

OSSABAW ORACLE

A Publication of the Ossabaw Island Foundation

July 2019

School is Out(side)! K-12 Education on Ossabaw Island

Photo by Elizabeth DuBose



"Ossabaw Island is very interesting as I got to know more about the history and culture of the island. I also enjoyed petting the donkeys as I love animals, and I had fun on the hike being surrounded by nature. It gave me a chance to experience fully being in wildlife and nature rather than on my phone." – Nishka Mirchandani

"The fallen trees were fun to climb.... The branches are cool swords by the way. The two best parts of the trip was the boat ride and petting the donkeys." – Edgar Cruz

"I also experienced some animals I thought I would never see as a kid. I saw donkeys which was awesome, and I saw a wild boar, the part where I saw the boar was special to me because I was one of the few people to see it. I learned a lot of history about the island and how it took a lot of work to keep Ossabaw the amazing place it is today." – Samuel Wise

"I was glad to go on this trip to see all the wonderful things God has created. The animals were so friendly and the sun was so calm. It was one of the best experiences I had dealing with nature." – Jonathan Santana

Oglethorpe Charter School Students

From January through June 2019, over one-third of Ossabaw Island visitors were K-12 students, and their teachers, leaders and chaperones. Student visitors came from as close as southside Savannah, and as far away as the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The K-12 visitors included Boy Scout troops, Waldorf students from Academe of the Oaks in Atlanta, and international high school exchange students, living with families and attending public high schools in Georgia as part of AFS Intercultural Programs USA and Greenheart Exchange. The exchange students were from Armenia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Spain, Thailand, and Ukraine.

A little closer to home, 35 eighth graders from Oglethorpe Charter School in Savannah visited as part of the school's Marine Science program. The semester-long course integrates lessons on coastal ecology and marine science into the required Georgia Standards of Excellence for mathematics, science, history and language arts.

"Part of the 8th grade curriculum is Georgia history," said Marine Science program director Ben Wells, "and part of that is the Georgia barrier islands. We augment the [standardized] content with Marine Science-related content."

"Our field trip was focused on barrier island living, especially the enslaved African people and their lives after emancipation--their lives on Ossabaw Island. We talked about their journey from Ossabaw to Pin Point," an oystering community in Chatham County founded in the 1890s by Freedmen from Ossabaw Island.

"After the history tour, the kids had so much fun playing tag and hide-and-seek, climbing the trees that came down during the hurricanes, and of course petting and feeding the donkeys," said Elizabeth DuBose. "They seemed to love everything about Ossabaw. There was no rocking on the porch for this group!"

This is the second year that Wells has brought students to Ossabaw Island. "It's easy and it's there and it's amazing, so why not bring them?" he said.



Photo by Robert S. Cooper

AFS students enjoy lunch

Revealing the Voices & Mystery of Ossabaw Island

Executive Director's Note



Photo by eThree Media

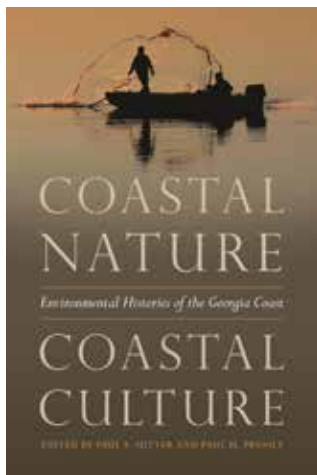
We have migrated south!

After twenty-one years of office space in downtown Savannah, the Ossabaw Island Foundation and Education Alliance have migrated south. Or more appropriately, moved our office to the Armstrong Center, on the Armstrong Campus of Georgia Southern University, on Savannah's southside. Our downtown Coastal Georgia Center office was leased by the City of Savannah. The Ossabaw Island Foundation and Education Alliance are grateful to the hospitality provided at the Coastal Georgia Center by Savannah State University (2018-19) and Georgia Southern (2005-2018), who managed the Coastal Georgia Center during our time there. Thank you to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia for providing our office space. Our new Armstrong Center location is a ten-minute drive to the Ossabaw/ state dock on Burnside Island, so we are closer to Ossabaw Island.

This unexpected move caused me to revisit the past twenty-one years of the Ossabaw Island Foundation and Education Alliance, invoice by invoice, bank statement by bank statement; and wade through decades of release/hold harmless forms and correspondence. Ultimately we shredded almost a thousand pounds of invoices, bank statements and duplicate files. Over the years we had filed away lots of "important papers." It was freeing to look at a paper or a file and realize it was no longer needed. Away to the shred pile it went! Despite our great paper purge, we still moved boxes upon boxes of letters, minutes, annual reports, plans, grant applications and reports, books, photographs, slides, artifacts, and Ossabaw art. Reading all of the old files made us wonder what we really understood about some of the stories we have been sharing through the years. To that end we have started re-interviewing Ossabaw folks and asking new questions about Ossabaw Island. During our recent Descendants' Heritage Day Trip in May I shared some of our new understandings of Ossabaw's history with our guests. Thanks to our archives we continue to share the voices and mystery of Ossabaw Island.

Elizabeth DuBose
Executive Director
Ossabaw Island Foundation

Coastal Nature, Coastal Culture Book Events in 2019



Coastal Nature, Coastal Culture Panel Discussion

AJC Decatur Book Festival

Saturday, August 31, 2019 | 5:30p.m.

First Baptist Church of Decatur | 308 Clairemont Ave.

Free and open to the public.



presented by



Paul S. Sutter, co-editor: "Coastal Nature, Coastal Culture: Co-existence?"

Janisse Ray, contributor. "The Majestic Scene East-ward': Discovering a Sense of Place on the Georgia Coast."

Moderated by Paul M. Pressly, co-editor.

Panel is sponsored by the Ossabaw Island Foundation & Education Alliance.

Interpreting the Human Geography of the Georgia Coast

A lecture by Paul M. Pressly, Ph. D.

Thursday, September 26, 2019

6p.m. Lecture | 7p.m. Book Signing

A.W. Jones Heritage Center Event Hall

610 Beachview Drive, Saint Simons Island

At first glance, the Georgia coast seems to be a place where nature reigns. But on second look, a deep and diverse human history emerges. Nature and culture have co-existed and interacted across five millennia of human history on our coast, and those interactions have shaped the Georgia coast as we know it today. Successive communities that include Native Americans, Spanish missionaries, rice planters, enslaved Africans and freedmen, lumbermen, vacationing industrialists, pulp and paper

manufacturers, nature writers and environmental activists have developed distinctive relationships with the environment and produced distinctive coastal landscapes.

Pressly's presentation is based on *Coastal Nature, Coastal Culture: Environmental Histories of the Georgia Coast* (UGA Press, 2018). He was a contributor to the book and was its co-editor.

Sponsored by the Coastal Georgia Historical Society and Ossabaw Island Foundation & Education Alliance.

Free and open to the public. Advanced registration preferred at coastalgeorgiahistory.org/date/lecture-and-book-signing or by phone (912) 634-7090.

Books available for purchase.



Visit Ossabaw Island in 2019!

Photo by Ben Wells

How to Register: The following trips are open to the public. Fees vary; see relevant websites for details. To register for all Ossabaw Island Foundation-sponsored events, visit ossabawisland.net or 912-344-3900. Pre-registration required.

Be Creative on Ossabaw: Two-night Retreat

Tue. July 30 – Thu. August 1

Paint, sketch, write, or take photos on Ossabaw Island. Let the island be your muse. Spend two nights and experience the island's inspiring features of marsh vistas, maritime forests, wildlife sightings. Bring your own art supplies. Hosted by the Ossabaw Island Foundation.

Turtle Hatching Two-night Weekend

Fri. August 2 – Sun. August 4

Watch Georgia DNR Sea Turtle Conservation Program interns as they inventory loggerhead turtle nests for eggs and live hatchlings. In 2019 Ossabaw Island (and the entire Georgia coast) is having record-breaking turtle nests. Led by coastal ecologist/naturalist John "Crawfish" Crawford and hosted by the Ossabaw Island Foundation.

Lift Every Voice: Ossabaw Island African American History Fee-Free Day

Sat. August 17

This "fee free" trip is a morning walking tour of the North End plantation site, including three restored tabby cabins built for and by enslaved people as their housing. Learn about Hercules and Betty in the 1770s, the Bond brothers in the 1850s and 1860s, and their descendants, the founders of the Pin Point community in the 1880s. Plan on visiting Pin Point Heritage Museum after returning from Ossabaw Island. Hosted by the Ossabaw Island Foundation.

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

Sun. September 22

Elizabeth DuBose shares the history of Ossabaw indigo. Indigo expert Donna Hardy provides instruction on creating fresh leaf dye vats and guides participants through the dyeing process. Hosted by the Ossabaw Island Foundation.

18th Annual Ossabaw Island Pig Roast & Art Auction

Sat. October 26 NOTE: This is a new date!

The only annual fundraiser hosted by TOIF. Held at the Torrey West Estate on Ossabaw. Funds raised go to support TOIF's management of programming and facilities on the island. Sponsorships available now. General Admission tickets on sale September 1.

Ossabaw Island Writers' Retreat Fall Weekend

Fri. November 1 – Sun. November 3

Writing workshops, lectures, readings, one-on-one mentoring by nationally recognized writing faculty and ghost stories are the highlights of this Halloween weekend workshop. Directed by poet and writing professor Tony Morris. Visit ossabawwritersretreat.org or 912-344-3123.

Georgia Conservancy Volunteer Weekend

Fri. November 8 - Sun. November 10

Support the preservation of Ossabaw Island by giving back with some elbow grease. Yard work, marsh clean-up, scrubbing and cleaning island structures. Hosted by the Georgia Conservancy. Visit georgiaconservancy.org or 404-876-2900.

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

Tues. December 31, 2019 – Wed. January 1, 2020

Spend New Year's Eve on Ossabaw Island on an overnight trip, with tales of Ossabaw Island around the fire pit after dinner. Plus, a midnight champagne toast to welcome 2020. Hosted by the Ossabaw Island Foundation.

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

Welcoming home the Descendants of Ossabaw from 1760-1980

Two centuries of Ossabaw Island's living history gathered under the trees near the Club House on May 11 for the first Ossabaw Island Descendants Heritage Day Trip. The day brought together members of nine family groups who trace their roots back to Ossabaw—people who lived, worked, or owned land on Ossabaw Island between 1760 and 1980. Their ancestors were tenant farmers, enslaved people, land owners, freedmen, hunting guides, island managers, and a builder. For some of the fifty-plus attendees it was a return visit to Ossabaw. For others it was their first trip after a lifetime of hearing about the island.

After a farm-to-table catered lunch (featuring Nell Torrey's Mystery Cake for dessert), a walking tour of the North End included stories shared by guests of their childhood memories.

Three former employees of Ossabaw, all cousins, enjoyed rocking on the Club House porch sharing Ossabaw stories. Roger Parker (1953 – 2016), Tommy Parker (1968 – 1974) and Arthur Graves II (1976) were hired to work on the island by their uncles/great uncles Arthur and Eugene Graves, who were island managers from the 1950s to 1980s.

A tour of the Torrey-West House was of particular interest to eight descendants of Farquhar McRae, the general contractor who built the Main House compound in the mid 1920s. McRae built many grand homes in Savannah in the early 20th century; according to his three grandchildren on the trip, he was especially proud of his work on Ossabaw Island. One of McRae's granddaughters recalled coming over to Ossabaw as a child with her grandfather and playing while he supervised the construction of the "Little House," built in the 1950s.

On a tour of Middle Place, Hanif Haynes (descendant of the Bond family), LaTika Lee, (Amos Johnson,) and Sandra Battise (enslaved people from South End Plantation) led the group in an impromptu ceremony of remembrance of the ancestors. As water was poured on the ground, descendants called out the names of their ancestors to honor those who had lived, worked and died on the island.

Although Sandy West was not able to attend, her family was represented by great niece Torrey Kingry and Torrey's son Emory. Torrey's grandfather was Bill Torrey, older brother of Sandy West.

Savannah-based freelance journalist Orlando Montoya interviewed and made audio recordings of four former island residents or their children and grandchildren. These recordings will be archived and available for research and to provide improved understanding of Ossabaw's history and its place in the larger United States historical landscape.



Ossabaw descendants enjoy lunch prepared by Lesley Varnadore and Roger Parker.



Terrence Gross, grandson of Cyrus "Jimbo" Martin who lived and worked on Ossabaw Island for over six decades, gave his wife, three sons and cousin a personalized tour of Tabby Cabin #2, where he spent many summers in the 1970s with his grandfather.

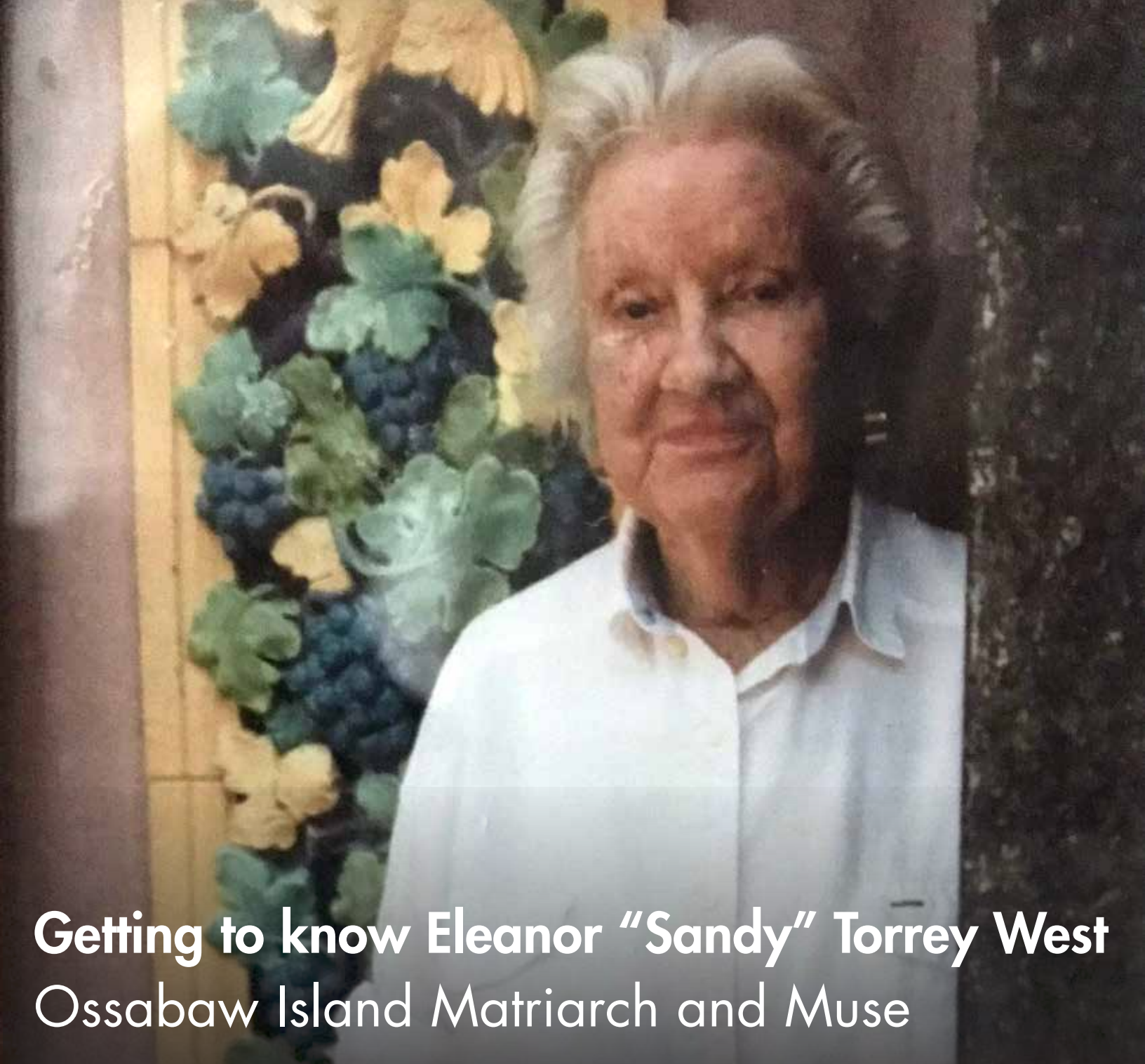
Families who attended the Descendants Heritage Day Trip:

- Descendants of the Morel family, who owned all or part of Ossabaw from 1760 to 1916.
- Descendants of the Bond family, enslaved people and freedmen at Middle Place on Ossabaw from the 1850s – 1890s, and founders/residents of Pin Point, Georgia.
- Descendants of Amos Johnson and Rachel McKiver, enslaved people and freed people at Middle Place and North End Plantations, in the 1860s and 1870s.
- Descendants of freedmen at Coffee Bluff, where Ossabaw Island freedmen emigrated in the late 1860s.
- Descendant of the Sams family, enslaved people and freedmen on Ossabaw and employed on Ossabaw in the 1930s, and residents of Pin Point, Georgia.
- Descendants of Cyrus "Jimbo" Martin, who lived and worked on Ossabaw Island from 1913 (at age 13) until the 1980s.
- Descendants of the Torrey family, Ossabaw Island owners from 1924 – 1978.
- Descendants of Farquhar McRae, builder of the Torrey-West House and buildings in 1924 – 1926, and the Little House in the 1950s.
- Descendants of brothers Arthur and Eugene Graves, island managers for the Torrey family from the 1950s to the 1980s.

If you are a descendant of Ossabaw Island, you're invited to join us on the next Ossabaw Descendants Heritage Day Trip in 2020. We can also arrange family history day trips for large descendant family groups.

Every year we learn more about the people of Ossabaw Island. Send us your family documents and photos to become part of the Ossabaw Island Collection at the Georgia Historical Society.

Photography by Ben Wells



Getting to know Eleanor “Sandy” Torrey West

Ossabaw Island Matriarch and Muse

No one in the last 125 years has 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’s life estate “ownership” of the Torrey West Estate continues, despite her no longer living on Ossabaw Island. In January 2019, Mrs. West celebrated her 106th birthday. She lives in Savannah with her dog, Toby.

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 special section provides a wider look at her long and active life.



Eleanor Torrey's Early life in Savannah

The Greenwich Years



In 1917, Dr. Harry Norton Torrey and Nell Ford Torrey of Grosse Pointe, Michigan purchased 100-acre Greenwich Plantation in Thunderbolt, Georgia, adjacent to Bonaventure Cemetery. They purchased Greenwich as their winter retreat. Many wealthy northern families including the Torreys bought large homes and land tracts in coastal Georgia in the early 20th century, seeking escape from the brutal northern winters. Harry Torrey was a brain surgeon; his wife Nell was an heiress whose grandfather, John Baptiste Ford, created the first plate glass in the United States, and founded Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, Libby Owens Ford Glass Company, and Wyandotte Chemical Company (now part of BASF).

At the time of the Greenwich purchase, Harry and Nell's daughter Eleanor and son Bill were four and six years old, respectively.

According to a Savannah newspaper article about the sale, the property included the elaborately furnished main house, a six-car garage, a laundry building, a superintendent's office and cottage, a gate lodge, a chauffeur's cottage, other servants' quarters, an artificial pond, and formal gardens.

In January 1923, a fire destroyed the main house, a three-story, 40-room structure built in approximately 1899 - 1900. In the fire, Eleanor (age 10), and her nurse, jumped from the second floor window to escape.

Instead of rebuilding at Greenwich, the Torreys purchased Ossabaw Island in 1924 and built what is now referred to as the Main House, or the Torrey-West House, on Ossabaw's North End. The Main House was designed by renowned Savannah architect Henrik Wallin; the builder was Farquhar McRae. Wallin and McRae were the architect and builder for other Savannah-area noted buildings, including the Armstrong House. Construction of the Main House was completed in 1926.

Sources:

Historic Bonaventure Cemetery, by Amie Marie Wilson and Mandi Dale Johnson

Ossabaw Island, by Ann Foskey

worldcat.org Ford, J. B. (John Baptiste) 1811-1903 section.



Sandy West – Writer

Did you know that Eleanor “Sandy” West is an award-winning book author?

Pictured: *The God of the Hinge* Book Cover Illustration

Maria Bosomworth and William Rodgers (Beehive Press, 1976) is a picture book for children of all ages, telling the story of an Ossabaw piglet “born in the deep, wild woods” of Ossabaw Island, “where she listened to the soft patter of oak leaves, the crackle of palmetto and the sweep sound of the wind.”

Separated from her mother at only four weeks old, Maria finds love with some unlikely creatures: first, with a group of “people who stop” who rescued her from Ossabaw’s beach; and soon after with William Rodgers, a long-eared, long-tailed, giant-footed puppy. The “true story of their love and friendship [was] written and photographed by Eleanor Torrey West.” The book won an award of excellence in the 1976 Southern Books Competition sponsored by the Southeastern Library Association.

In fewer than 1000 words, with 30 photo illustrations, the 70-page *Maria Bosomworth and William Rodgers* offers a glimpse into the heart of Sandy, and a sidelong glance at the island itself in the years just before the sale of Ossabaw Island. More than a children’s book, *Maria Bosomworth...* is a timeless fable of finding love in unexpected places.

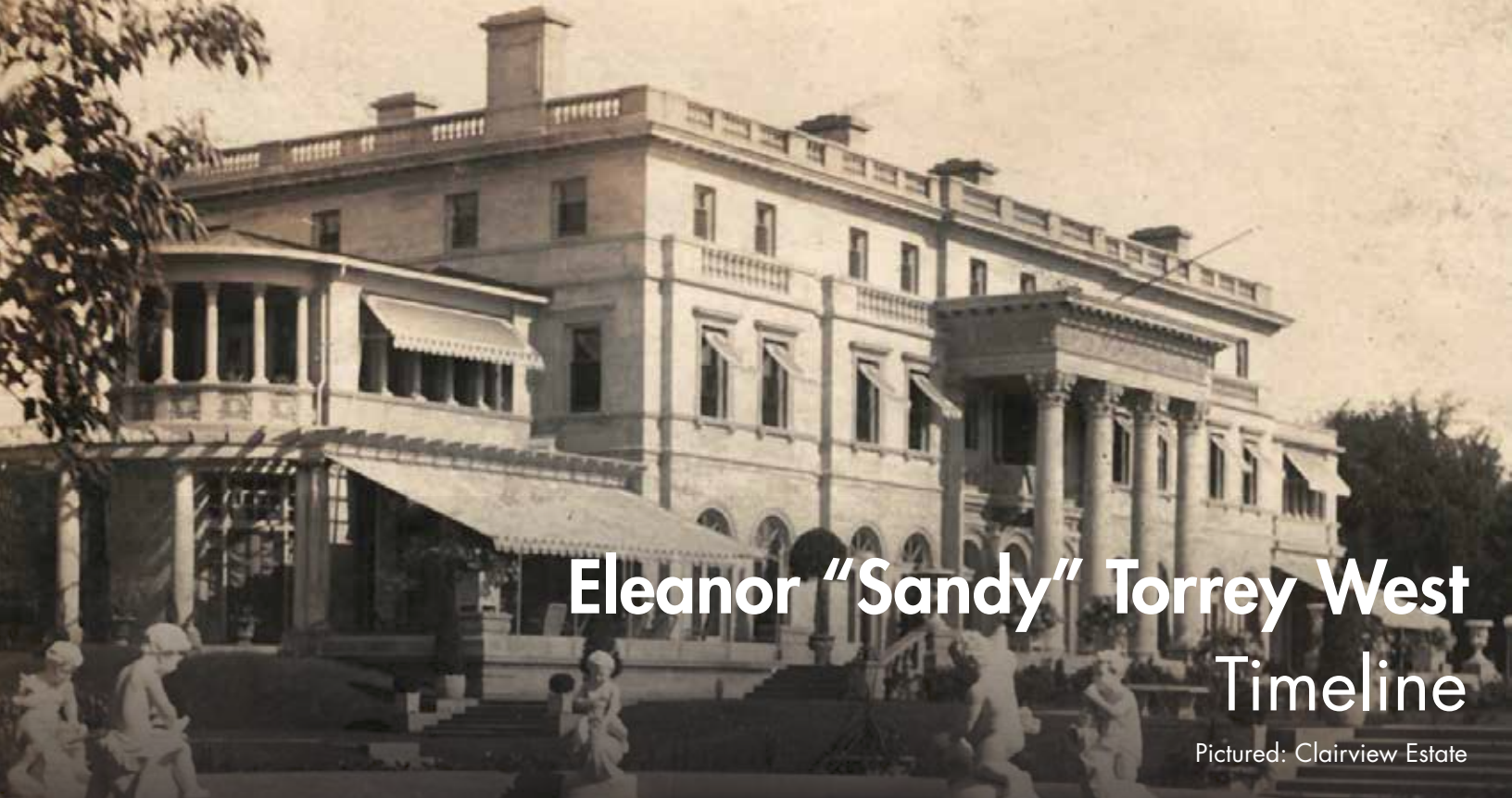


In 2006, Sandy joined forces with Elizabeth “Rusty” Pool, her longtime friend, former sister-in-law, and travel companion, to write their joint memoir, *The God of the Hinge: Sojourns in Cloud Cuckoo Land* (Harbor House, 2006). The first-person account begins with their meeting in 1935—two debutantes in their early 20s in New York’s Grand Central Station. They take their first trip together in 1941—a day trip to Windsor, Ontario, a short drive from their homes in Detroit. Over the decades, they travel together almost yearly. On that first trip they hear the song “You and I” many times, which became their name for their travel persona.

As the duo of “You-and-I” makes trips to Jamaica, New Orleans, Santa Fe, Boston, Charleston, and inevitably Savannah, among many destinations, they become aware of a third companion on their journeys, both physical and metaphysical. Revealed in sections written separately, responding to each other as if in correspondence, *The God of the Hinge* is officially written as a missive to Sandy’s oldest granddaughter Melanie. Episodes of adventures lead them to old bookstores and libraries, on beaches in South Carolina and Key West, and back again and again to Georgia. Packed into fewer than 250 pages are tales of Greek mythology, the Big Bang, women’s marches in Washington DC, quotes of classic poetry, and the story of the sale of Ossabaw Island.

Through these expansive narratives the reader is offered a rare image of the young woman who is Eleanor Torrey, and her metamorphosis into Sandy West, the muse of Ossabaw Island.

Books available for purchase at ossabawisland.org



Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West

Timeline

Pictured: Clairview Estate



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.

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.

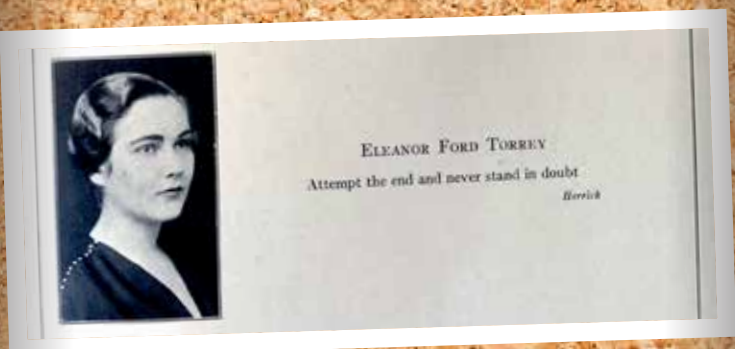
1937 – 1944 Eleanor and John Shallcross, now living in Detroit, have three children: Michael (1937), Gillian (1940), and John (1944). They visit Ossabaw annually during this period. The marriage ends in divorce.

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.



Eleanor T. West

Maria



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. Other honoraria over the years include awards from Georgia Humanities Council (Governor's Award), the Georgia Council for the Arts, and The Garden Club of America.

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 resides with her dog Toby.

Sources and photo credits:

Betsy Cain

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)

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

Maria Bosomworth and William Rodgers, by Eleanor Torrey West (1976)

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





Photo by Fran Lapolla

Ossabaw Island's donkeys: Justin West tells their story.

The eight donkeys living on Ossabaw Island are some of the most beloved of all Ossabaw Island creatures. They are the remaining members of several generations of Sicilian donkeys who first came to Ossabaw in 1965. By 1998 the original herd had grown to approximately 150 animals and were impacting the ecosystem of the island. At the request of the State of Georgia, most of the donkeys were rehomed to families on the mainland, selected by Mrs. West and Roger Parker. The eight donkeys that remain are carriers of equine infectious anemia and are quarantined on Ossabaw for life.

In June, TOIF talked to Justin West, youngest child of Eleanor “Sandy” Torrey West, about the donkeys’ decades-long history on Ossabaw.

How the donkeys first came to Ossabaw Island:

“[The donkeys] were a present for me, years and years ago. I was 12. It was Christmas morning. We always had a big Christmas tree from the island that reached all the way to the ceiling in the Main House. Under the tree was an envelope [for me.] I opened the envelope and it was a clue. It led me to different places in the Main House, and then to the Club House. The last clue was to the barn near the Boarding House. We all went down to the barn and there were three donkeys. My mother and father [Clifford West] had gone down to Bull Island [South Carolina] in our blue Volkswagen minibus and loaded them in the bus and drove them back to Savannah.

“There were three original donkeys. Then we thought, ‘that’s not going to be good for the gene pool.’ Within a year or so we got [eight more]. I don’t think they were from Bull Island.”

Controlling the growing donkey population:

[By mid-1975, the original herd of 11 donkeys had grown to 69 animals.]

“The donkeys were populating the island at an alarming rate. Bill McCort from Penn State suggested that they might be interested in vasectomizing the donkeys [to stop the donkey expansion]. We rounded up a bunch of the donkeys. [A vasectomy clinic was set up] in Middle Place field. A bunch of vet students came down from Penn State. McCort was interested in animal behavior; the vasectomies didn’t change how the donkeys behaved. This was when Arthur [Graves] was the superintendent; Eugene [Graves] and Roger [Parker] and the rest were all there too. The vasectomies worked, except they missed a couple of the donkeys.

“I had grown up on the island and reached that age where nothing surprised me. It was just another day on Ossabaw--a bunch of Penn State vets with their masks on, and their instruments, operating a field hospital.”



Photo by Fran Lapolla

Justin’s personal connection with the donkeys:

“I did feel ownership of the donkeys; in the sense they were always referred to as ‘Justin’s donkeys.’ I remember my mother asked my permission to do the vasectomies because they were ‘my’ donkeys. At some point, like everything on Ossabaw, they became the island’s.

“When I’ve told people the story of the donkeys, people who have never been to the island don’t believe it--it sounds made-up. People who have been [to Ossabaw], there’s so much to absorb that it just fits in with the alligators and the snakes. It’s a bit of an Alice in Wonderland situation—you don’t really question the fact there are hedgehogs playing croquet because everything else is so unusual.

“I’ll be talking to someone, and they’ll say ‘Oh, I was [an Ossabaw Island Project] member down there. Are those donkeys still there?’ Or I’ll see a picture that someone did from the island, and there are the donkeys out in the marsh; or someone will send me a poem that their mother wrote about them.”

Justin’s reflections on donkey life:

“They travel widely and fast but they don’t seem to rush. You’ll see them at North End and very soon after that we’ll see them at Middle Place. They are the quintessential Buddhist animal, they are in the moment, they take their time and don’t hurry.

“I don’t want anyone messing with them. They should have a full life and peaceful death on the island. They’ve woven themselves into island life and into what has come out of the creative life, as an integral part of the island.

“I’m sure the donkeys will appreciate being written up; they like their moment in the sun.”

Ossabaw Fund Contributors - Thank you for your donations to the Ossabaw Island Foundation's Ossabaw Fund from December 2018 – June 2019

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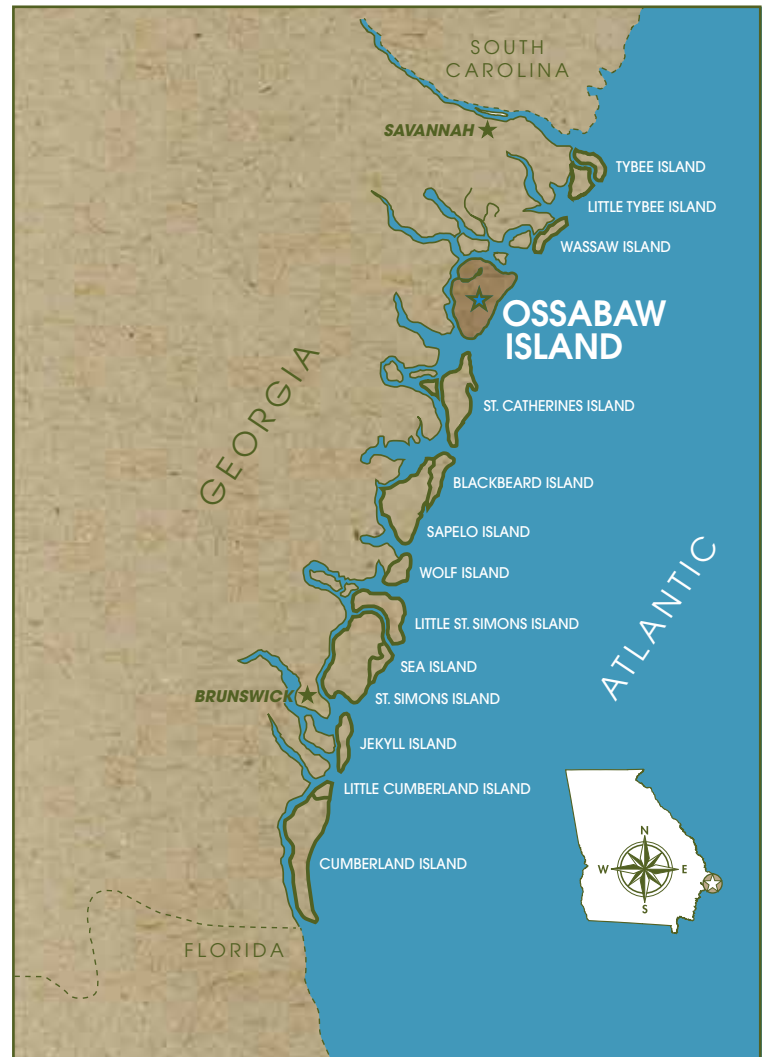
Support the Ossabaw Fund this Summer



It's summertime — and (we hope) the giving is easy! Our 2018-2019 Ossabaw Fund goal is \$55,000. Our fiscal year ends July 31. Your summertime gift can help us meet our goal, and supports our efforts to share Ossabaw Island while preserving her natural and historic resources for future generations. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Donate by using the enclosed envelope or visit ossabawisland.org.

Every gift matters. Thank you!



OSSABAW ISLAND PIG ROAST & ART AUCTION SATURDAY OCTOBER 26, 2019 (THIS IS A NEW DATE!)

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Pig Roast Tickets On Sale September 2

Pig Roast sponsorships available!

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

Sponsorship Benefits

- Complimentary tickets to the Pig Roast
- First choice on boat departure time traveling to the Pig Roast
- Pre-selection of return-to-mainland boat times
- Listing on the event program, all event publicity, and on TOIF website

Call for Artists - Pig Roast Art Donations

The Ossabaw Island Foundation (TOIF) seeks donations of Ossabaw Island-inspired artwork to be sold in the silent auction at the Pig Roast, our only fundraising event. All types of visual art and fine crafts are welcomed that reveal the voices and mystery of Ossabaw Island. Donor artists are eligible for one complimentary ticket to the Pig Roast. Details on art donation are available at ossabawisland.org or by calling our office at 912-344-3900.

Artwork Donation Deadline

Friday, September 20, 2019. For listing in program & complimentary ticket (first come, first served)

Friday, October 11, 2019. Final artwork deadline. No art will be accepted after this date.

Artist tickets may be claimed once the art is delivered to the TOIF office at 13040 Abercorn Street, Suite 20, Savannah. Deadline for claiming a Pig Roast ticket is September 20.

For more information, email robin@ossabawisland.org or call 912-344-3900.



Photo by Bobby Krupczak

Volunteers: Third Eagle Scout Project on Ossabaw Island

Picnickers at Ossabaw Island's north end will dine on four new picnic tables constructed and transported to Ossabaw Island by Justin Dorsey of Troop 197 as part of his Eagle Scout project. Justin is from Atlanta and just graduated from Westminster School this May. Dorsey and troop members cut the pieces for the tables on the mainland, transported them to the island and assembled them on the dock. "Justin's new tables are now at the north end and the older tables constructed by Georgia Conservancy volunteers have been moved to the south end campsite, replacing the deteriorated tables under the pavilion," said Elizabeth DuBose, TOIF Executive Director. Thank you to Troop 197 and to Eagle Scout Justin Dorsey!



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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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