



Illustration by Islenia Milien for *The New Yorker*

Ossabaw Night in Savannah

Armstrong Center

Lecture by Dr. Paul M. Pressly, Director Emeritus, OIEA

January 18th

5 p.m. Reception | 6 p.m. Program

Free & Open to the Public!

A Southern Underground Railroad: Titus of Ossabaw Island, 1767 - 1797 Lecture by Dr. Paul M. Pressly, Director Emeritus, Ossabaw Island Education Alliance

Paul Pressly offers a prelude to his forthcoming UGA Press book *A Southern Underground Railroad: Black Georgians and the Promise of Spanish Florida and Indian Country*, scheduled for publication in fall 2024. His new book is the culmination of a decade of research that began when he discovered the existence of Titus, an enslaved African American born on Ossabaw Island in 1767. Paul first published an article “The Many Worlds of Titus: Marronage, Freedom, and the Entangled Borders of Lowcountry Georgia and Spanish Florida,” in the *Journal of Southern History* in August, 2018. The idea of maroons, people who escape slavery to create independent hidden communities, enlivened Pressly’s research. He expanded his work to include the network of these communities stretching from the Savannah River into Spanish Florida.

From UGA Press: “The Southeast provided a vital connecting link between the Black self-emancipation that occurred during the American Revolution and the growth

of the Underground Railroad in the final years of the antebellum period. From the beginning of the revolutionary war to the eve of the First Seminole War in 1817, hundreds and eventually several thousand Africans and African Americans in Georgia crossed the borders and boundaries that separated the Lowcountry from the British and Spanish in coastal Florida and from the Seminole and Creek people in the vast interior of the Southeast. Even in times of peace, there remained a steady flow of individuals moving south and southwest, reflecting the aspirations of a captive people.”

Pressly’s lecture on Ossabaw Night will focus on Titus as a key figure in this little-known chapter of the origins of the emancipation movement. Pressly’s research shows that “the movement by self-emancipating Blacks across borders was an integral part of the sustained struggle for dominance in the Southeast, not only among the Great Powers, but also among the many different racial, ethnic, and religious groups that inhabited the region and contended for control.”