

OSSABAW ORACLE

A Publication of the Ossabaw Island Foundation

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OSSABAW ISLAND

F O U N D A T I O N

Celebrating 25 Years

The Ossabaw Island Foundation: 25 years of revealing the voices and mystery of Ossabaw.

In 1998, the Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF) was four years old, operating on temporary non-profit status from the IRS and seeking an employee to run the organization for the third time in four years. Board Chair Amy Smith was negotiating with the State of Georgia for the first Ossabaw Island Use Agreement, a five year renewable “contract” giving TOIF permission to lead programming on Ossabaw Island. Since incorporating four years earlier, TOIF had struggled to find leadership and legitimacy.

As the year progressed, there were breakthroughs: a Use Agreement signed in January, a new TOIF hire in May, and by December, full non-profit status was granted by the IRS.

Leading TOIF’s side of the use agreement negotiations was King and Spalding attorney Patricia Barmeyer, who knew and loved Ossabaw from her work representing the State of Georgia on the 1978 sale of the island. The new hire was Elizabeth DuBose, a neighborhood organizer and Executive Director for Keep Savannah Beautiful for the City of Savannah with degrees in American studies and historic preservation, and with a passion for preserving the Georgia coast.

In 2023, TOIF celebrates DuBose’s 25 years leading the organization and recognizes Barmeyer for her 25 years serving TOIF, who has completed her final three-year term on our Board of Trustees and resigned as our pro bono legal counsel. We highlight a quarter-century of TOIF’s accomplishments that “reveal the voices and mystery of Ossabaw Island.”

Revealing the Voices & Mystery of Ossabaw Island

Executive Director's Letter



Photo by Robert S Cooper

In January we celebrated the 16th annual Ossabaw Night in Savannah. There were many accomplishments to recognize: our 25th year as a public charity; the renewal of our use agreement with the State of Georgia; our 2022 and 2023 Sandy West Ossabaw Fellows; and the contributions of Patricia Barmeyer, who retired in January from her volunteer roles with TOIF.

Patricia has been integral the past 25 years to TOIF and my tenure with the organization. Her first task with TOIF was to negotiate on our behalf to get the 1998 Use Agreement signed. How fitting that Barmeyer's final project for TOIF was the renewal of that first agreement, bringing her to a full-circle moment.

My favorite "Patricia Ossabaw" idea is the creation of the Sandy West Ossabaw Fellowship. In a brainstorming meeting at the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, in 2005, Patricia made her pitch for a recognition to be awarded by TOIF. She suggested that the Foundation give an award for a body of work on or about Ossabaw Island, perhaps inspired by the island in the spirit of Ossabaw's matriarch, Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West. The idea was met with enthusiasm. It was agreed that a separate fund should be designated for the award. Patricia and five other Trustees each made a leadership gift creating an endowment for the Fellows.

This award is given when a project is deserving and exceptional. It has been awarded five times since its inception. The links to the works by the 2022 and 2023 Fellows are below.

Over the past twenty-five years, Ossabaw has been like another family member that I interact with and consider as I move through life. Working with the Ossabaw Island Foundation has been more than a passion; it has been all-encompassing for the DuBose-Frissell family. My first day on the job was only 16 days after Mark Frissell and I were married! Our baby daughter Selden went to the office on Bull Street everyday, and she has spent many nights with us on the island while we were hosting groups. On May 21, 2023 Selden (our Ossabaw baby) graduated from my (and Patricia Barmeyer's) college alma mater, Hollins University!

These next years will be particularly dynamic as TOIF turns its attention to the renovation of the Torrey-West Estate, to expand the capacity of overnight accommodations and meeting and gathering spaces on Ossabaw Island. Twenty five years ago, at the start of this journey, I had no idea how much the island would be a part of my life. As TOIF moves forward, I can't wait to see the ways that the new challenge of the Torrey-West Estate influences the lives of all of us.

Elizabeth DuBose
Executive Director
Ossabaw Island Foundation



Scan QR code to read "People, Place and Taskscapes of Enslavement: African American Life on the South End Plantation, Ossabaw Island, Georgia, 1949-1861" by Dr. Amanda Thompson, the 2023 Eleanor "Sandy" West Ossabaw Fellow.



Scan QR code to view *Island Vision*, a film by May Ramming, the 2022 Eleanor "Sandy" West Ossabaw Fellow.





Visit Ossabaw Island in 2023!

Photo by Stacey Wells

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 OR scan the QR codes below. Pre-registration required.

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

Sat. August 12

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 Day Trip

Fri. August 25 & Sun. August 27

Accompany Georgia DNR Sea Turtle Conservation Program researchers as they inventory hatched loggerhead turtle nests for eggs and live hatchlings on Ossabaw Island’s South Beach.



A Hands-On Indigo Dyeing Experience: Ossabaw Island Indigo Day Trips

Fri. September 22 & Sun. September 24.

Elizabeth DuBose and Mark Frissell share the history of Ossabaw indigo and provide instruction on creating fresh leaf indigo dye vats and guide participants through the dyeing process.



Day Trip Tour of Ossabaw Island’s North End

Sat. November 11

Travel one hour through the Moon River District to the island’s North End, for an interpretive walking tour that includes ecology and history, plus time on your own to explore.

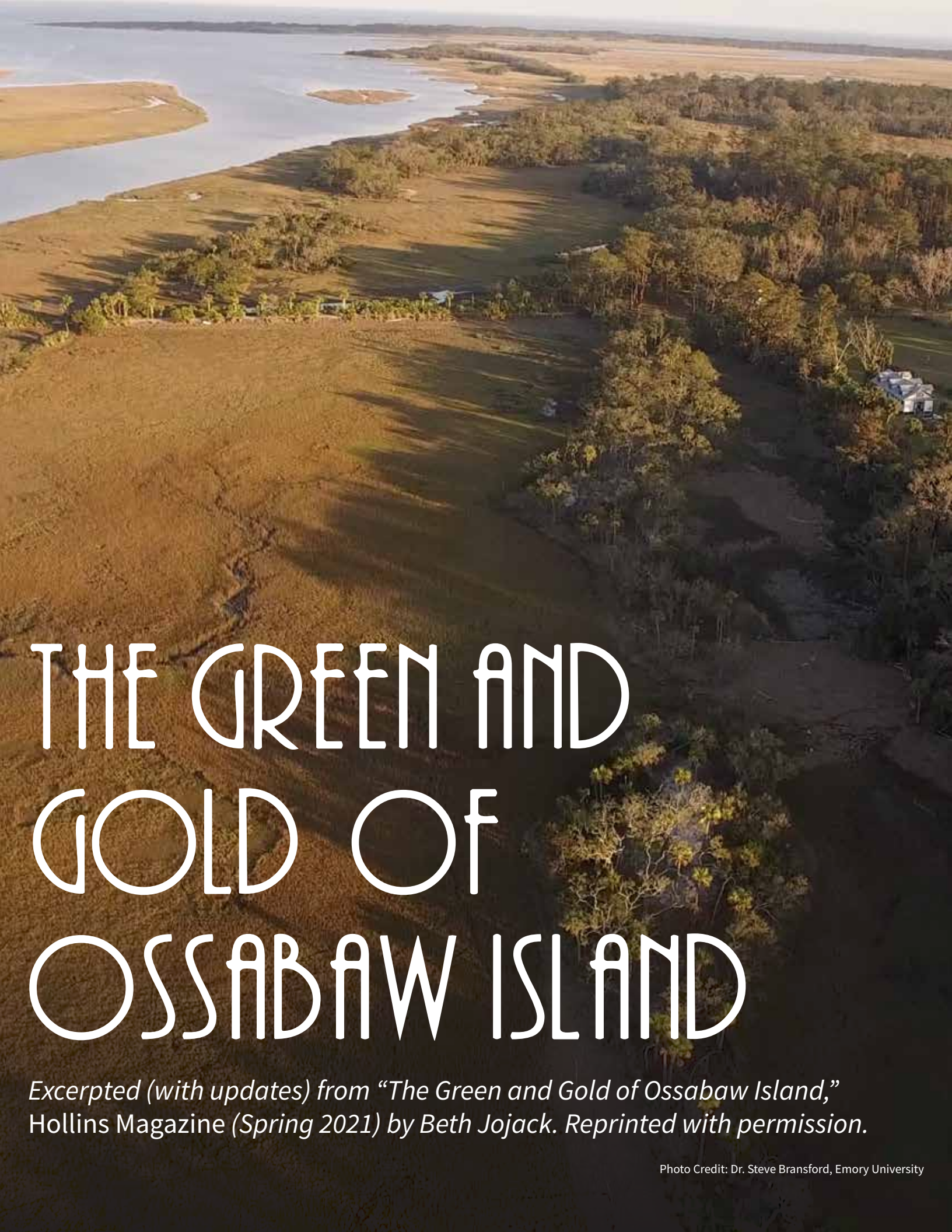


Wild Night on Ossabaw: New Year’s Eve Overnight Trip

Sun. December 31, 2023 – Mon. January 1, 2024

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 champagne toast to welcome 2024.





THE GREEN AND GOLD OF OSSABAW ISLAND

*Excerpted (with updates) from “The Green and Gold of Ossabaw Island,”
Hollins Magazine (Spring 2021) by Beth Jojack. Reprinted with permission.*

Patricia Thrower Barmeyer: Dogged Negotiator for Ossabaw

“For a long time Ossabaw was viewed as, and was, a place you couldn’t get to. It was mysterious and private and you couldn’t get there unless you knew somebody who could get you there. But we have created the opportunity so that anybody who wants to go can experience this wonderful island.” —Patricia Barmeyer

Patricia Barmeyer worked as an assistant attorney general for the state of Georgia for 17 years. During her tenure, she did everything from working to ensure Georgia’s beaches and tidelands belonged to the public to arguing a state border dispute in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. She also spent two years negotiating with Eleanor “Sandy” Torrey West (1913 – 2021) to make Ossabaw Island the state of Georgia’s first acquisition under the Heritage Trust Act.

Established by Jimmy Carter, then governor of the Peach State, the act protects sites with “unique natural characteristics, special historical significance, or particular recreational value” from development.

Rising property taxes prompted West and her relatives who shared ownership of the island to consider selling. But, they didn’t want to see it developed.

“She wasn’t entirely happy obviously with giving up her island, but she had decided she was going to do it,” Barmeyer says of West. “She, like a lot of people, wanted to keep things the way she had always done it.”

Barmeyer and West, usually through her lawyers, endured protracted discussions over the fate of the island’s non-native animals, including cattle, horses, donkeys, and hogs, all brought to the island by various visitors over its long history. “All of those hooved animals were very destructive to the dunes,” Barmeyer explained.

Officials with the state of Georgia wanted to ensure hunters would be allowed to come to the island to shoot hogs and deer. West, an animal lover, blanched at the idea.

“So those were some of the long negotiations that we had,” Barmeyer says.

West could be a tough dealmaker. “She was very comfortable negotiating with governors and talking to presidents,” says Barmeyer. “She read me as an intermediary.”

By 1978, Barmeyer and other state administrators had managed to finalize a deal with West and her family. Robert Woodruff, the Coke magnate and an outdoorsman, gave \$4 million of his own money, which the state added to \$4 million from taxpayer coffers to purchase Ossabaw — a price that was about half the property’s assessed worth. The deal guaranteed the island could only be used for natural, scientific, and cultural study along with research and education programs and that the island had to be preserved in its natural state.

The day the deal was signed stands out in her distinguished legal career, Barmeyer admits. “It was very exciting.”

Her work for Ossabaw didn’t end there.

In 1990, Barmeyer moved to the private law firm of King & Spalding. One day, a partner called her to a conference room to meet with Lee Adler, who wanted to create a nonprofit public foundation to look after the island.

“He introduced me and said, ‘OK, Patricia, will help you,’” Barmeyer recalls. “And then he left, and so I started helping the foundation.”

She never stopped.

Barmeyer, who recently retired as a partner at King & Spalding, cycled on and off the board of TOIF until the end of 2022 and served as TOIF’s pro bono legal advisor. She did it, Barmeyer says, out of a genuine love for the island.

“My idea of the most wonderful experience in the world,” she says, “is to be on a barrier island beach and look up and down to the horizon in both directions and not see anybody.”

Elizabeth DuBose: Champion of Ossabaw

Elizabeth DuBose first stepped on Ossabaw Island in 1990.

As a masters’ degree student in historic preservation at the Savannah College of Art and Design, DuBose visited the island on a field trip. She toured the Torrey-West Main House (circa 1926) and listened as Eleanor “Sandy” Torrey West held court about the island.

The trip made an impression.

Continued on page 6



Elizabeth DuBose and Patricia Thrower Barmeyer, photo by Robin Gunn

“I was intrigued by this little magical island that not many people had heard of, that did not have a regularly scheduled ferry,” DuBose says. “There were some hurdles to get to it, and that made it almost mystical in a way.”

By the mid 1990s, DuBose found herself thinking about Ossabaw once again when she saw a newspaper ad hiring a director for the Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF).

“I had this vision that I would go to this wild, romantic place every day to work,” DuBose explains.

By that time, DuBose had put together a solid resume: two years at the Owens Thomas House and five years at the City of Savannah.

Ready for a new challenge, she applied for the Ossabaw position. Later, DuBose learned over 400 people had sent in resumes. “Obviously, I never even heard anything.”

A couple of years later, DuBose received a call from a friend. He had met the chair of the Ossabaw Island Foundation, and she needed help. Turns out, the director the foundation hired hadn’t stayed very long. Was DuBose interested in throwing her hat in the ring?

Absolutely.

DuBose, who majored in American studies at Hollins, got the job and quickly learned she would be spending the bulk of her time not on Ossabaw but in the foundation’s office, on the ground floor of a Savannah home. Right from the

start, she had a full plate--the foundation owed several outside organizations reports detailing how the foundation had spent grant money.

“I had to do forensics and look at the check stubs and try to figure out where did the money go, and what was it used for, and write these reports,” she says. “So that was a good nonprofit trial-by-fire.”

That was only the start of challenges DuBose would face over the course of her 25 year career as coordinator and then as Executive Director for the Ossabaw Island Foundation.

Over the years, DuBose has overseen the installation of a wireless network, data collection towers, and a weather station on Ossabaw. She’s helped thousands of visitors coordinate trips to the island. She’s managed the restoration or stabilization of 11 historic buildings.

DuBose’s background in historic preservation has saved the foundation thousands of dollars. “She single-handedly runs the restoration of the historic buildings,” says Patricia Barmeyer, longtime TOIF Trustee.

Of all of her accomplishments as director, DuBose is proudest of the restoration of Ossabaw’s three tabby slave cabins, built between the 1820s and 1840s.

Victor Thompson, Ph.D., an archaeologist at the University of Georgia, regularly brings students to Ossabaw. As the years have passed, DuBose has earned his respect as someone who has a genuine interest in the island’s history. “She has a deep appreciation not just for the big broader ecology of Ossabaw and the Georgia coast, but for the deep stories that it has to tell,” he says.

DuBose is quick to tell Ossabaw newcomers about the history of the people who inhabited the island before West’s mother and father purchased it in 1924. She talks of the migratory North American tribes who wintered on the island by harvesting shellfish, the enslaved people who lived on Ossabaw prior to the Civil War, and their children and grandchildren who later lived there as tenant farmers.

Each year, the foundation hosts a gathering for the descendants of Ossabaw Island. “It’s a great sharing of stories,” DuBose says.

The island regularly hosts writing retreats and events for artists, as well as trips for students, educators, and scientists.

DuBose often greets island visitors personally. She also puzzles over figuring out the logistics of getting things on and off the island. DuBose guesses she spends one third of each work year on Ossabaw.

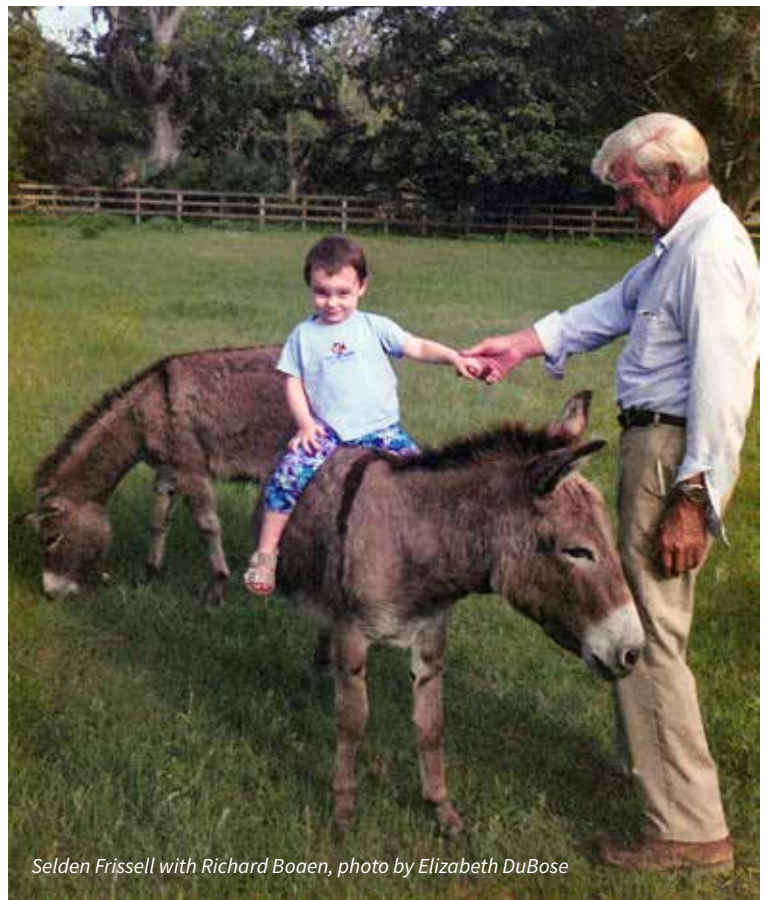
“She does everything from being the visionary to picking up the dirty towels and taking them to the laundry,” Barmeyer says. “She is a nuts and bolts person, but also has the big picture and the vision of Ossabaw.”



Mark Frissell, photo by Stacey Wells

Caring for Ossabaw has long been a family affair. Mark Frissell, DuBose’s husband, who also studied historic preservation at SCAD, volunteered on Ossabaw for over a decade before joining the team as a contractor and now the Island Facilities Manager. He maintains buildings and vehicles, and hosts about half of the overnight groups on Ossabaw. Their daughter Selden Frissell basically grew up on the island.

A favorite of Selden’s Ossabaw memories is begging her parents to buy her a five-pound bag of carrots to take to the island. “I’d bring those, and I’d have like all the donkeys following me around because I was the keeper of the carrots,” she says.



Selden Frissell with Richard Boen, photo by Elizabeth DuBose

Selden says she learned a lot about leadership watching her mom care for Ossabaw for all these years. She points to how during the 2020 legislative season, a member of the Georgia House of Representatives introduced a bill which would have allowed the Department of Natural Resources to sell up to 15 acres of land protected under the Heritage Trust Act.

“She was relentless about that. She’s like a dog with a bone a little bit. When she’s on something, you can’t tear her away.”

The bill died in the state senate— no doubt, in part, due to DuBose’s advocacy.

These days, DuBose is staying busy leading TOIF while managing over 250 days per year of island use, and working with the Trustees on funding the pending renovation of the Torrey-West Main House and grounds.

After all these years, DuBose has never felt tempted to look for a different job. On Ossabaw, there are always new challenges and new adventures.

“The longer I’ve been out here, I find it even more intriguing,” DuBose says. “Because, I think, we are continuing to learn from the island. Ossabaw reveals herself in a very secretive way. As time goes on, it’s true, she reveals more and more.”



Counting Butterflies: 7,356 It's a wrap!

Next time you see a butterfly in your garden, if it's a monarch, a cloudless sulphur, or a Gulf fritillary it might be one of thousands on its way to Ossabaw Island, as a stop on its north-to-south migration. From 2019 - 2022, volunteers on Ossabaw counted 7,356 of these butterflies – part of the Butterflies of the Atlantic Flyway Alliance (BAFA) multi-year survey to document migration behaviors of these species on the Georgia coast.

Butterflies of the Atlantic Flyway Alliance (BAFA) is a collaboration between land management entities and citizen scientists in coastal Georgia. The project was designed to document the movement patterns of three fall-migrating butterfly species, identify habitats and native nectar plants utilized by fall-migrating butterflies, and engage citizen scientists in butterfly conservation. Over ten survey sites were established across eight barrier islands (including Ossabaw) and two mainland sites.

On Ossabaw Island, the survey partnership included the GA Department of Natural Resources, BAFA and TOIF. In 2019, DNR biologists and BAFA organizers selected fifteen survey locations, representing different island ecosystems. These locations were retained for all four years, and were visited each week at about the same time of day during the data collection period. In 2019 – 2022 volunteers traveled the island every Monday for fourteen weeks, counting butterflies at the pre-identified sites. Over the four year project, 163 volunteers spent 1,770 hours counting 7,356 butterflies on Ossabaw: 5,912 Gulf fritillaries (*Agraulis vanillae*), 1,241 cloudless sulfurs (*Phoebis sennae*), and 203 monarchs (*Danaus plexippus*). Ultimately, BAFA findings will be used to guide conservation and management of migratory butterfly habitat on the Georgia coast.

Thank you to Andy Meadows and Codey Elrod with the GADNR for transporting the volunteers to and from and around Ossabaw Island. A special thank you to volunteer Cam Mathis, who served as TOIF's BAFA Coordinator for three years: recruiting and scheduling volunteers, managing the count each week, tabulating the Ossabaw survey data and forwarding it to the BAFA Project Manager for inclusion in the full survey findings.

OSSABAW ISLAND FOUNDATION AND EDUCATION ALLIANCE

25 YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

1998-2023

Sharing and Preserving Ossabaw Island: Georgia's First Heritage Preserve

The Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF) was established in 1994 to manage programming and facilities on Ossabaw Island. Our partnership with the State of Georgia was formalized in 1998 with the signing of the Ossabaw Island Use Agreement. This renewable "contract" gives TOIF exclusive right of use of the North End of Ossabaw Island, and shared use, with the State, of the island's southern portion. TOIF pays an annual use fee to the State of Georgia for this privilege. The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for management of Ossabaw's infrastructure and for "environmentally sound preservation, conservation and management of the Island's ecosystem."



Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West at the Ossabaw Island historical marker dedication (2003).
Photo by Elizabeth DuBose

Ossabaw Island Heritage Preserve

Ossabaw's Heritage Preserve designation was negotiated by the Torrey and West families as a condition of their sale of Ossabaw to the State in 1978.

The Heritage Preserve was designated on June 15, 1978 via an Executive Order by Georgia Governor George Busbee, "...to protect, conserve, and preserve the natural and cultural resources of this Island for the benefit of present and future generations, and that Ossabaw Island shall only be used for natural, scientific, and cultural study, research, and education, and environmentally sound preservation, conservation, and management of the Island's ecosystem."



Elizabeth DuBose talks with students inside a tabby cabin built in 1845.
Photo by Ben Wells

TOIF: Stewards of the Heritage Preserve

The Ossabaw Island Foundation's (TOIF's) first priority and mission is to assure that all who use Ossabaw Island comply with the island's Heritage Preserve requirements of "natural, scientific or cultural education, research or study." Empowered by the Use Agreement, TOIF is tasked with sharing Ossabaw Island's story and resources, while preserving the island for future generations.



OSSABAW ISLAND FOUNDATION AND EDUCATION ALLIANCE

1998

1998 – Present. 5 year Renewable Use Agreement Signed.

On January 25, 1998 the first Use Agreement was signed between the State of Georgia’s Department of Natural Resources and TOIF. Our sixth Use Agreement was signed January 31, 2023.

1998 – 2001. Ossabaw Island Comprehensive Management Plan.

Eight (8) TOIF representatives served on the steering committee and subcommittees of this DNR-led plan, adopted May 1, 2001, “to provide clear direction...in the management and protection of Ossabaw.”

1998 & 2014. National Trust for Historic Preservation – National Preservation Conference Field Workshops.

Showcased Ossabaw’s successes since the island’s designation on the 1996 list of “America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.”



2002

2002 – 2011. Visiting Artists Program.

Hundreds of artists visited Ossabaw Island at no charge, for overnight stays or day trips. Artists continue to visit Ossabaw with independently-organized overnight groups and with TOIF creative trips.

2002 – 2011. Torrey-West Furniture Acquisition.

Purchased from the Torrey and West families original 1926 Torrey-West Estate furnishings, to remain in place.

2002 – 2013. UGA Marine Education and Georgia Youth Science & Technology Center Teacher Training Workshops. Taught coastal ecology and marine biology.



2005-07

***2005 – Present. Ossabaw Island Education Alliance.**

Created as an educational partnership between the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, the Department of Natural Resources, and TOIF.

2006 – Present. The Art and History of Ossabaw Indigo.

Conducted historical research, identified and geno-typed Ossabaw indigo. Developed hands-on workshops and film on the history, economics, and craft of this colonial-era plant-based dye.

***2007 – 2010 Barrier Island Observatory.** Installed data collection towers, wireless internet connectivity, and weather station on Ossabaw Island.

2008

***2008 – 2010. African American Life in the Georgia Lowcountry.**

This 2008 symposium featured original research presented by twelve historians on the lives of African Americans from the colonial period through the 20th century. UGA Press published a book from the conference proceedings in 2010.

***2008 – 2010 Ossabest.**

Hosted three-day stays on Ossabaw Island for public middle school students and teachers. Science and technology projects focused on the coastal ecosystem. A partnership with Armstrong State University and Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools. Funded by a \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

2008 – 2015. Museum Artifact Conservation Course.

Led by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. Funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

25 YEAR TIMELINE

2009-10

***2009 – 2013, and 2017. African American Life in the Georgia Lowcountry Summer Institutes.** Instructed teachers and professors on daily life for 19th-century enslaved workers. Led by Georgia Historical Society, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

***2009 & 2010. Genesis & Ossabaw Island Project Reunions.** Organized reunions for Directors and first-year Genesis members. Filmed and produced two documentaries.

***2009 & 2011. Historical Research on African American Life.** Interpreted the Ossabaw Island story of enslaved Africans and Freedmen tenant farmers. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

***2009 – Present. The Sandy West Ossabaw Fellowship.** Since its inception, five people have been recognized for their creative endeavors related to or inspired by Ossabaw Island.



2011

2011 – Present. Ossabaw Island Writers' Retreat. Hosted independently organized spring and fall workshops featuring instruction and critique by writers in fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry.

2011 – Present. Expanded TOIF Public Education Trips. Lead turtle hatching weekends and day trips. Storytelling New Year's Eve events, creative retreats, "fee-free" Super Museum Sunday and Lift Every Voice African American history day trips.

***2011 – Present. Archaeology Field Schools and Public Days.** Excavated sites across Ossabaw Island for research and university-level field instruction. Hosted by the Universities of Tennessee, Georgia and Pennsylvania, TOIF and DNR.

2013-18

***2013 – Present. Moon River District in south Chatham County.** Created a partnership of six sites (including Ossabaw Island) to increase visitation and awareness, and educate the public about the area's common history and geography.

***2016. Textiles Society of America National Conference.** Held a field trip/workshop on the history of indigo on Ossabaw Island.

***2016 – 2020. Coastal Nature, Coastal Culture: Environmental Histories of the Georgia Coast.** Hosted a symposium featuring original research presented by twelve historians and writers on how 5000 years of people and cultures were influenced by Georgia's 100 mile coastline. Book published by UGA Press. Launched with 15 statewide events including the Decatur Book Festival. Created a virtual six part lecture series with The Learning Center at SCI.

2019-23

2019 – Present. Ossabaw Heritage Day. Annual gathering for descendants, Ossabaw families, OIP and Genesis members. A day of friendship, history and remembrance.

2019 – 2022. Butterflies of the Atlantic Flyway Alliance survey. 132 citizen-scientist volunteers counted over 7,000 migrating butterflies for the four year, 14-week survey in partnership with the DNR.

2020 – Present. Advocating for the Heritage Preserve Act. Sounded the alarm and defeated GA HB906 that threatened Georgia's Heritage Preserve Act. Worked with a network of statewide partners and President Jimmy Carter to protect Georgia's Heritage Preserves.

2022 – 2023. Island visits reach capacity. Island use reaches full capacity with 268 program days and 2900 visits in FY 2021-2022. The 2023 island calendar is full.



BEFORE



AFTER

Photos by Elizabeth DuBose

Preserving the Built Environment

Since 1998, TOIF has restored or stabilized eleven historic buildings on Ossabaw Island. Project funds (\$4.5 million) were raised from private and public foundations, federal grants and individual donations. Buildings are used to further our mission: as housing, teaching, and laboratory spaces; for photography/darkroom processing; and for historic interpretation of 19th and 20th century life on Ossabaw Island and the Georgia coast.

- **2002 - Club House (Circa 1886)** Full rehabilitation. Received regional and state historic preservation awards.
- **2002 - Torrey-West House (1926)** Restored terra-cotta roof. Received regional historic preservation award.
- **2005 - Tabbies #1, #2, #3, and the Smoke House (Circa 1820-1840)** Full restoration on Tabbies 1 and 2; stabilization on Tabby 3 and Smoke House. Received Save America's Treasures national restoration grant
- **2010 - Boarding House (1918)** Full rehabilitation. Received regional and state historic preservation awards.
- **2015 - Abattoir (Circa 1960)** Adaptive reuse to Field Lab and Dark Room.
- **2015 - Tower House (1979)** Replaced metal roof.
- **2015 - Torrey-West Shop (Circa 1926)** Replaced metal roof.
- **2018 - Little Torrey House (Circa 1955)** Replaced roof.

Torrey-West House Preservation and Renovation

Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West's death on January 17, 2021 (her 108th birthday) ended the Torrey-West life estate. As stipulated in our Use Agreement, TOIF took responsibility for the Torrey-West house and grounds, in the same way TOIF provides access, maintenance and use of the northern half of Ossabaw Island. TOIF has been applying for Georgia Outdoor Stewardship grants, and other funds to begin the renovation of the buildings for island users. The project will expand the capacity of Ossabaw by doubling the overnight accommodations and quadrupling the meeting/classroom space capacity on the island, while preserving three historic structures.



Photos by Tim Lancaster



BEFORE

Photo by Elizabeth DuBose



AFTER

Photo by Bryan Stovall

Adopt-A-Donkey!

Donate Here:



Photo by Jeannette Beranger

New Ossabaw donkey “adopters”
November 2022 – April 2023

Berry Atwood	Jan Kapoor
Kern Baker	James Kello
Edward Benton	Christine Kiley
Jennifer Bessick	Anastasia Kontos
R. Bloeser	Dana Lee
Catherine Bowman	Sam Lynah
Paul Brechin	Mary Madden
Sharon Brooks	Gayle Major
Pam Bullock	Jonathan Mann
Amy Burr	Lori Markiton
Cheryl Chip	Cam Mathis
Bradford Christman	Sandra McCoy
Lynn Copeland	Carol McCurdy
Anthony Costrini	Mike McGeehin
LuAnn Craighton	Margot Meyerhoff
Robert Daniels	Rebecca Moore
Philip Davis	Sheena Myers
Emily Dickinson	Connie Nester
Heather Dolinar	Nancy Oosterhoudt
Helen Downing	Clayton Osbun
Marla Dugan	Ava Pandiani
Joy Dunigan	Eric Parrish
John Ernest	Janet Parrish
Carl Espy	Clifford Pierce
Jennifer Fischer	David Poyer
L. Flieman	Ann Pursley
Ed Fogarty	Kimberly Ridley
Michele Folta	Betty Rule
Cindy Fuller	Liza Rule
Bonnie Futrell	Mark Saussy
Joyce Garner	Christine Savage
Lee Garner	Michael Schroeder
Dorinda Dallmeyer	Taylor Self
Jonathan Goldstein	Dean Smith
Chris Gooby	Sally Speed
Timothy Haeussler	Mary Sprague
Amy Hankins	Dougless Strickland
Carol Harper	Bonnie Terrell
Charlene Harrell	Marion Thomas
Pamela Harte	Lynn Townsend
Jennifer Hicks	John Vian
Bethany Hofmann	Patricia Vrobel
Laura Ingle	Jennifer Wenberg
Mary Isele	Anna West
Edward Johnson	Lisa White
Owen Johnson	Katie Wiggins
Joyce Jones	Sara Williams
Jonas Jordan	Noel Wright
Robert Joyner	



Photo courtesy of Torrey West Family

Thank you
President Carter
for helping preserve
Ossabaw Island

Video footage of Mrs. West recorded by Max Ramming in
2002, interview with Kate Wilttrout, *Savannah Morning News*:



The Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF) and all who love Ossabaw Island thank President Jimmy Carter for his vital contribution to preserving Georgia's third-largest barrier island, located in Chatham County just south of Savannah.

The late Mrs. Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West frequently credited Carter for his two-part role in her family's decision in the 1970s to sell Ossabaw to the state of Georgia, instead of pursuing other potential stewards: creating the Heritage Preserve Act of 1975 and encouraging her family to sell the island to the state.



Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West discusses the sale of Ossabaw Island to the state of Georgia with President Jimmy Carter. Photo courtesy of Torrey West Family

"The reason that we sold to the state was Jimmy Carter," said Mrs. West in a 2002 video interview. "And he was the only one that came down and said 'you tell me what should be done.' You know everybody else said 'you read this, you do that' and sat in the living room and didn't even go out and see anything. So, we sold to the State of Georgia."

In 1975, Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter signed into law the State Heritage Preserve Act. "Ossabaw was the first acquisition in the Georgia Heritage Trust that Governor Carter had started," said Mrs. West.

The Georgia Heritage Trust Act of 1975 (O.C.G.A. 12-3-70) was established to "preserve certain real property... that exhibits unique natural characteristics, special historical significance, or particular recreational value." Under this act, certain properties are designated as heritage preserves.

In the years leading up to the island's sale, the Torrey-West family faced uncertainty about which of the many possible stewards for Ossabaw would be the best fit. By this time, Carter was our 39th U.S. President. Yet, he continued to work for Georgians, encouraging Mrs. West that the state's proposal would be the best solution for Ossabaw's future.

Ossabaw's Heritage Preserve designation was negotiated by the Torrey and West families as a condition of their sale of Ossabaw to the State of Georgia in 1978.

The Ossabaw Island Heritage Preserve was designated on June 15, 1978 via an Executive Order by Georgia Governor George Busbee, "...to protect, conserve, and preserve the natural and cultural resources of this Island for the benefit of present and future generations, and that Ossabaw Island shall only be used for natural, scientific, and cultural study, research, and education, and environmentally sound preservation, conservation, and management of the Island's ecosystem."

In 2020, President Carter went to bat for Ossabaw Island one more time. When Georgia House Bill 906 threatened the protections for all Heritage Preserve properties, Carter sent a letter opposing the bill to Lt. Governor Geoff Duncan for distribution to the Georgia Legislature.

"That commitment [holding land in trust for the benefit of present and future generations of Georgians] was an essential element in the negotiation of the acquisition of Ossabaw Island from Eleanor Torrey West and the Torrey family by Gov. George Busbee," wrote Carter. "HB 906... would breach the commitments made to Mrs. West and many others who have conveyed land to the State as Heritage Preserves. I urge you to halt any further consideration of HB 906 by the Senate."

Elizabeth DuBose, TOIF Executive Director, said, "With every group that visits Ossabaw, we make sure to share President Carter's contribution to preserving the island. Mrs. West trusted him, at a time when it seemed there were few trustworthy players in the process."

"Three years ago he took the time to lend his voice to protecting what he signed into law in 1975, preventing arbitrary private development on Ossabaw Island and over 120 other Heritage Preserve properties, from Amicalola Falls to Providence Canyon to Little Tybee."

"In the grand scheme of things, Ossabaw Island is a tiny dot on the globe. President Carter's contributions will continue to resonate on the broader global stage for decades to come. On Ossabaw Island we will never forget what he did for our little corner of the world."

*Thank you President Carter,
may you be surrounded by love
and care in your final days.*

Ossabaw Fund Contributors

Thank you for your donations to the Ossabaw Island Foundation's Ossabaw Fund, November 2022 – April 2023.

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TODAY:**





Viridescence: Paintings by Bellamy Murphy

June 16 to August 14

Reception Fri. June 16, 6:00 - 8:00pm

Location Gallery

251 Bull St., Savannah

Gallery hours: M - F 10:00am - 5:00pm, Sat. 11:00am - 3:00pm

A benefit for the Ossabaw Island Foundation.

All the greens of Ossabaw Island rendered in “Viridescence “ by the talented brushwork of Bellamy Murphy will be displayed for the very special installation at Location Gallery in Savannah. Gallery profits from the run of show are donated to Ossabaw Island Foundation.

Artist’s statement:

My art training can be best described as the story of how I grew up... born an artist into a family of “fishaholics.”

My grandparents always had a place on the water. Back then, you needn’t be a person of means to have waterfront. It was simply the most important thing for my grandfather that his grandchildren, there were six of us, learn to love the river and the environs. I could gig, throw a shrimp net, crab, fish and swim before I could ride a bike. My mother was a true naturalist. It was not unusual for a beach walk to be an all day affair. She would have us examine every little shell to notice every nook and cranny. She had names for every one;

some I think she made up. We spent many an hour in the lowcountry mud alongside the oyster beds and salt marsh.

The summer I turned eighteen, I dismissed college. My high hopes for an art education vanished with my parents’ divorce. I took to traveling and being more and more inspired by life itself; and, in some form or another, I have been a working artist for more than thirty years.

Scan to view work and purchase:



Ossabaw Island: Personal encounters with the Georgia coast Paintings by Raven Waters

June 22 - August 25

Receptions Thu. June 22, 2:30 - 3:30pm and 6 - 7:30pm

The Gallery at The Learning Center, SCI

3025 Bull St., Savannah

Gallery Hours: M - F 8:30 - 5:00

A benefit for the Ossabaw Island Foundation

Artist’s Statement

For six years Ossabaw Island has been my muse. Multi-layered and mesmerizing, it never fails to bring me inspiration and show me love. Mostly I work in oil alla prima, capturing a fleeting yet everlasting mood and atmosphere that reflects my everlasting admiration for this wild and captivating place.



Artwork by **Craig Rubadoux**

2023 Ossabaw Island Three Little Pig Roasts Benefiting the Ossabaw Island Foundation

Pig Roast-to-Go

Friday, October 20, 11:00am - 3:00pm

During Pig Roast weekend, enjoy an Ossabaw-inspired take-away barbecue on the mainland! Order a Pig Roast-to-Go for two or six and take it to your home, office, the beach or a downtown square for an Ossabaw-style feast.

Barbecue Supper on the Lawn

Saturday, October 21, 2:30 - 7:00pm

Barbecue Supper on the Lawn

Sunday, October 22, 2:30 - 7:00pm

Limited to 60 guests per party, our “Little Pig Roasts” are held on the lawn and grounds of the Torrey-West Estate on Ossabaw Island, overlooking Ossabaw Sound. Each gathering features a delicious spread of barbecue and Southern side dishes, craft beer inspired by Ossabaw Island, wines, live music from our favorite Ossabaw musicians, and great company with other Ossabaw Island supporters.

Sponsorships are available now:

Scan here to pay or email
robin@ossabawisland.org to be invoiced:



Order Pig Roast to-go for
two or six from Erica Davis
Lowcountry in Savannah, GA:



Bronze work by Gay Gillies



Ossabaw Island Art Auction: A benefit for the Ossabaw Island Foundation

Summer Gallery Exhibition of Donated Art: July 3 – 28, 2023

Fine Arts Gallery – Fine Arts Hall

Georgia Southern University Armstrong Campus in Savannah

11935 Abercorn Street (Fine Arts Hall faces Science Drive)

Reception: July 20, 2023 4 - 6pm

Fine Arts Gallery – Fine Arts Hall

Meet many of the artists and see the Ossabaw-inspired work that they have donated to this auction.

Ossabaw Island Online Art Auction

July 4 - August 4, 2023

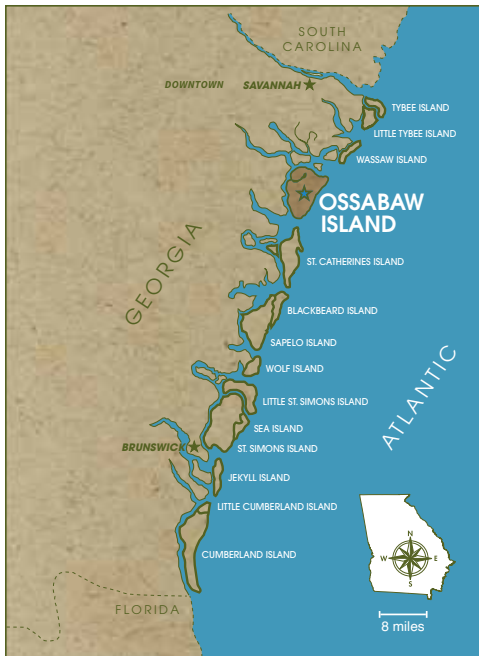
All works in the Summer Gallery Exhibition will be included in the online auction. Auction will be live on July 4, scan here to preview!





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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