

OSSABAW ORACLE

A Publication of the Ossabaw Island Foundation

December 2021



Photo by Julian Buckmaster

Ossabaw Island Project: 60 Years Ago

A place of “creative thought and purpose” on Ossabaw Island’s Torrey-West Estate

For more than 20 years beginning in 1961, notable artists, writers, scientists and professionals gathered from around the globe to experience and draw inspiration from Ossabaw Island in coastal Georgia. The Ossabaw Island Project (OIP) was a unique interdisciplinary fellowship program established by Eleanor “Sandy” and Clifford West, borne out of their desire to share Ossabaw Island without destroying it.

“This project makes [Ossabaw] island available to dedicated men and women of creative thought and purpose, the arts, the sciences, industry, education and religion from October to May,” according to the mission of OIP. Nearly 1,000 people came to Ossabaw as project members during OIP’s tenure. Project members were guests for a week or more in the 15-bedroom Torrey West Main House and the Little Torrey House. At any given time, about 20 people would be OIP residents, with overlapping arrivals and departures.

“Project members operate on their own,” said Mrs. West in an interview with Alison and Kathryn Wade. “There are no social demands, but members are encouraged to join together for dinner and exchange ideas. OIP is a place to get your imagination back.”

The Wests insisted that OIP was not a writers colony or an artist colony. “At one time, the group may include a dynamic sculptor, a young

modern painter, an experimental photographer, the world’s greatest authority on Slavic languages, a weaver, a leading ecologist, a popular novelist, a freelance journalist and a composer,” said Mrs. West. Olive Ann Burns, an OIP member, wrote, “Ossabaw is like a stage play with a constantly changing cast of characters. It was a time of real isolation, no radio, no TV or no newspapers,” she said.

Among those who attended the Ossabaw Island Project were: composer Samuel Barber; writers Ralph Ellison, Annie Dillard, Margaret Atwood, Allan Gurganus, Sallie Bingham; ecologists Eugene Odum and Bob Hanie; architect Robert Venturi; and inventor Itzhak Bentov. Project members were originally selected by an advisory board. Through the years project members gained the ability to recommend OIP candidates. In the early days OIP members were asked to pay \$35 a week; in later years the fee increased to \$75. If participants could not pay, they were still welcome. Equipment available were two pianos, a complete dark room, movie and slide projectors, a pottery wheel and kiln, a four-harness 6.5-foot loom, a bronze casting foundry, and a reference library.

Mrs. West continued to operate OIP on her 23-acre life estate property after the State of Georgia purchased Ossabaw Island in 1978. OIP closed abruptly in September 1983 due to lack of funding to continue the project.

Revealing the Voices & Mystery of Ossabaw Island



Executive Director's Letter

This October marked the 20th Ossabaw Island Pig Roast and Art Auction, Ossabaw Island Foundation's sole fundraiser. As we planned the Three Little Pig Roasts this year we found ourselves reminiscing about the evolution of the Pig Roast over the past two decades.

The Pig Roast started in 2002 as a forty-person event hosted on the lawn of the Torrey West House--Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey-West's home on Ossabaw Island overlooking Ossabaw Sound. That first party was catered by Savannah's Susan Mason and Mrs. West's longtime island manager Roger Parker, who smoked and prepared the Ossabaw Island pork. An Ossabaw-inspired silent art auction filled the Torrey-West House entry hall. By the third year, Epting Events from Athens, Georgia stepped in as the official Pig Roast caterer, with Roger Parker and crew in charge of the pork.

As the event grew, we began assigning boat arrival and departure times, staggered throughout the day from 9 am until 5:30 pm. At the height of the Pig Roast we hosted close to four hundred people in Mrs. West's front yard. Savannah-area musicians and nationally touring Americana performers provided entertainment. Ossabaw specialty cocktails and locally brewed yaupon craft beer increased the festive atmosphere. As attendance grew, Roger's Ossabaw pork was replaced by Boston butts prepared by the caterer. Roger Parker went from celebrity cook to celebrity guest at the party.

The silent auction filled the entry hall, the dining and sun rooms of Mrs. West's home. A live auction was added for higher-ticket items that featured cartwheels and other acrobatics performed by the volunteer catering staff and DNR employees when bidding reached over \$10,000. Our premier caterer/entertainer/auctioneer, Daniel Epting, created bidding wars for weekend Ossabaw trips, wooden treasures created by Mark Frissell, original paintings by Mrs. West and Betsy Cain, an original Jack Leigh photograph, a live donkey, a helicopter tour over Ossabaw Island and the stumps and island driftwood used as table centerpieces.

From 2002 to 2015, the highlight of the Pig Roast was always an appearance and brief remarks by Mrs. West. Most years she would spend part of the afternoon in the living room or on the front lawn laughing with old friends and making new ones. One year she remained upstairs and spoke to us from the balcony at the top of the spiral staircase. Her comments ranged far and wide, but she always called on us to be vigilant in keeping Ossabaw undeveloped and wild.

The Pig Roast has faced a slew of logistical challenges over the past 20 years: losing running water during several events (meaning no toilets); a rain storm or two (but never rained out!); too much sun on the art when the auction was on the back patio; and our one unwelcomed guest--Hurricane Matthew in 2016, forcing us to reimagine the October Pig Roast into the "Hurricane History Tour & Picnic" in November.

The 2019 Pig Roast was our last large fundraising event. During this pandemic we have shifted to a smaller model. The "one big HOG of a party" for over 300 people on a single fall Saturday is now "Three Little Pig Roasts" a weekend of small, late afternoon parties on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with a separate Monday creative day trip and lunch for the auction's contributing artists. The entire event is smaller: total attendance over the weekend is about 150 people. The silent auction once held in the Torrey-West house has moved online. The catering "torch" has passed again, to Lesley Varnadore of Harris Neck, Georgia.

We have depended on countless volunteers to clean the yard, clean the house, transport the tables and chairs, set up the event, take down the event, check in the guests and load the boats, mix and serve the special Donkey Kick cocktails, set up the silent auction and check out the winners and stock and manage the store. With two staff people the event would have never happened without our volunteers. Thank you!



Photo by Jeff Carmel

Save the Date!

Ossabaw Island Foundation
Mainland Event

**"What We Learned from Sandy":
Reflections on the life and legacy of
Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West, 1913–2021**

Thursday, January 20, 2022

6:00 pm Reception

7:00 pm Program

8:15 pm Birthday Cake in honor of
Mrs. West's birthday on January 17

Armstrong Center
13040 Abercorn St.
Savannah, GA 31419

Free and Open to the Public

Sponsored by Mermaid Cottages LLC

For sponsorship opportunities contact us at 912-344-3900 or elizabeth@ossabawisland.org

The Pig Roast was conceived by TOIF Trustee Jim Noyes. After a rainy but successful Club House opening on the island in March of 2002, Jim imagined Roger cooking his pork on Ossabaw and guests paying to come to the event. Fellow board member Kathy Ledvina added the idea of artists coming to Ossabaw and then donating works for a silent auction. The TOIF Board of Trustees dedicated the Pig Roast proceeds to purchasing the Torrey-West House original furnishings and artwork from Mrs. West. This plan gave Mrs. West needed funds to remain on the island until 2016, and resulted in the house's interior to remain nearly in its original décor as planned by Nell Torrey in the 1920s. By 2009, when all of the available furniture was purchased, the funds raised from the Pig Roast moved to support the Ossabaw Island Foundation's work. TOIF continued to pay Mrs. West a fee each fall for the use of her house and grounds for the Pig Roast.

This year (our 20th anniversary pig roast year) yielded the highest number of sponsors in our history: 45 sponsors, including nine first-time supporters. What a great way to honor two decades of Ossabaw Island Pig Roasts! With two successful little pig roasts and online art auctions behind us, the question is what direction will next years' event take? As on-island coordinator Jim Bitler (1955 – 2011) would say: "Stay tuned!"

Elizabeth DuBose
Executive Director
Ossabaw Island Foundation



Visit Ossabaw Island in 2022!

Photo by Julian Buckmaster

Our highest priority is the safety of Ossabaw Island visitors and our staff. For some trips listed below, the maximum group size has been reduced in order to maintain physical distancing on the boat, in vehicles, and in our buildings. Protocols for each trip will comply with local and state guidelines in place on

the date of that trip. Those protocols will be emailed to each person who registers as part of the trip information. 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 open to the public. Fees vary. To register for all Ossabaw Island Foundation-sponsored events, visit ossabawisland.org or call 912-344-3900. Pre-registration required.



Wild Night on Ossabaw: New Year's Eve Overnight Trip

Fri. December 31, 2021 – Sat. January 1, 2022

Spend New Year's Eve on Ossabaw Island on an overnight trip, with music and tales of Ossabaw Island around the fire pit after dinner. Plus, a midnight champagne toast to welcome 2022.

Get Creative on Ossabaw: Winter Day Trip

Sat. February 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.

Super Museum Sunday on Ossabaw Island

Sun. February 6

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.

Creative Four-Day, Three-Night Retreat

Fri. February 18 – Mon. February 21

Spend three nights on Ossabaw Island creating. This is a "no agenda" time for creativity, writing, drawing, painting, image making time on Ossabaw Island.

Day Trip Tour of Ossabaw Island's North End

Sat. March 26

Travel by pontoon boat with Captain Mike Neal of Bull River Cruises to the island's North End for an interpretive tour that includes ecology and history.



Ossabaw Island Descendants Heritage Day

Sat. May 7

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 4

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.

Lift Every Voice: Ossabaw Island and Pin Point Fee-Free Day Trip

Sat. August 13

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 Gullah-Geechee community established by formerly enslaved people from Ossabaw Island.

Turtle Hatching Day Trips or Weekend Trips

Sat. August 20 Day Trip

Sun. August 21 Day Trip

Fri. September 2 – Mon. September 5.

Labor Day Weekend Three-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. In 2021, 381 sea turtle nests were documented on Ossabaw. 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 16 and September 23

Sun. September 19 and 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.

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

2021 by the Numbers



Fee Free trips: Super Museum Sunday in February and May. Two Lift Every Voice trips in August.



new turtle hatching day trips added in August.



2,256

Hosted 2,256 visits for 140 program days. 21 TOIF-hosted trips open to the public.



1,217

butterflies counted by 24 citizen scientist volunteers over 11 weeks. 1,156 gulf fritillary, 251 cloudless sulphur, 41 monarch. (data collected over 11 weeks of a 14 week survey)



additional indigo workshops added due to demand.



Ossabaw Island Foundation & Education Alliance Partners

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Sea Turtle Conservation Program

Wildlife Resources Division

Board of Regents of the State of Georgia

Georgia Southern University

College of Education

University of Georgia

Center for Archaeological Sciences

Marine Extension Center and Aquarium

Skidaway Institute of Oceanography

UGA Press

Savannah State University

Department of Marine & Environmental Sciences

Coalition to Save Butler Island

Coastal Museums Association

Georgia Conservancy

The Learning Center at SCI

Moon River District

One Hundred Miles

Pin Point Heritage Museum

Ossabaw Island Writers' Retreat

The Landings Association

2020/2021 Financial Report (Aug 1 – July 31)

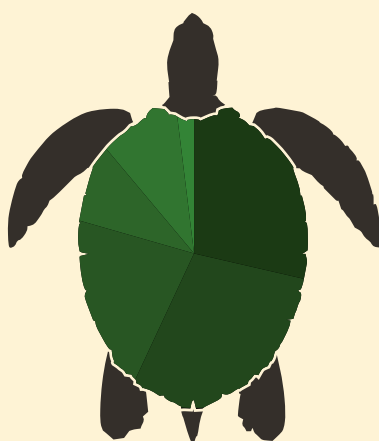
REVENUE • \$271,000

- Pig Roast: \$78,000
- Donations: \$77,000
- On Island Revenue: \$61,000
- Grants: \$25,000
- CARES Loan/Grant \$25,000
- Books and SWAG sales: \$5,000

EXPENSES • \$256,000

- General & Administration \$141,000
 - staffing
 - printing & postage
 - Annual Meeting expenses
 - audit fees
- On Island Expenses: \$110,000
 - cleaning, maintenance & repairs of buildings & equipment
 - transportation to/from Ossabaw
 - on-island staffing
 - Pig Roast expenses
- Use Agreement \$5,000
 - paid to the State of Georgia

NET REVENUE • \$15,000





Al Bradford in the Cookshack



Cook Day photo by Ann Jones

Settling In: First Days at Genesis

By David Bayne

When I first heard of Ossabaw, I was a three-week graduate from Reed College in Portland, Oregon. Although I was pretty sure Georgia had a coast, I had no idea of what barrier islands were. In March of '76, after leaving Oregon and crisscrossing the country I arrived in Savannah, Georgia and drove straight to the boat landing at Vernon View. I slept in my car, virtually on the dock, waiting for the boat to Ossabaw Island. I did not want to miss that boat.

The next morning, Dan Burns took me to the island and on the way, recommended I snuggle up to the exhaust pipe on the boat to stay warm. My first sunrise in Georgia.

After I got to Genesis, at Middle Place, I slept for three days. I was happy to have my own room in the Long House. I was signed up for Genesis on a work scholarship. My first job was to tear apart the barn that used to be where the Tower House is now, across from the tabby foundations. I relished the demolition, and Helen Hamada, Genesis co-manager, told me later that my gusto with a sledge hammer added to my nascent bad-ass reputation. Work at Middle Place was just what I needed.

People reacted in unusual ways to what is still, and hopefully always will be, a unique environment. Most everybody who came to Genesis adapted to living at Middle Place eventually. Thank goodness. What was the process? We all ate dinner together, and after Town Day (mainland visit day) there was a chance for the rest of us to get to know the newbies. Of course, many were shy and I started to notice that a way to make them comfortable was to talk about TV shows. Surrounded by the marsh, in the lee of the historic sawdust pile, Mt. Middle Place,

we would discuss the *Dick Van Dyke Show* or *Leave it To Beaver*. 1970's TV was a lingua franca, even with linguists from Illinois in the mix. Eventually of course we talked about the light on the marsh and how to form perfect vowels, and marveled at the braying of the donkeys in Middle Place field. We all had our specialties and we learned to share at the dinner table in the Cookshack.



A classic dinner in the Cookshack

Full incorporation into the group often took place after the first Cook Day. It wasn't easy either. First milk the cow, then empty the outhouses, then a chore or two, and finally cook for all. The kitchen lacked many amenities and Helen Hamada coached me through my first Cook Day like she did with so many other first-timers. You might think that emptying the two outhouses would have a high yuck factor but surprisingly there were few complaints. It was a good system, it didn't stink, and nobody got sick.

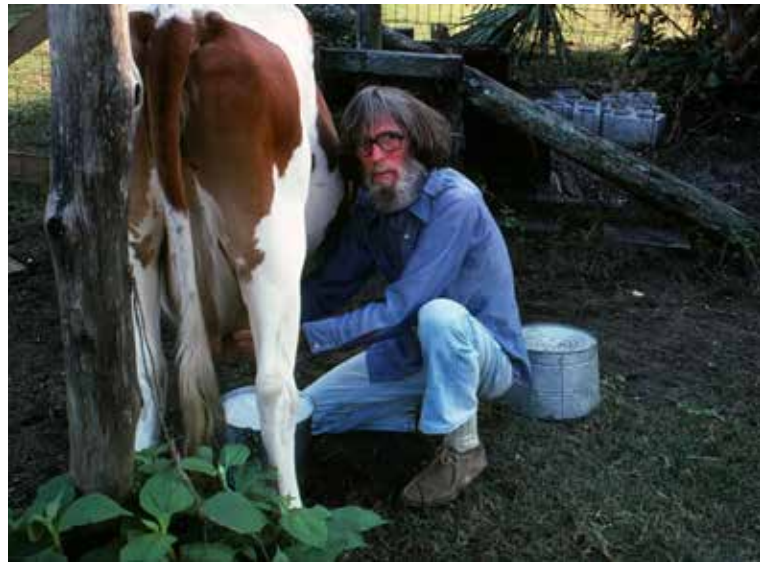
There were Cook Day casualties occasionally. At one point a co-manager was explaining the intricacies of starting the gas powered pump to fill the water tank. When he pulled the starter rope he cold-cocked the poor soul standing attentively close. A chore that many took pride in was making bread for the group. The go-to cook book was *The Tassajara Bread Book* written by Zen Buddhists hoping for enlightenment for all. Well we had a new scientist and he was sure that bread-making did not require love and understanding. Instead it was a scientific process. After just the right number of strokes you were done. He kneaded that dough good and hard, and that's what the bread was. Al Bradford claims they actually used it as doorstops. Al also remembers a woman who on her Cook Day got distracted by an eagle and forgot the bread rising in the oven. As the eagle had been soaring overhead, a much more humble life form swelled the dough until it filled the oven. But then the dough kept going and escaped over the floor. The poor cook was resourceful, scooped up what she could, and made a couple of loaves.

The process of integration at Middle Place wasn't solely up to the individual or the current co-manager. The process was also determined by the group at the time and all the previous and ongoing interactions. Eventually though it almost always seemed to mesh though. As someone put it, "You knew they were 'in' when they started scratching like everyone else as we sat around the Cookshack table."

Editor's note: The Genesis Project—a cooperative, semi-sustainable, inter-disciplinary community—operated at historic Middle Place on Ossabaw Island from 1970 to 1982. David Bayne was a Genesis member in 1976, and later became a co-director. Images provided by David Bayne.



From Left to Right: unknown woman, unknown man, Jon Vara, Helen Hamada, Michael Billa, Kevin Donovan, Mark Bromley (kneeling) and Cyrus the rooster.



John Earl on his Cook Day



Mark Bromley and Michael Billa

If you or a family member participated in the Ossabaw Island Project or the Genesis Project please consider donating your journals, letters, photos, sketchbooks or other materials from the era to the Ossabaw Collection at the Georgia Historical Society. For information on how to contribute your Ossabaw items, contact Elizabeth DuBose, elizabeth@ossabawisland.org to begin the donation process.



THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 OSSABAW ISLAND THREE LITTLE PIG ROASTS SPONSORS

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Service Brewing Co. • Southern Environmental Law Center • Alice Steyaart • Angie & Jeff Stewart • symbioscity
Christiana & Bart Turner • Alan & Peggy Usher

Thank you to all of our Pig Roast volunteers! Betsy Cain, Mario Castro, Brad Christman, Robert Cooper,
Todd Eaton, Leigh Goff, Cam Mathis, Ben Wells, Charlie Wells, and Stacey Wells.

Special thanks to our caterer for all three Little Pig Roasts, Lesley Varnadore, and to Pig Roast-to-Go caterer Erica Davis Lowcountry.

Photos by Stacey Wells Photography





Woodcut by John McWilliams



Save the date!
Ossabaw Island Pig Roast October 21-23, 2022.

Ossabaw Island Art Auction 2021

For the second year, the Ossabaw Island Art Auction was completely online, from October 1 - 27. Thank you to all of the bidders and congratulations to the winning high bidders.

Each year, Ossabaw Island-inspired artwork is donated to TOIF for the auction. As a thank you from us, TOIF hosted a Donor Artists Creative Day Trip on October 25, featuring a pig roast lunch and a full day on the island to make art and explore Ossabaw's North End.

Thank you to the following visual artists who created and donated Ossabaw Island-inspired art to the 2021 auction:

Angie Abbott	Anne Brodie Hill
Paige Adair	Regina Holderness
Carmela Aliffi	Don Howe
Anne Berry	Kathryn Kolb
Andre Bertolino	Kathleen Kollock
Jim Bitler (donated by Nancy Marshall)	Kathleen Kostra
Barbara Bormes	Dottie Leatherwood
Pam Bullock	Danelle LeJeune
Hannah Burtnik	Nancy Marshall
Betsy Cain	Leah Medders
Alan Campbell	Robert Medders
Ekron "Ches" Crow	Cora Morris
Janet Csadenyi	Kenny Nobles
Lynn Daley	Deborah Palk
Harry DeLorme	Blanche Nettles Powers
France Dorman	Beth Reiter
Joy Dunigan	Deanne Christman-Resch
Helen Durant	Debra Shea
Morey Gers	Becca Sipper
Gay Gillies	Sheryl St. Germain
Marc Hanson	Barbara Vaughn
Vicki Hardy	Raven Waters
William Harrell	Ben Wells
Carol Hartley	Teake Zuidema



Photo by Carmela Aliffi



Photo by Elizabeth DuBose

Do you know of an "Ossabaw Donkey" living on the mainland?

As the Ossabaw donkey story goes, in the 1940's a small population of Sicilian miniature donkeys was imported by Porter Crosley and brought to Bull Island, SC. Following his death, the donkeys were carefully dispersed. Sandy West introduced a group of 17 donkeys in 1965 to Ossabaw Island where some still remain today.

A recent census of the miniature donkey in both Europe and America has shown that the miniature donkey breed is in severe decline globally. The Livestock Conservancy is interested in learning more about what is left of the Ossabaw miniature donkeys and their purebred descendants. "If you own or know of any of these delightful donkeys please contact us at info@livestockconservancy.org. We know there are still pockets of them on the mainland and we would like to organize an effort to conserve the breed and their unique genetics that could be important for the miniature donkey breed." —The Livestock Conservancy

Adopt-A-Donkey! New donkey "Adopters" February-October 2021

Heidi Blanck, in memory of Sandy West
Erin Clarkson
Mary Elfner, in honor of Elizabeth DuBose
Sebastian Lawrence
Debra Lee

Claire McCluskey
Christine Midwood
Julie Seckinger
Linda Renee Thornton
Patricia Wright



"Adopt" an Ossabaw Island Donkey for \$25 or \$50

Tuesday, November 30, support the
Ossabaw Island Foundation as part of
#GivingTuesday and **GAgives**.

A donkey adoption makes a great gift.

Adopt as many donkeys as you
like at GAGives.org/story/Donkey



For your \$25 adoption, you or your gift
recipient will receive an adoption certificate,
and a donkey sticker. A \$50 adoption adds
a plush braying donkey.

Thank you for supporting
the Ossabaw Island Foundation on

GIVINGTUESDAY



Photos courtesy of the Speed Family

Snowbirds in Thunderbolt, Georgia: The Torrey Family of Grosse Pointe, Michigan

By Jessica Leigh Lebos, Guest Contributor

Ossabaw's luckiest visitors know that the dirt road veering off to the left of the Club House leads to majesty.

Past the massive wrought iron gates, the red clay roof rises first into view, followed by the rest of the Torrey West House. This Spanish revival mansion is where the island's matriarch, Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West, spent decades hosting guests and contemplating the island's beauty. Built in 1924-1926 as the Torrey family's winter home, the pink stucco walls still glow with the fading elegance of an era long gone.

But this was not the first glorious residence Dr. Henry and Nell Torrey inhabited along the Georgia coast. The Grosse Pointe, Michigan family purchased their first Georgia residence in 1917: Greenwich Place, a sumptuous Beaux-Arts manor located on the Wilmington River. Said to rival the famous Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina, the Thunderbolt, Georgia estate boasted double colonnades, decorative pools, a yacht dock, and an English-style garden full of ancient Roman statuary.

Construction of this architectural jewel began in 1898 on a former plantation site at the behest of Spencer Shotter, a turpentine magnate who cultivated an appetite for opulence and a social calendar that included the Carnegies, Vanderbilts, and other Gilded Age tycoons. Unlike his prosperous peers, Shotter's fortunes faltered when he found himself in the crosshairs of an antitrust lawsuit headed by the U.S. government and was forced to sell off vast portions of his wealth.





The Torreys picked up Greenwich Place and its exquisite collections of art and rare important plants for \$300,000, escaping the North's treacherous icy weather for Savannah's balmy months. As told to Jane Fishman in her book *The Woman Who Saved An Island*, Sandy and her brother, Bill, used to make up stories "for all the gawkers" who would drive by trying to catch a glimpse of the palatial home behind Bonaventure Cemetery. The family enjoyed several seasons at Greenwich, hosting parties and lending the grounds as the setting for Hollywood films, including the silent-era 1920 classic *Stolen Moments*, featuring Rudolph Valentino.

But the mild winters at Greenwich came to a cataclysmic end on January 27, 1923. Sometime in the early morning hours, the sewing room on the second floor caught fire, spreading flames quickly to the nearby bedrooms. The family managed to escape unharmed, including ten-year-old Sandy, who jumped out the window to safety along with her nurse. According to the report in the *Augusta Chronicle* the next day, her father saved his 86-year-old mother-in-law from the blaze himself, singeing off his eyebrows. The mansion and its priceless treasures, however, burned to ash.

As the embers cooled, the Torreys remained on the grounds, living on their 100-foot yacht. In Fishman's book, Sandy recalls sifting through the debris with Bill and finding their mother's jewelry, including one piece fused to a hunk of glass that had once been her dressing room mirror.

Rather than rebuild upon the storied piece of land first settled in 1765 where Revolutionary War hero Casimir Pulaski supposedly died, the Torreys decided their money would be better spent elsewhere. Buying up Georgia's Sea Islands was already in vogue among the country's elite class, and when the hunting retreat of Ossabaw Island came up for sale, the Torreys began a new legacy, starting with the construction of a much smaller, but no less iconic, waterfront retreat.



The Greenwich Place mansion is long gone, but traces remain if you know where to look. The City of Savannah purchased the property in 1937 as an extension of Bonaventure Cemetery, demolishing the rest of the ruins for burial grounds. The home's original fountain still stands among the marble markers, and a short walk towards the back of Greenwich Cemetery reveals the decorative pond where captains of industry once strolled. Across town, a half dozen or so pieces of Spencer Shotter's Roman statuary can be viewed at the Telfair Academy, though the fate of the rest of the collection remains in question as the city waits to appraise its value for possible sale.



Photo by Morey Gers

Today you can drive along the main road to Greenwich where Sandy and Bill used to jeer at passersby, but Ossabaw legend says that the iron gates now guarding the entrance aren't the originals. The Torreys are said to have taken them to Ossabaw, installing them along the road to their new winter home.

The filigreed ironworks are still attached to pink stucco pillars, a reminder of the Gilded Age's former grandeur and a bridge from Ossabaw's history to Savannah's mainland.

Ossabaw Fund Contributors

Thank you for your donations to the Ossabaw Island Foundation's Ossabaw Fund, February – October 2021.

Winki Allen
Charles Anderson
Lenny and Linda Bailey in honor John Crawford
Cathi Barlow
Edward Benton
Reed Bohne
Leigh Bottomley
Sharon Brooks
Jill Brougher
Dan Burns in memory of Agnes Graves
Susan Burns
Team Callahan: The Gaunder Family and March clients
Kristina Carroll
Éva Castro
Susie Clinard
Julianne Collin
Amy Collings
Gaston Conley
Babe Crockford in memory of Jack A. Crockford
Laurie Crossley in memory of Clois Witt
Richard and Paulette Crowley in memory of Margueritte Kimball
Robert Daniels
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Julie McCormick
Constance McGough
Michael McLaughlin
Jack and Barbara McMaken
Harriet Meyerhoff in honor of Don Callahan
Holly Spalding in memory of Elizabeth Bailey Ritzert (1957-1991)
Norman Wildlife Consulting in honor of John Posa
Mark Padgett
Scott Pendergrast

Debra Perkins
Eva Persons in memory Mr. Bill Torrey and in honor of
John Crawford
Mrs. Richard Platt
Noreen Powell
Paul Pressly in memory of Linda Fisk Morris
Dick and Sue Prior
Denise Ray
Mickie Roby
Sundiata Rush
Milton Schreiber
Anne Schwingle in memory of Allen Dean Clark
Julie Seckinger
Six Pence Pub
Dean Smith in honor of Elizabeth DuBose
Eileen Smith
Mark Smith
Leigh and Reggie Smith
Jane and Bob Springfield
Sheryl St. Germain
Kristin Stafford
William Steinhauer
Janet Stone
Jill Stuckey
Amanda Thompson
Linda Thorton
John Train in memory of Gordon Varnedoe
Caroline Vaughan
Caryl and Carol Warner
Jimmy Ward
Patricia and Jim Wann
Ann Watkins
Sara Williams
Suzanne Williams
Patricia Wright
Jennifer Zdunczyk
Susan and Randy Zeek

In memory of Elisabeth Anna Lipp:

Jaclyn Bennett
Jennifer Campbell
Bethany Dorminey
Mike and Ashley English
Janet L. Grimm
Linda Lipp
Ann Lowder

Jack and Adell Ruppel
Joe Simon
Lisa Wilkes

In memory of Elizabeth Morris:

Boy Scout Troop 34
Donald Callahan
James Cook
Jane Downs
Jennifer Dabbs Garrish
Jeff and Debbie Hargett
Virginia Harman
Lesley Hatcher
Deborah Hearn
Richard Hyde
Neva Long
Betty Z. Morris
Billy Morris
Jim Morris
Mark Padgett
Monica Sheppard
Heather Szatmary
Laura E Trammell
Curt Vann

In memory of Sandy West:

TOIF has committed these gifts to the Torrey-West Fund,
to be used for renovations to the Torrey-West House.

Linda Best
Susan Cole
Ellen Crowley
Mr. and Mrs. Archie Davis
William Dickinson
Cynthia Garrett
Sandra Hadaway
James Harris
Janet Harvey
Omar Hendrix
Noel and Terri Holcomb
Kathryn Kolb
Philip Lohr
Eva Persons
Brook Reynolds
Sue Goldstein and Beth Richardson
Zelda Tenenbaum
Pam Wuichet

Sandy West in the Media

The Ossabaw Island Foundation board and staff are thankful for all of the glorious memories people have shared with us about their relationship to Eleanor “Sandy” Torrey West, who died on January 17, 2021, her 108th birthday.

Below are links to recent articles about Sandy’s amazing life.



*“Eleanor Torrey West, Preserver of Her Inherited Island, Dies at 108”
—Veronica Penney, The New York Times*



*“Sandy West, doyenne of Ossabaw Island, dead at 108”—Tamar Hallerman,
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*



“Difference Maker, Elizabeth DuBose: Ossabaw Island Foundation leader discusses Sandy West’s legacy”—Podcast with Savannah Morning News’s Adam Van Brimmer



*“Sandy West showed love for Ossabaw by protecting island as a natural treasure.”
—Elizabeth DuBose, Op-Ed,
Savannah Morning News*



*“Sandy West: A legacy like no other”
—Jim Morekis, The Savannahian*

Echoes of Ossabaw

Fall 2023

Telfair Museums' Jepson Center

"I didn't care what they did here, I cared what the island did to them...I wanted to share (Ossabaw), I guess, because of my guilt of having such a wonderful place."-Sandy West (Atlanta Journal Constitution, 2016)

Telfair Museums' upcoming exhibition *Echoes of Ossabaw* will consider Ossabaw Island through the lens of social history, tracing how the island fostered and continues to serve as a creative environment. In 1961, Eleanor "Sandy" and Clifford West established the Ossabaw Island Project (OIP), and the interdisciplinary program ran until the early 1980s. The exhibition will trace a cohort of past residents of the program, their interconnections, their sphere of influence, and simultaneously, the compelling story of Ossabaw as a site for such a creative experiment—historically, environmentally, socially, culturally, personally—during these decades and through to the present day. The exhibition will consider important artistic voices affected and influenced by the island including: Harry Bertoia, Betsy Cain, Agnes Denes, John Earl, Anna Colquitt Hunter, Jack Leigh, Sally Mann, Nancy Marshall, Ross McElwee, Martha Odum, Craig Rubadoux, Bertold 'Tex' Schiwetz, Ellen Biddle Shipman, Anne Truitt, Clifford Bateman West, among many others.

Inherent to the narrative of artistic output on and about Ossabaw is the exploration of the changing historical and physical landscape of the island over 4,000 years of known human intervention. Archaeological records, landmarks, and archival records reveal some understanding of the Native American tribes who lived on the land as well as the island's eventual use for plantation crops harvested by enslaved labor. In the early 20th century, the island was purchased as a private retreat for the Torrey family and in 1978, Ossabaw was established as Georgia's first Heritage Preserve "...to protect, conserve, and preserve the natural and cultural resources of this Island for the benefit of present and future generations." Ultimately, Ossabaw Island's known history and influence reverberates far beyond its physical shores and *Echoes of Ossabaw* will offer a lens through which to explore the continuous and powerful pull of the place.



This exhibition is currently in the research phase to gather information, artist names, social and physical histories of the island. Do you want to share your story of Ossabaw Island? Do you have any memories of the Ossabaw Island Project or Genesis? Please contact Erin Dunn, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at dunne@telfair.org or 912.790.8842.

Images from top to bottom: Alphonse Jungers (Luxembourger, 1872-1947); *Untitled* (Portrait of Nell Ford Torrey and her two children, William Ford Torrey and Eleanor Ford Torrey), 1918; oil on canvas; courtesy of the Ossabaw Island Foundation. Harry Bertoia (Italian-American, 1915-1978), *Ossabaw Echoes*, 1962; bronze; courtesy of the Cranbrook Museum of Art. Tabby slave cabins on Ossabaw Island.



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“Adopt” an Ossabaw Island Donkey for \$25 or \$50

Tuesday, November 30, support the Ossabaw Island Foundation as part of **#GivingTuesday**.

A donkey adoption makes a great gift.

GAGives.org/story/Donkey

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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In memoriam:

Eleanor “Sandy” T. West, Chairperson Emerita
1913 - 2021

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ossabawisland.org