

Talbot Islands State Parks

Virtual Ranger Series – Volume 1

Saturiwa Trail

Note to participants: The term “Saturiwa” is pronounced as [sa-chur-EE-wa].

Welcome to Talbot Islands State Parks and the Virtual Ranger Series.

This is a driving tour of the 4.4 mile Saturiwa Trail on Fort George Island, Florida. Each stop is marked on the edge of Fort George Road and Palmetto Avenue with a brown sign. If you are using the audio CD, you will hear the music in between each tour stop, which will signal you to stop your CD player and proceed to the next stop. If not, you will see the titles and stop numbers in this text.

Please keep safety in mind as you proceed through the tour with consideration for other vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians. Parking areas are not necessarily provided, and sometimes all you can do is pull over to one side of the road. Please use caution.

There is one stop we would like you to make on your way to or from the Ribault Club. It is not in the regular circular route that the rest of the tour follows. At approximately 0.4 miles along Fort George Road from its entrance at Heckscher Drive you will pass on your left, a large tabby structure with no roof. This is the Thompson Tabby house. If you are approaching the Thompson Tabby house now, pull over when you arrive at the structure and listen to the following paragraph. If not, forward the audio to the very next track and proceed to the Ribault Club to begin the tour. You will have the option at the end of the circular tour to catch the Thompson Tabby stop again as I will repeat this information.

THOMPSON TABBY HOUSE / TABBY RUINS (no separate Marker #)

Please do not touch this tabby structure. You may park carefully and walk around this structure if you wish, but the oils from human hands can damage the fragile tabby. Climbing is also forbidden.

This particular structure dates from mid 1800s, but is the same type of construction that was used in the Americas circa 1580 by the Spanish and their slaves. It is typical tabby construction, a method that is thought to have originated in Africa. The material is oyster shell.

It is an ideal form of construction for areas that have no rock outcrops! They made it like this: they would gather shells from the area, and burn them at a very high temperature. Once burnt, they would crush easily into a powder. They then would mix the crushed shell with equal parts of sand and water and add in some whole shells. It was then poured into wooden support forms and dried for several days. The process was repeated for the next layer making the horizontal lines that are visible today. The small holes are from where the two pieces of wood were braced together when they poured in the tabby.

Researchers believe that the idea of tabby construction is probably of African origin, but again this structure was built in the mid 1800s.

This is called the Thompson Tabby house but is also known as the Munsilna Mugundo house.

It has two names because two theories exist on who built this structure. It was originally thought to have been willed to Munsilna Mugundo and her daughter Fatima by Zephaniah Kingsley in 1831. Everyone believed for years that this was Ms. Mugundo's home. However, a local researcher got curious about a local ghost story about a woman in a long white dress, and started to look into the history. Interestingly, it turns out that it does not appear on maps of the area until 1854. It is now believed to have been built by Mr. Thompson, who purchased Fort George Island in 1854. He remained an absentee landowner until he died in 1855, one year later. He supposedly started building this house for his daughter and her husband, but it was never finished. Thus, it was never occupied.

The large fireplace has never been lined with brick. Wood grain still shows in the holes made by wooden ties used in construction, indicating that these openings were never filled with lime mortar. Also the way it rises over the road indicates a higher degree of precision and engineering than the other tabby structures known to be 1830s on Fort George Island.

Now proceed past all numbered signs, staying to the right at the V in the paved road and proceed to the Ribault Club.

MARKER #1

Fort George Island is an island with a very rich, long and varied past, with many historical periods. You will see that each historical period that we speak about today has impacted the island, and the people or their activities in its own way.

Paleo-Indians were in FL around 13,000 years ago. The archaic people were on Fort George Island probably around 6000 years ago. The reason that we can say this is that evidence has been found in shell middens.

A shell midden is basically like an old landfill site from the early people. In this area, they are mainly composed of broken oyster shells, broken pieces of pottery, parts of bones, discarded tools, etc. The midden in this immediate area stretches from the waterline behind the Ribault Club, up through the back grounds and under the Ribault Club. Middens are not easily seen by the untrained eye, however a high density of oyster shells along with pieces of pottery, tools made of shell and bones often indicate their presence. Pottery found in this area has been dated back 4000 years and is part of what is referred to as Orange Period Pottery. It is said to be some of the oldest pottery in W. Hemisphere.

The large white building you see on the east side of Fort George Road, the Ribault Club and its predecessor, the Fort George Hotel (built in 1875 and destroyed by fire 14 years later), were both constructed atop this prehistoric midden. While construction destroyed the upper

levels of the midden, artifacts recovered from undisturbed lower levels indicate a probable occupation over three thousand years ago. This midden is one of 34 designated archeological sites on Fort George Island, which are all protected by state and federal law.

Now picture in your mind “*The Roaring 20s*”... a time of incredible financial growth, expansion, parties and celebration. It was just after the Great War (WW1). and there was a general belief that war would never happen again and that times would now be relaxed and easy. It was a time to celebrate and enjoy life. The Ribault Club was constructed in the optimism of this time.

The Ribault Club was opened in 1928, and was meant to be a playground for the rich and elite of places like Jacksonville, NY, Boston, and Philadelphia. It was marketed to wealthy northerners who enjoyed the facilities here including lawn bowling, the yacht basin overlooking the Fort George River, a Scottish style golf course and clay tennis courts. Club membership boomed the first few years to 225 affluent members, and an additional lodge was built on the grounds to accommodate the growing membership. The roaring 20’s continued at full swing here until the Depression and WW11, when the Club began to falter. For the next 50 years, the Club was owned by a number of developers who attempted to develop it and the island. Eventually, in 1989, the Club was purchased by the FPS. The FPS owned the building and leased the golf course to the City of Jacksonville who operated it until the facility closed in 1991. The Club was stabilized and boarded up from 1991-1998 and left as a mere image of what it once was.

We will talk about the very successful partnership, the community effort that saved the Ribault Club and the restoration of the building when we return here at the end of the tour.

MARKER #2 – MOUNT CORNELIA

If you look carefully up through the bush behind the marker sign to your right, you will notice that the ground rises to approximately 65 feet above sea level. This rise is Mount Cornelia, reputed to be the highest point along the US Atlantic coastline south of North Carolina. This abrupt slope marks the southern end of an ancient dune field paralleling the island’s northeast shoreline.

The significance of the Mount Cornelia has varied over time. British General James Oglethorpe, founder of the Georgia Colony, reported building a fort on the island in 1736. While Mt. Cornelia’s elevation may have been beneficial for the English colonists, the exact location of the fort has never been identified. General Oglethorpe named Mount Cornelia after a niece of King George II.

During the late 1800s, Mt. Cornelia was a recreational focus for visitors to the Fort George Hotel mentioned earlier. Tourists viewed the mouth of the St. Johns River from a large observation platform atop the dune. Then from 1928 to 1991, Mt. Cornelia was the 9th hole in the Scottish style golf course. We will see more of the impact of golf on the island when we are at the next marker.

MARKER #3 – CANOPIED ROADS

As you follow the unpaved road through the interlocking trees and vines overhead, we can readily understand why the Indian term “hammock” translated as “shady place.” Besides creating a cool place to escape the intense Florida sun, these maritime hammock forests are home to a small plant commonly called Spanish moss. Spanish moss, sometimes called “old man’s beard” is the curly pale green or gray plant hanging from the live oak trees. Though not really a moss, this air plant has been utilized by island residents for centuries.

Sixteenth century illustrations show examples of Timucua women using Spanish moss as skirts.

More recently, it was used as cordage, mattress stuffing, and seat padding in early Ford automobiles. Since it is full of tiny biting cinch bugs, some people believe that using the moss in the seat cushions caused Ford to issue the first automobile recall in history!

During the mid to late 1800’s, when citrus was grown on Fort George Island, it is believed that Spanish moss from the island’s trees was used to pack oranges and grapes grown right near here. Modern man may find no commercial use for Spanish moss, but it remains an important source of nesting material for wildlife, and helps define the island’s southern charm. When you get to Marker #4, please pull into the small parking lot.

MARKER #4 – POINT ISABEL

You are looking at the path that leads to Point Isabel, also known as Blue’s Point. If you were to follow the path on foot for about 15 minutes, you would reach a rectangular bay on the Fort George River stabilized with concrete block from the 1920’s. In the 18th and 19th century it was a wharfing facility for the plantations that were in the area. It was later used as a marina.

The name Isabel is actually a Kingsley family name. It is also the name of a specific variety of grape that was once grown and marketed on Fort George Island.

The game of golf was an important part of the island’s identity for over 63 years. In 1928, the clearing ahead of you was a portion of the 5th and 6th fairways, part of a 9 hole Scottish style course. Scottish style courses were characterized by longer grass, less manicured and more rugged landscapes. In 1968, 9 holes were expanded to 18 holes. The fairways were maintained up until 1991, but left to naturalize after that. The naturalization gives us an interesting opportunity to watch the succession of areas take place naturally; note the younger pine trees growing on this fairway clearing. The old fairways along with ponds, open woodlands and oak hammocks, can be further experienced on foot or bicycle on a trail maintained by the Florida Park Service. Trail maps for this 3 mile trail are available at the Ribault Club and the Ranger Station.

MARKER #5 – PRIVATE HOMES

Homes in this immediate area are developed on some of the original lots platted by John Rollins during what we refer to as the Rollins Period on Fort George Island from 1868-

1910. John Rollins bought the island for \$5,500 in 1869. Rollins platted much of the island into house lots, and invited writers to the island during northern winters. The magazine articles that resulted from his efforts praised the climactic, historic and natural significance of the island.

Fort George Island has adapted to successions of residents, and gently camouflages the clues of previous occupants. During the Rollins era on Fort George, the vicinity to the right was used for family gardens, grapes, and mulberries. The forest has since reclaimed the land.

When you reach the Kingsley Plantation sign, there will be a gate and an entrance to your right. If the gate is open, you may choose to enter Kingsley Plantation and park in the lot at the end of the drive while you listen to this audio production.

MARKER #6 - KINGSLEY PLANTATION COMPLEX

You should now be in the parking lot or at the entrance to Kingsley Plantation. As the Plantation is open to the public from 9 AM to 5 PM most days with the exclusion of holidays, please feel free to exit the car and tour the grounds and the National Park Service Visitor Center.

Operated by NPS as part of the 46,000 acre Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, Kingsley Plantation offers an authentic view of an early 1800's sea island cotton plantation. The house, built by John McQueen in 1791, is the oldest plantation house still standing in Florida. The extensive remains of 23 tabby slave cabins provide a valuable resource to learn about slavery.

Fields of Sea Island cotton were planted and tilled by plantation slaves on Fort George Island. The island was a well-managed, money-making landscape for the owners. The slaves lived against a backdrop of bondage, agriculture, and family.

Daily activities of the enslaved men, women and children of the Fort George plantation were defined by the job assigned each day. Clearing the island of forest, they grew indigo and Sea Island cotton. They also grew the food needed for the families living at the plantation, both free and enslaved. After tasks were completed, they took care of their own livestock, gardens, and home.

Slaves came from different African cultures. Culture in the slave community persevered through the harsh conditions. The daily lives of plantation owners and slaves were intertwined in the rhythms of the seasons and the land. Meals and evenings were a time for relaxation. Many ideas, beliefs, and traditions were exchanged in their community.

John McQueen was the first to develop Fort George Island for *large scale agriculture* in the period between 1791-1804. McQueen sold his land to John McIntosh who operated it until 1814, when he leased it to Zephaniah Kingsley. Kingsley and his wife Anna operated a successful sea island cotton plantation here from 1814-1839. They also grew corn and indigo. Indigo of this area was prized for its high quality.

Ask the staff in the visitor center here about scheduled tours, or read one of the many interpretive panels for further details on this interesting site, then proceed to Marker #7.

MARKER # 7 – PINE PLANTATIONS

The focus of this stop is the pine trees interspersed between the other vegetation.

Retired Navy Admiral Victor Blue was responsible for much of the development activity on the island during the early 20th century. After retiring from the U.S.Navy, Blue planted pine trees in abandoned plantation fields on the west side of the island. We will speak about Victor Blue more extensively when we stop later in the tour.

MARKER #8 - PALMETTO AVENUE – “The Avenue of Palms”

Instead of the rich forest canopy along this old plantation road, imagine large open fields stretching back from the road, with only the occasional large live oak tree for shade. Much of the island remained in crops until the early 1900s. Today, the Sabal palms you can see lining the road are slowly being dwarfed by the pine trees and forest vegetation which now occupy the old fields. Numerous legends have passed through the years regarding these majestic Sabal Palms. *Scribner’s Monthly, Volume 14, Oct 1877*, carried an article by Julia Dodge entitled “An Island of the Sea” which said:

“The avenue is said to have been planted under the direction of an overseer during the absence of his master, and was to have extended across the island. But the planter returned, and the so enraged at the waste of time and labor that the unlucky overseer was discharged on the spot.”

Regardless of their origin, the stately palms provide a *sense* of the island’s history.

MARKER #9 - SAN JUAN del PUERTO MISSION AND ASSOCIATED VILLAGE SITE.

The first European settlers on the island were Spanish missionaries who in 1587 established the mission of San Juan del Puerto, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Excavations near here documented both Indian and Spanish Occupation. Missions were commonly placed in existing Indian villages such as the one on this island, which housed members of the Saturiwa tribe of the Timucua at the time of Ribault’s landing.

In 1595, Franciscan Father Francisco Pareja described the mission as very ornate with a bell tower and organ. His *Confessionario*, an account of mission life, became a primary source of information about Timucua lifeways and language. The document was rewritten in the native tongue and Spanish.

Destroyed in 1597 by Guale Indians who didn’t subscribe to the European religion and culture, the mission was rebuilt, and served the entire region for over 100

years. Use of the island's original name, Alimacani, declined in favor of San Juan, during the 1600s.

The mission was destroyed in 1702 by British Governor James Moore of South Carolina and was not rebuilt.

At marker #10, almost directly ahead on your right, stop your car just short of the marker sign.

MARKER #10 - SAN JUAN CREEK – INTERCOASTAL WATERWAY

The landscape of the salt marsh here is defined by the cooling towers you see on your right belonging to the St. John's Electrical Park. These additions to a natural landscape provide a constant reminder of the delicate balance between modern needs and our natural resources.

The intercoastal waterway is approximately 1 mile west of here on your right. The core portion stretches from Miami, Florida to Trenton, New Jersey at 1391 miles, with an average depth of 12 feet below Mean Low Water.

This local area here has been noted to be one of the areas that prompted early consideration of a permanent channel between the Islands and the Mainland along the east coast. European colonist's vessels required more water than the Timucua boats had in earlier times. In 1828 Lt. Gadsden wrote the Chief Engineer of what today is the Army Corps of Engineers to suggest a waterway. He described four navigational obstacles between St. Mary's and the St. J. River. There is some belief that Gadsden contracted Kingsley to provide some of the work force to start construction on the waterway. Later, during the War, the waterway would also serve to protect the mainland from German U-boats.

Again at the next stop, pull over just short of the sign for Marker #11.

MARKER #11 – MOSQUITO DITCHING

You also may be noticing a number of deep ditches dug perpendicular to the road as you have been driving along. These are called mosquito ditches. For many years wet areas were drained to dry out the upland habitat, in an effort to eliminate freshwater breeding sites for mosquitoes. Unfortunately this had a big impact on the hydrology of the area and modified the flow patterns, water levels, collection areas and made some habitats more apt to support more terrestrial plants including exotics. Exotic plants are those that would not normally grow naturally in this area.

MARKER # 12 – GARDEN CREEK MARSHES

Your view here is a little different than what the Timucua would have seen thousands of years ago because of the various objects on the distant skyline, but they would have been very familiar with the endless expanse of salt marsh you see before

you now. A tremendous volume of water moves through this marsh, under the road. In fact the road is often inundated with water.

Students have studied this flow and found that 2.5 Million gallons of water flow in and out of this small marsh 2x/day. Imagine what goes through the whole system!

Marshes benefits the environment and its inhabitants in numerous ways.

Salt Marshes are extremely productive. They are one of highest producers of energy through the breakdown of plant and animal material (a process called decomposition). Thus the smell that people think of as a bad smell is actually an indicator of a very healthy ecosystem that is releasing gases during the decomposition process. Most of the energy produced in the form of nutrients is washed out to sea with the tide to be used by organisms in the ocean.

Salt marshes like this one, act like nurseries for more than 2/3 of the commercial fish that live in the ocean. The salt marsh ecosystem is absolutely essential to the continuation of many species of fish, shellfish, invertebrates, reptiles and other organisms.

The marsh protects the shoreline in storms and even from the day to day fluxes of the tide. Compare how much more vegetation can grow right here as opposed to an open beach. The vegetation that takes hold in a marsh provides food and shelter for animals and benefits humans by decreasing shoreline erosion. Land is not washed away nearly as fast if it has a salt marsh to protect it.

Salt marshes also act as filters. Although all marshes have a carrying capacity, or limit, not to be exceeded, they can act like a big strainer that filters out many pollutants that otherwise would not be trapped and broken down. By slowing down the speed of water and trapping pollutants in the mud, decomposers get a chance to work on the pollutants and often break them down into forms less harmful to the environment. The water flowing out of a marsh has been shown to be cleaner than the water flowing in. Again, there are limits to how much they can filter out and clean!

MARKER #13 – MILL SITE

Near here are the remains of an old sugar mill or cotton gin from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The only clue to the exact identity of this site was a circular earthwork with a central depression. Although an excavation in the 1960s unearthed three metal gears and 60 metal blades, these artifacts could not substantiate the exact use of this site. Old documents indicate John McQueen constructed a cotton gin on Fort George Island in the late 1700s or early 1800s. Alternatively, sugar milling activities were common in this area during the same time period. Perhaps future research will determine which activity was practiced here.

MARKER # 14 – RICE DAM

Early during the plantation era, the area immediately to the west or your right may have been dammed for rice cultivation. J. Tucker, Esquire, owned the island from 1767 to 1783. Tucker exported rice and indigo to England, which subsidized the crops to encourage colonists. The technology of rice cultivation was well developed in the sea islands of Georgia and South Carolina, and remained an important crop there until the civil war.

Rice was never a major crop on Fort George Island. Perhaps the labor and fresh water required for the crop was simply not available here. After being cleared and leveled, potential rice fields required flushing with freshwater to remove the salt. Once the rice was planted, the field was repeatedly flooded with freshwater during the growing season. The rice seedlings tolerated the inundation while undesirable grasses and weeds drowned.

MARKER #15 – BLUE’S POND

Blue’s Pond, 1 and ¼ miles up this old road to your left, was an old ditch that was expanded into a borrow pit for expansion of the golf course described earlier. Today, Blue’s Pond is an important freshwater source for the island’s wildlife. Wood storks, mergansers, raccoons, marsh rabbits and other animals benefit from this secluded fresh water source, quietly tucked away from the traffic and activity on the island. Access to the pond is currently not encouraged.

MARKER #16 – THE CRYPTS

The remains of two Crypts still exist on the Island that remind us of the hazards early island residents faced. The Crypts are reported to have been built to house the remains of John McIntosh’s sister-in-law and his daughter, who both reportedly died in 1808. There are no existing remains in the crypts at this time, and it is questionable whether or not they were ever in use. Unfortunately these crypts are the target of much vandalism, thus they are closed to the public and their location is not advertised.

MARKER #17 – CHIEF SATURIWA

As mentioned, each period of occupants that lived on Fort George Island altered the landscape: (the middens, the plantations, the missions, the mosquito ditches, the cooling towers and other construction). Miraculously, the Island has accommodated to the impacts and still retained the amenities that attract us: the climate, the luxurious flora, the location, and the surrounding water.

The native people that greeted Jean Ribault in 1562 were members of the Saturiwa tribe.

The European were probably the first to refer to the native people as “The Timucua”. The people on San Juan Island spoke the Mocama dialect of Timucuan.

Much of what we assume about the Timucua today is really due to the interpretation of the people by the Europeans, and thus may in some cases have a European slant to it, or be misrepresented. As a result of their interpretation and the passage of time, a number of different pronunciations of the word Timucua and its derivatives are commonly used today.

I would like to tell you a little bit about how we believe the Timucua people lived. The Europeans reported that the Timucua were a very tall people, the men wore loin cloth made of animal skin (similar to bathing suit material today) and the women wore clothes made from Spanish moss. It was draped across their body diagonally. The clans were traced across Maternal lines.

Their houses were circular inverted cone shaped structures with thatched roofs. They had a low door on the side and a chimney hole at the top. They kept warm with fires, and used smaller smudge fires to keep the bugs away. The walls did not come all the way down to the ground, but they probably had some type of sleeping benches made of river cane. They built small "pahas" nearby for storage which were small areas sealed with mud.

The Timucua are reported to have grown corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, sunflowers, used herbal medicines and used fires as a hunting tactic. Although they ate mainly fish and shellfish, they did do some hunting. They made what they needed from nature. Portions of tools, dishes, fishhooks, shell axes, and shell bowls have been found in the middens.

Follow the rest of this dirt road and take your next left at the stop sign just after the road turns to pavement and proceed to Marker # 18

MARKER #18 - SAINT GEORGE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

This church was established in 1877. It is one of 12 "Carpenter Gothic" river missions built along the St. Johns River in the late 19th C. Carpenter Gothic refers to the architectural style commonly used by Episcopal Churches all through the USA in the 1800s. It is considered to be the first Victorian architectural style. Some of the characteristics of this style include the vertical side boards that make it appear taller and tall windows with peaks at the top to bring in more light. The hexagonal cutout window on the North wall is also characteristic of this style.

As you progress to the next marker, keep an eye on the RHS of the roadway. There you can see evidence of shell mining that has gone on during the years, reportedly for fertilizer in the early years and during construction of the road. What you see is already disturbed midden. Middens are very fragile and noted ones are protected by law when they occur on public lands. Please now proceed to Marker #24

MARKER #19 - ROLLINS BIRD AND PLANT SANCTUARY

Gertrude Rollins donated 150 acres of land to Rollins College in 1939. In 1940 and 1941 two log structures were built, a 2 stall-2 room lodge in 1941 and a garage in 1940 respectively. They were built with wood on site, other than the roofing and the nails. Please do not venture onto the sanctuary as these two structures are presently used as a residence that is managed by the Florida Park Service.

Gertrude apparently intended the lodge to be for students interested in studying the nature in the Sanctuary surrounding them. There is a quote in the Stowell report (our most accurate historical record of Fort George Island history) which says that the lodge was wired for electricity, however Gertrude was *“disappointed by the Electrical Co. who gave a very heavy estimate for giving us electric lights”*. *“We were forced to use kerosene stoves and lamps”*.

The college named the Sanctuary to recognize John Rollins. Here is a little background on John Rollins and his importance to Fort George Island. Mr. Rollins was originally a chemist from New Hampshire. He planted about 100 orange trees here but they did not yield very successfully at first.

Rollins decided to initiate a new cycle of land ownership on Fort George Island by encouraging authors and snowbirds to come and visit the “pleasant climate and rich soils”. Articles promoting the island began to appear in Harpers and Scribner’s.

He together with two partners built the Fort George Hotel in 1875 on the same site as the Ribault Club. He also platted the island into individual lots. He was later foreclosed upon by Fort George Island Co, who expanded the hotel but subsequently failed as well. Rollins is significant because his period and marketing embodied the end of the Plantation Era and the beginning of the Recreation Era.

MARKER #20 – FORT GEORGE BOTANY

There is a long history of naturalists and scientists attracted to Fort George Island. Naturalists John and William Bartram visited here in the late 1700s during the English Period and remarked on the “rich plant life”.

Just look around at the lush growth that is quite obvious.

A wide variety of plants including the Resurrection Fern, the Greenfly Orchid, the monstrous Live Oak trees, Spanish Moss, Numerous Ferns interspersed with Cedar Trees create an invaluable habitat for many animals.

Great Horned Owls raise a family each spring nearby, and the Grey Fox can sometimes be seen on the road in winter.

Red shouldered hawks, osprey, and the occasional Bald Eagle soar over these skies and are accompanied by over 200 species of migratory birds in the spring and fall. You can enjoy the melodious tunes of the Carolina wrens, cardinals, and mockingbirds all year round.

MARKER #21 – THE NELMAR HOUSE

This large house was built by John Stuart in 1877. As mentioned, the island began to be subdivided and sold as lots in 1873 by Rollins and Ayer. John Stuart's house was one of the first houses built.

The house is constructed of wood, with cypress shingles covering the second story and the tops of the porch posts. Ornamental features include octagonal chimney pots and novel designs in the muntins in the front door and side lights.

The Nelmar house is named after John Stuart's daughters Eleanor "Nellie" and Marion. Eleanor Stuart married Rear Admiral Victor Blue, who was a highly decorated due to his heroism in the Spanish American War, and together they spent many winters at Nelmar.

Blue eventually bought the Nelmar House and then subdivided much of the island into lots offered to members of private clubs that he helped organize. Adm. Blue was the founder of the Army Navy Club which became the FG Club in 1923 (located at the Kingsley house and adjacent building). FG Club was less relaxed than RICL which he also built later to replicate other clubs he had been in.

This house is significant because its association with the Recreational Development period of Fort George Island (1870s/1880s) with the Club development in the 1920s, and is perhaps the finest remaining residential structure built during the Rollins ownership of Fort George Island.

MARKER #22 – LITTLE TALBOT ISLAND OVERLOOK

From an abandoned golf tee, the vista toward the southeast includes Heckscher Drive (also known as State Road A1A), a highway linking the entire Florida Atlantic coastline. Thousands of people pass daily along this important recreational, commuting, and commercial route between Jacksonville and Amelia Island to the north.

Fort George Island, however maintains much of the appeal it must have had for early human visitors. Shell middens demonstrate that long before the first Europeans landed, people were using the island; altering it to meet their needs. The island retains that character: Fish thrive in the saltwater habitats surrounding the island, and the mild climate is modified by the nearly Atlantic Ocean.

MARKER #23 - RIBAUTL CLUB, PARTNERSHIP AND FORT GEORGE ISLAND VISITORS CENTER

Here I would like to give you a little more detail on the rehabilitation of the Ribault Club. As mentioned earlier the club was originally established in 1928 as a playground for the wealthy northerners as part of an early attempt to develop Florida's real estate and tourism potential. The Club faltered through the Depression and World War II. It was sold several times, used for a variety of purposes, and finally boarded up and left as a distant reminder of what it once was.

In 1991, the Florida Park Service assembled a group of interested citizens, formed the Ribault Task Force and posed the question – *“Is the Ribault Club worth saving and how could it be used to best serve the community in the park setting?”* Interest and support rallied. Initial restoration funding began with the FPS and historic preservation grants from the Florida Dept. of State.

The project was completed through an innovative partnership between the City of Jacksonville, the National Park Service and the Florida Park Service – now known as the *Timucuan Trail State and National Parks*. A four year multi-million dollar rehabilitation is now complete. The Ribault Club held its grand re-opening in Dec. 2003, 75 years after the first grand opening in 1928.

This historic landmark now serves as a gateway to Fort George Island and the Timucuan Trail, with interpretive displays orienting visitors to the rich 6000 year history of Fort George Island. A bookstore is also available.

The Ribault Club's Grand Rooms are available for event and meeting spaces, revenue from which supports the continued maintenance and protection of this architectural treasure.

Please visit the Fort George Island Visitor Center in the Ribault Club between 9AM & 5 PM Wednesday to Sunday to complete your Fort George Island interpretive experience.

We hope that you have enjoyed this audio tour through the various historical periods on Fort George Island and would like to invite you to participate in other interpretive programs held by the Park Rangers of Talbot Islands State Parks.

Don't forget, if you started the tour from the Ribault Club and missed the Thompson Tabby house, stay tuned after this music and listen to the paragraphs about the Tabby remains.

If you borrowed a CD for this tour, please return it to the Ribault Club, the Ranger Station on Little Talbot Island, or the outlet you borrowed it from.

THOMPSON TABBY HOUSE / TABBY RUINS [repeated]

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Researchers believe that the *idea* of tabby construction is probably of African origin, but again this structure was built in the mid 1800s.

This is called the Thompson Tabby house but is also known as the Munsilna Mugundo house.

It has two names because two theories exist on who built this structure. It was originally thought to have been willed to Munsilna Mugundo and her daughter Fatima by Zephaniah Kingsley in 1831. Everyone believed for years that this was Ms. Mugundo's home. However, a local researcher got curious about a local ghost story about a woman in a long white dress, and started to look into the history. Interestingly, it turns out that it does not appear on maps of the area until 1854. It is now believed to have been built by Mr. Thompson, who purchased Fort George Island in 1854. He remained an absentee landowner until he died in 1855, one year later. He supposedly started building this house for his daughter and her husband, but it was never finished. Thus, it was never occupied.

The large fireplace has never been lined with brick. Wood grain still shows in the holes made by wooden ties used in construction, indicating that these openings were never filled with lime mortar. Also the way it rises over the road indicates a higher degree of precision and engineering than the other tabby structures known to be 1830s on Fort George Island.

Thank you for your interest in the Saturiwa Trail. We welcome you to partake in our weekend Ranger Programs to explore the many other fascinating points of interest within our Florida State Parks.