

## *Prologue*

By the fall of 1932 Chlotilde Martin had published almost all of the articles in her series. She wrote the following to mark the beginning of the season when the northern sportsmen came south, and she summarized information about many of the plantations she had already documented. In addition she mentioned other northern-owned properties elsewhere on the coast, suggesting just how extensive this movement was.

Yankees in the “nawth,” worn out with their battle against depression and constant watching of the stock market, are beginning to feel the tug of coastal South Carolina once again. The sharp chill of northern mornings conjure up before their mind’s eye the blue and gold of October days down on the plantation, the glint of sunshine upon the little winding coastal rivers, the pungent odor of dead leaves burning, the deep bay-ing of favorite hounds.

The uncertainty of the financial world and the approaching election will keep a large number of them reluctantly at their listening posts up there “where things go ’round” for a little while longer, but the annual hunger for the lowlands of South Carolina is getting in its work.

The yankees will be coming south before long now.

Already, the plantations, where weeds and underbrush have been having a riotous time all summer and where houses have been barred and shuttered and silence has reigned for many months, are beginning to snap out of their lassitude.

### **Things “Redded Up”**

Wide, rolling lawns are being clipped and spruced up, repairs and renovations are being made to homes and outhouses. Things are being “redded up” in anticipation of the return of the owners for the hunting season.

Original title: “Low-Country Plantations Stir as Air Presages Coming of New Season. Caretakers Spruce Up Big Houses for Northern Guests. Some Come to Hunt, Others to Rest and Sun on Their Large Coastal Estates. Election Will Delay Arrivals. Baronial Homes of Northern Winter Colonists along South Carolina Coast.” Publication date: October 16, 1932.



Chlotilde R. Martin (second from right), circa late 1930s, with her son, Thomas Martin Jr., her mother, Eva Randall Rowell, and her daughter, Chloe Martin. *Courtesy of Chloe M. Pinckney*

Even the dogs have caught the spirit. They perk up their long ears and sniff the new tang in the air. They know it won't be long now and they frisk and frolic in their kennels, eager to be at the good times they know are in store for them.

And not the least of those anticipating the arrival of the yankees are the negroes who live in the little cabins scattered here and there about the lands.

The word "yankee" in lower South Carolina used to be synonymous with a monstrous creature with horns and a pitchfork. The word had a colorful prefix—"damn"—and the older generation had a habit of running the two together with such a nicety of pronunciation that its children grew up thinking it was all one word.

Even many of the negroes, whose condition was the bone of contention, called them "damnyankees."

But the descendants of these slaves—and a scattering of the ex-slaves themselves—feel differently towards these Yankees who have bought up the old coastal plantations and re-built the "big houses" of that romantic "befo' de war" time.

### **Create Big Preserves**

These may be children of the yankees who laid the south in ashes, reason these darkies, but they themselves have brought back the old days with their benevolent and paternal attitude to those negroes they found living upon the lands which they purchased for hunting preserves.

Plantation life is enjoyed to the fullest by the new owners of the various tracts of land, which range in extent from forty thousand acres down to just a few hundred. It means different pleasures to the different owners.

Some of them, like the W. R. Coes at Cherokee, overlooking Combahee, the R. G. Elberts' Airy Hall on the Ashepoo river in Colleton, the Bayard Dominicks on the Tullifinny, the George E. Wideners on the Pocotaligo at Mackay Point, Joseph S. Frelinghuysen at Rice Hope on the Cooper river, G. D. B. Bonbright at Pimlico in Berkeley county, Percy R. Hudson on the Combahee, the Harry Payne Bingham at Cotton Hall in Beaufort county, the H. K. Hudsons, of New York, at The Delta on the Savannah, Arthur Corlies of New York near Bluffton, Charles L. Lawrance of Long Island, designer of the motor of the Lindbergh ship, The Spirit of St. Louis, at White Hall in Colleton, Edward F. Hutton of New York at Laurel Spring, A. H. Caspary's Bonnie Doone in Colleton and others, have preferred to build homes of varying degrees of ornateness and grandeur, equipped with every modern comfort and convenience upon their recently acquired plantations. Some of these homes are fashioned after the old coastal colonial style, others after the New England type of architecture and still others are palatial affairs of brick and stone, carrying out their respective owners' tastes.

To these the owners come at intervals during the winter seasons, bringing groups of friends for house parties, hunting, resting or riding through the woods which are ever green and pleasant with the mellow winter sunshine.

Other northern property owners in this section prefer to erect hunting clubs or lodges or merely plain frame buildings to house them from the elements. Some of the quaintest of the lodges are those of R. P. Huntington at Gravel Hill, near Garnett; Dr. A. W. Elting of Albany, at Pine island; Paul and Dalton on the Combahee, remodeled from an old house by Charles L. Lawrance and Jack Hollins, of Long Island; the lodges owned by Landon K. Thorne and Alfred L. Loomis, of New York, at Hilton Head; Strawberry Hill in Jasper, where John F. Harris of Chicago comes to hunt; the colony of log cabins at Good Hope camp in Jasper owned by Herbert L. Pratt; and Bindon, near Yemassee, owned by E. E. Lorillard of tobacco fame.

Henry W. Corning, of Cleveland, has a simple white cottage on the Broad river in Beaufort county. The Frederic Pratts, of Long Island, have two small white houses at Chee-ha-Combahee plantation at Wiggins.

There are the sportsmen pure and simple. They prefer to "rough it" when they come south, spending their entire days in the woods or streams and having very little need for the niceties of living at their sleeping or eating quarters.

### **Large Hunting Clubs**

In addition to the private hunting lodges there are several big hunting clubs with large memberships where sportsmen may come and be cared for while enjoying the hunting season. One of these is the Chelsea club in Jasper county, which escaped Sherman's flames. This has been renovated and is used by the club members on their hunting trips over the twenty thousand-acre game preserve.

Okeetee club with a forty-two thousand acre game preserve was one of the first hunting clubs formed in this section. It has a fifty-room clubhouse and employs between thirty and forty people.

Pineland club, the oldest of them all, was formed in 1877 with the purchase of nearly fourteen thousand acres of land. The membership in this club was fifteen at the beginning but when a member dies, the others buy his share so that the 1931 membership list included only: J. S. Clark, Philadelphia attorney; Walter E. Clark, Philadelphia banker; E. J. Baetjer, Baltimore attorney; Dr. L. R. Morris, retired, of New York; Arthur Lyman, lawyer and real estate man of Boston; and Mr. Getties, of New York.

Rice Hope hunting plantation in Georgetown is another club, housed in the old Lucas home and the members listed this year were William N. Beach, George C. Meyer, William J. Knapp and Clarkson Cowl, all of New York.

Another hunting club is Palachucola at Garnett, of which R. P. Huntington is president.

### **Houses Renovated**

There is still another group of northerners who have renovated the old plantation houses which they found upon their properties, furnished them fittingly and make their homes there while here, thus carrying out the spirit of the old south.

Among these are the J. Fritz Franks, of the Bluff plantation, overlooking the Cooper river in Berkeley; Henry Laurens' home, Mepkin, on the Cooper, now the property of the J. W. Johnson family of New York, manufacturers of the surgical supplies; Z. Marshall Crane, of the Crane Paper company, at Hope plantation in Colleton; Wappaolah on the Cooper, owned by W. H. Barnum and Owen Winston, of New York; the famous and handsome Oaks in Berkeley county, property of Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Sabin, once the home of Arthur Middleton, signer of the Declaration of Independence; the Cameron estate on St. Helena island, one of the first of the game preserves; the LaFayette house on the Edisto, property of Donald Dodge of Maine; Dean Hall and the beautiful Cypress Gardens in Berkeley, property of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin R. Kittredge of New York and South Carolina; Mansfield in Georgetown, property of Robert M. Montgomery, Philadelphia banker; Mulberry Castle, in Berkeley, rich in romance and history, owned by the C. E. Chapmans; Medway, historic home of Landgrave Smith, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney J. Legendre of New York; and the home of A. Felix du Pont on the Combahee. On this plantation is a landing field used by air-minded Du Pont guests.

The William Cops occupy their Spring island home the year around, farming and raising cattle. Belfair, near Bluffton, built of tabby by its artist-owner, W. Moseley Swain, is also occupied by the Swain family the entire year. Spring Hill plantation in Jasper county, owned by Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Clark of New England, is actually the Clark home, Mr. Clark making his more than 3,000 acres of land a self-supporting venture. Harry Cram, young scion of a wealthy Tammany hall leader, and his young wife live all year in their little white frame cottage at Foot Point, below Bluffton. James H. Kidder lives at Green Point, Beaufort county, all the year.

Buckfield plantation, better known as the Kress Narcissus farm, near Yemassee, property of C. W. Kress, is the winter home of the Kress family as well as a money-making venture in the raising of bulbs for the Kress stores.

Gippy in Berkeley county, winter home of Nicholas G. Roosevelt, of New York and Philadelphia, is a self-supporting dairy project.

Harold Ashton Richardson, Canadian inventor, lives simply in a small frame cottage at Long Brow plantation in Colleton county, during his visits here.

Archer M. Huntington and his sculptor wife occupy a fortress-like house on Magnolia beach in Georgetown county, where they are developing gardens to preserve the native wild flowers of this state.

Among the other interesting and beautiful plantation estates of the northern property owners are Bernard M. Baruch's (native South Carolinian) Hobcaw Barony near Georgetown; Tomotley, owned by Edward Thorne, Sr., of New York; the Dewees island estate of C. B. D. Huyler; Harrietta, near McClellanville, owned by Horatio S. Shonnard; Arcadia, near Georgetown, owned by George Vanderbilt; Fenwick Hall, on John's Island, estate of Victor Morawetz; Willbrook, near Summerville, property of William S. Ellis; Pierate House, across the Cooper from Charleston, owned by Dana Osgood, of Hopedale, Mass.; Bonny Hall, near Yemassee, owned by Arthur Lyman; Arthur Barnwell's magnificent swimming pool at Cuthbert Point; Dawn plantation, in Colleton, owned by G. V. Hollins; Myrtle Grove, in Colleton, owned by J. W. Stevens; Twickenham, near Yemassee, owned by R. J. Turnbull; Castle Hill, Beaufort county, property of John S. Williams; Brewton Hall, nearby, owned by John R. Todd, of New York; Peter B. Bradley's vast acreage, which includes several old plantations down in Colleton and Charleston counties. Solomon Guggenheim owns a hunting preserve on Lady's island. And there are others.

These large preserves are well stocked with wild game, including deer, turkey, quail, duck, marsh hen, and fox. The salt water rivers or "cricks," as the Gullah negroes term these little back water streams, are teeming with fish to tempt the sportsmen.

Since the duck season does not open this year until November 16, some of the Yankees will doubtless postpone their coming until around that time. The quail addicts will be down in good time for the opening of the season on Thanksgiving day.

Many extensive duck ponds have been built on these coastal plantations in recent years, so great has the interest been in duck shooting. And these new plantation owners have bred quail by the thousands in pens and turned them loose on their preserves so that the stock of wild game will not be depleted.

Another experiment in preservation being conducted by several of these wealthy landowners is that of reforestation and the lessening of the danger of forest fires in the coastal section.

The organization of the Carolina plantation society last season, following the first plantation field trials, is expected to aid in cultivating a more neighborly friendliness among plantation owners. ✨

Chlotilde Martin wrote a similar article, also naming dozens of northern property owners, which appeared in the *Charleston News and Courier* on June 28, 1936. Near the beginning of this article, Mrs. Martin alludes to subjects that she rarely mentions in the bulk of her articles: the political and economic situation of the day, which of course at the time was

grave. Approaching was the first presidential election since the 1929 stock market crash, when Franklin D. Roosevelt challenged the incumbent president Herbert Hoover. As the editors' comments following each of the plantation articles in this book make clear, a remarkable number of northern plantation owners held on to their properties through the Depression. The plantation society that she mentions at the end of the article still survives and still provides the "neighborly friendliness" that was intended, though now the bulk of the members live in South Carolina and Georgia.

# *Beaufort County* **PROPERTIES**

Belfair

Bray's Island (also the Old Means' Farm,  
Cunningham's Bluff, Hall's Island,  
Grays Hill, Laurel Bay)

Callawassie Island

Cat Island

Chisolm Island (also Palmetto Hall,  
Horse Island)

Clarendon

Clay Hall, Nieuport (also Green Point)

Coffin Point

Cotton Hall

Cuthbert Point (Pleasant Point)

Dataw Island

Foot Point

Fort Fremont

Hilton Head Island (Part 1)

Hilton Head Island (Part 2)

Lady's Island

Orange Grove (also Fripp [Seaside])

Palmetto Bluff (also Oak Forest  
and Trimblestone)

Pine Island

Polawana Island

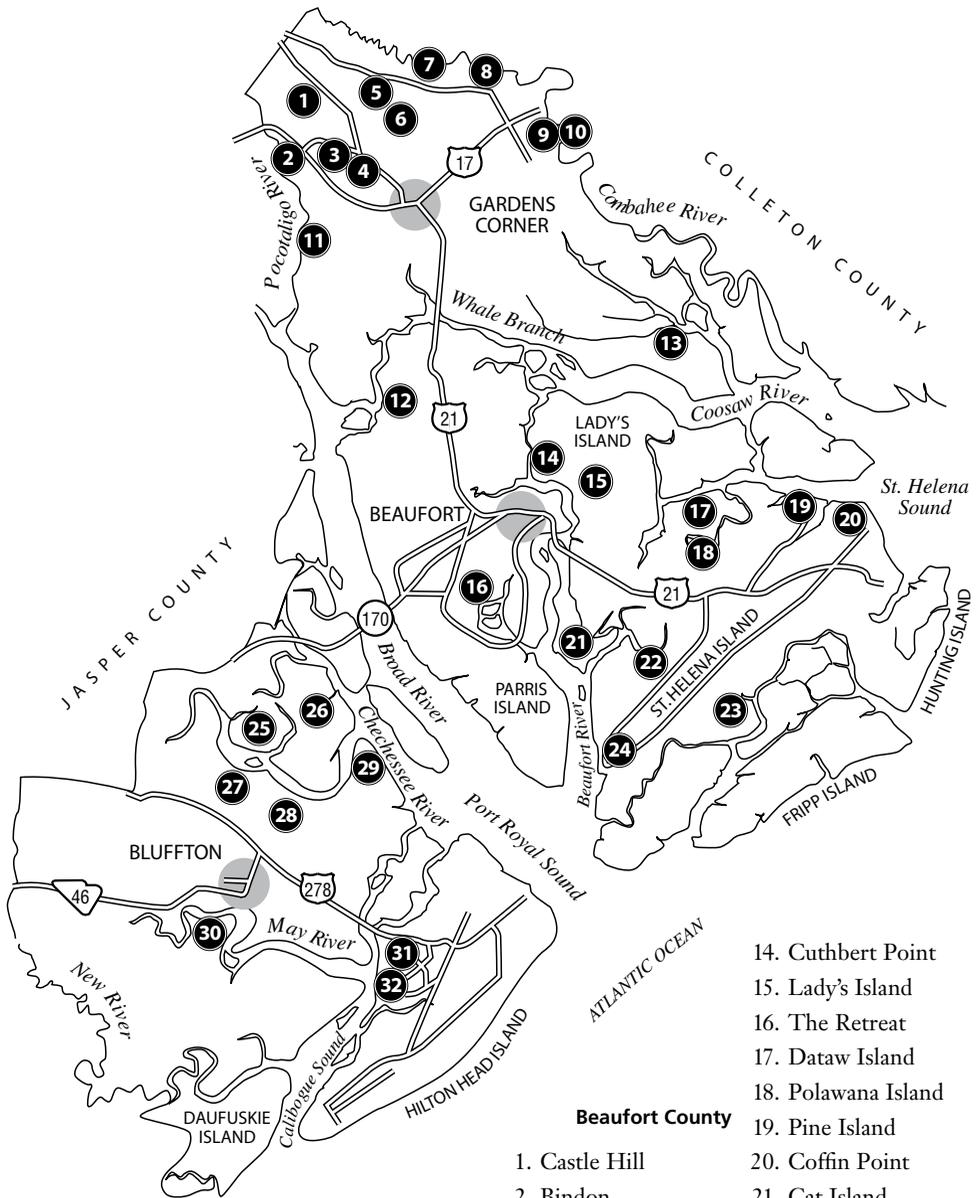
Retreat

Rose Hill

Spring Island

Tomotley, Brewton, Bindon, and Castle Hill

Twickenham, Bonny Hall, and Hobonny



**Beaufort County**

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Castle Hill        | 14. Cuthbert Point     |
| 2. Bindon             | 15. Lady's Island      |
| 3. Cotton Hall        | 16. The Retreat        |
| 4. Tomotley           | 17. Dataw Island       |
| 5. Brewton            | 18. Polawana Island    |
| 6. Twickenham         | 19. Pine Island        |
| 7. Hobonny            | 20. Coffin Point       |
| 8. Bonny Hall         | 21. Cat Island         |
| 9. Nieuport-Clay Hall | 22. Orange Grove       |
| 10. Green Point       | 23. Frigg (Seaside)    |
| 11. Bray's Island     | 24. Fort Fremont       |
| 12. Clarendon         | 25. Callawassie Island |
| 13. Chisolm Island    | 26. Spring Island      |
|                       | 27. Rose Hill          |
|                       | 28. Belfair            |
|                       | 29. Foot Point         |
|                       | 30. Palmetto Bluff     |
|                       | 31. Honey Horn         |
|                       | 32. Hurley's           |

## *Belfair*

W. Moseley Swain, artist, has perhaps more truly recaptured the spirit of the old homes of Coastal South Carolina than any of the other northerners who have bought lands and built large estates in this section.

Perhaps it is because he is an artist and, therefore, capable of a keener sense of the fitness of things than the average person. However that may be, Mr. Swain has achieved the atmosphere of the old south in his magnificent tabby home, which is situated on a bluff overlooking the Colleton river about four miles from Bluffton, in Beaufort county.

Mr. Swain's plantation is called Belfair, the original name of the old plantation being retained in practically every instance where these old low-country estates have come into the hands of wealthy men from the north.

Belfair is entered through high white wooden gates just off a country road between Hardeeville and Bluffton. At the left of the entrance is the small white cottage of the superintendent of the estate and at the end of a long white shell road is Belfair.

### **Four Stories High**

This beautiful home is four stories high and is fashioned of a combination of three-fourths oyster shell and one-fourth cement. The old tabby was made of oyster shell and lime.

The material for the home was made up at the site, the oyster shell being obtained from a nearby oyster factory. The house was designed by Mr. Swain himself.

The approach is made to the rear of the building, although, in this case, the rear is so lovely that one can scarcely believe the front is more so.

The walk that leads to the wide high stairs, which mount to the great porch, is bordered with Satsuma oranges. The low bushes in December were heavy with fruit, glowing golden through the green foliage. These bushes have been growing only a year and a half.

Original title: "Belfair—Designed by Artist Owner. W. Moseley Swain, 'A Citizen of South Carolina,' He Says, Builds Magnificent Tabby Home Overlooking Colleton River in Beaufort County." Publication date: January 18, 1931.



Belfair. *Courtesy of the Bluffton Historical Preservation Society*

In fact, the home was built only two years ago, but so perfectly did Mr. Swain carry out his ideas that the building seems aged already.

The house fronts the river with its wide concrete porch, great white columns and curving railed stairs which lead down over a flagged walk to the water's edge.

#### **Four Windows to River**

The immense reception hall has a double stair, which leads to the sleeping apartments above. On one side of the hall is a large, bright living room and on the other the dining room. These rooms have three exposures each, with four windows which overlook the river.

Upon the walls hang interesting family portraits, exquisite tapestries and paintings. Above the mantel in the dining room is a full-length portrait of Mr. Swain in his uniform during the World war.

On the second floor are bedrooms and one small sitting room. All of these rooms, with one exception, command a splendid view of the river, glinting in the sunshine or winding grayly to sea, according to the moods of the weather.

On the fourth floor are three of the coziest attic rooms that could be imagined. The big center room has its oddly shaped walls lined with books and magazines. On either side of this is a big dormitory room with many single beds. This floor is used for hunting parties.

Peeping out of the quaint little attic windows is to be seen the Swains' white yacht, riding gracefully at anchor. It sways there proudly, like a swan.

#### **Two Daughters and Son**

There are Mr. Swain, his two daughters, Louise and Phyllis, the latter being just out of Smith college, and W. Moseley Swain, Jr., a tall fair youth with a warm, friendly smile, known to his family as "Bill."

Phyllis, who was in khaki breeches and shirt, just in from a “gunning” trip, is boyish and athletic and is the housekeeper. Mrs. Swain died suddenly just after the home was finished and the family make their home at Belfair, although they come and go as the notion strikes them.

“But this is our home,” Mr. Swain waxed enthusiastic. “This is how well we like your coastal country. We used to live in Haverford, Pa., but I am now a citizen of South Carolina.”

And, here, tucked away from the stir of the world, yet within easy reach of the glitter of bright lights, is everything that the heart could desire. Still, Louise and Phyllis and Bill are young, and when asked what they did to amuse themselves, Phyllis’ bright eyes crinkled with laughter. She dashed off somewhere and returned with a picture. “This is what we do, mostly—pushing ourselves out of the mud. Oh, yes, and we also help fight forest fires. Did you ever do it? It’s lots of fun.”

They are very versatile, these young people. They speak with equal casualness of trips to Europe and of deep sea fishing. On one wall hangs a huge tarpon weighing 99  $\frac{3}{4}$  pounds, which was caught by Louise Swain, off the coast of Florida. Had the fish weighed a quarter pound more, she would have received a medal. Down in the basement is another fish weighing 147 pounds which her father caught in the same place.

#### **Pictures in Basement**

Down in the basement, too, are hung some of Mr. Swain’s pictures. His work features nude women, although there are some still life scenes. Mr. Swain has exhibited at the Art club in Philadelphia and received two honorable mentions, one nude and one still life. He never seriously studied art until he was a grown man with children, but his pictures show a rarely delicate touch.

Mr. Swain comes of a newspaper family, his grandfather Swain being one of the founders of the *Philadelphia Ledger* and the *Baltimore Sun*. During the Confederate war, his partner, who was running the *Sun*, was a Secessionist, while Mr. Swain, who ran the *Ledger*, could not agree with him. So they dissolved partnership.

Belfair plantation is located at what is known as Wigg’s Point and comprises about two thousand acres, including what were formerly the old Barnwell and Glover plantations. Part of this property is also known as the old H. A. M. Smith place. It is said that the name Belfair was a combination of the names Bell and Telfair, which families at one time owned some of the property.

Mr. Swain and his children like to shoot birds, but not deer. Asked why he did not like deer hunting, Mr. Swain looked slightly embarrassed, but Phyllis rushed to his rescue. “Oh, who could shoot a beautiful deer!”

Her father’s eyes warmed upon her. “I couldn’t get a kick out of killing a deer—it would be like cold-blooded murder.”

Eager, responsive, likable people are the Swains. Their beautiful, expensive tabby home was a happy thought for Coastal South Carolina, but they themselves are the richer acquisition. ✨

Judging from Mrs. Martin's enthusiastic description of Belfair, the Swain family must have given her a cordial welcome when she made her visit in 1931. The family had been living there since 1928.

William Moseley Swain's grandfather, who shared the same name with his grandson, founded the newspapers mentioned by Mrs. Martin. His son Charles Moseley Swain, a prominent lawyer and financier in Philadelphia, left a fortune of \$1.8 million in 1904 but no will. In addition to his painting career, William Moseley Swain was president of the Williamson Motor Company.

The Belfair property had been part of Devil's Elbow, or Okeetee Barony, the twelve-thousand-acre grant to Sir John Colleton in 1718. It was rich, productive land on the Colleton River, and the family had kept it intact until sometime after Sir John's death in 1777. It had never been the family seat, however. That was always Fairlawn Barony in Berkeley County. Later, in the nineteenth century, Belfair was owned by William Wigg Barnwell and sometimes was called Barnwell. Wigg Point, where Mr. Swain built his house, takes its name from that ownership.

The Swain house was a striking residence, as Mrs. Martin says, of tabby construction, a material used along the coast for the raised foundations of plantation houses as well as for local fortifications. Its reputation was that the composition strengthened with age.

Mr. Swain was his own engineer, but unfortunately he had not mastered the art of preparing tabby. Over time the excessive saline content of the mixture began to leach out, causing the walls to crumble—a distressing end to a house built to last for the ages. His "magnificent tabby home" fell to pieces after Mr. Swain's 1940 death in Savannah at age sixty-seven. W. Moseley Swain Jr., the "tall fair youth with a warm, friendly smile," was murdered in Beaufort County in December 1948, a crime that remains unsolved and is still discussed locally. Belfair Plantation, five miles from the bridge to Hilton Head Island, is now a residential golf development.