

**A HISTORY OF TYBEE
ISLANDS, GA. AND A
SKETCH OF THE
SAVANNAH & TYBEE R. R.**

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A history of Tybee islands, Ga. And a sketch of the Savannah & Tybee R. R. by B. H. Richardson

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B. H. RICHARDSON

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A HISTORY
OF
Tybee Island, Ga.,
And a Sketch of the
Savannah & Tybee R. R.

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B. H. RICHARDSON.

SAVANNAH, GA.



PRESS OF SAVANNAH TIMES PUBLISHING COMPANY,
1885.

AS A TRIBUTE
TO THE
ENERGY, FORESIGHT AND PUBLIC SPIRIT
OF
CAPT. DANIEL G. PURSE.

PRESIDENT OF THE SAVANNAH AND TYBEE RAILROAD,

Manifested in the grand enterprise which has linked the Forest City to Tybee Island—the South's Long Branch—with bands of steel, this little sketch is dedicated with the esteem and friendship of

THE AUTHOR.

SAVANNAH, GA., December, 1886.

THE SOUTH'S LONG BRANCH.

A MAGNIFICENT SEASIDE RESORT — ATTRACTIONS FOR STRANGERS, RECREATION FOR ALL—A SUMMER RESORT WITH ALLUREMENTS FOR WINTER TOURISTS—A SKETCH OF TYBEE ISLAND, GA., 12½ MILES FROM SAVANNAH, AND 18 MILES TO THE EXTREME SOUTHERN END—HISTORICAL INCIDENTS — REMINISCENCES — FORTIFICATIONS—PICTURESQUE SCENERY, PURE WATER, PERFECT DRAINAGE, AMPLE HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS—A RAILROAD FROM THE FOREST CITY, THE SEAPORT OF THE EMPIRE STATE OF THE SOUTH, TO THE SEA—A GIGANTIC ENTERPRISE CONCEIVED AND SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHED BY CAPTAIN D. G. PURSE, A PROMINENT CAPITALIST AND CITIZEN OF SAVANNAH.

B. H. RICHARDSON.

Within the past twenty years, particular attention has been directed to the South, especially in the North and the West; and hundreds of thousands of the representative people of these sections have been attracted to its sunny clime in search of recreation and health, and particularly in winter, from a desire to escape the rigors of their own climate. Naturally, this annual inflow of strangers has acted as a stimulus upon the Southern people, and with the purpose of encouraging it they have exerted their best efforts.

The tide of travel has been particularly directed to Georgia and Florida, and Savannah, the chief seaport of the Empire State of the South has been the Mecca to which thousands of these pilgrims have wended their way. While hundreds have remained in that lovely city but a few days, thousands more have been charmed by its picturesque beauty and have lingered longer.

For health seekers and tourists few cities offer greater attractions in the South than Savannah, with its lovely squares and parks, its monuments, its handsome churches, its superb Art Gallery and Historical Society Library, Hospitals, Infirmaries, Masonic Temple, Odd Fellows Hall, and other Society Halls and Military Armories, and it is not surprising, that with its equable climate, its unsurpassed transportation facilities and its grand market, from which are supplied not only the products of Southern soil, luxuries of its waters such as fish in every variety, oysters, clams, crabs, and shrimp, but the choicest articles of the Northern and Western markets. Savannah, therefore, is popular with those seeking health and recreation. With all these advantages, however, there was something lacking to fill the full measure of the desire, not alone of the stranger, but those to the "manner born."

New York has her Long Branch, New Jersey her Cape May, Maryland her Eastern Shore, Rhode Island her Nantucket, and Savannah, equally fortunate, scarcely realized that she had at her arm's length, as it were, an Island with attractions and resources capable of development that would compare favorably as a pleasure resort with any of the places named. It remained for an energetic citizen, a man of broad views, nerve and determination, to grapple the situation, conceive the scheme from which would be evolved a plan for utilizing the resources of this island, and develop it into a resort that would prove attractive alike to the summer health and pleasure seekers nearer home, as well as the tourist and invalid from the bleak North. This man was Captain D. G. Purse, and what he has secured to the people of interior Georgia and her sister Southern States, who seek the sea coast during the summer for health and recreation, as well as for the enfeebled invalid, and the wealthy pleasure tourist from the North in winter, is told briefly within these

pages, in which narrative the writer has endeavored to present a truthful yet graphic description of the "Long Branch of the South,"

TYBEE ISLAND.

Tybee, far famed, delightful Tybee, whose shores are laved by the bounding billows of the broad Atlantic, is the most important link in the chain of islands which fringe the South Atlantic coast from Charleston to Fernandina.

It is at the entrance to the harbor of Savannah and within its road-stead vessels find safe anchorage during the most tumultuous storms. In 1874 the island first came into prominence as a fashionable seaside resort, and grew rapidly in favor, and it would have been to-day, what it is hoped to make it in the near future, but for want of perfect connection with the main land. This drawback is being rapidly removed by the Railroad now in process of construction, connecting the Island with Savannah, which will reduce the time of the trip from two hours to thirty minutes.

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE ISLAND.

The most careful research has failed to fix definitely the exact time of the settlement of Tybee, but it would appear from the best information that at an early period in the life of the Georgia colony the Island was peopled, though not very thickly settled. It is highly probable, however, that it was occupied a short time previous to the settlement of Savannah by people from the neighboring South Carolina Islands.

THE FIRST PRAYER ON TYBEE.

One of the most interesting and note-worthy incidents in connection with the history of Tybee is that upon its soil the Rev. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism in America, uttered his first

prayer in Georgia. Every reader of history will recollect what was called "the great embarcation" from England which left the port of Liverpool in December, 1735. Prominent among that company were John Wesley, David Nitschmann, Sr., a venerable Moravian Bishop, who had suffered persecution, imprisonment and almost death in Germany, and who was now leading another colony of Moravians to join their brethren already settled near Savannah. It was indeed a rare company. They had been out for fifty-seven days, crowded together in small ships, when their hearts were gladdened by the sight of Tybee; they felt that their long and dangerous voyage was ended, and disembarking safely on the Island immediately their hearts were uplifted in thankfulness to the Creator for the preservation of their lives. What a spectacle it must have been, that the beach at Tybee presented on that calm Sunday morning in February, 1735, when the Rev. John Wesley, surrounded by these people, who were seeking in the new world relief from oppression and persecution, and the enjoyment of their religious convictions, on bended knees and with bowed heads, gave utterance to words of adoration and thankfulness to the Almighty, who had safely brought them "to the haven where they would be."

THE LIGHT HOUSE.

As early as 1733 a light-house, to rise ninety feet above the surface,—was by direction of General Oglethorpe, begun near the northern end of Tybee Island, and a guard was there posted. It was intended for the guidance of vessels entering the Savannah river. Moore informs us that "this beacon was to be twenty-five feet square at the base, ninety feet high, and ten feet each way at the top."

It was to be constructed "of the best pine, strongly timbered, raised upon cedar piles and brickwork round the bottom."

He adds that, when finished, it would be "of good service to all shipping, not only those bound to this port, but also to Carolina, for the land of all the coast for some hundred miles is so alike, being all low and woody, that a distinguishing mark is of great consequence."

Much delay occurred in the completion of this structure, and appropriations were made from time to time, during the colonial epoch, for its repair. A plate of this tower is in the Public Record office in London, and a small engraving of it may be seen at page 88 of Harris' Memorials of Oglethorpe. In the course of time this beacon fell unto ruin and was, in later days, supplanted by the substantial light-house constructed under the auspices of the General Government.

THE ESCAPE OF GOVERNOR WRIGHT.

It will be remembered that after his escape under cover of night by way of Bonaventure from Savannah, Governor Wright took refuge on board the British fleet then lying in Tybee Roads. Subsequent to the demonstration by Barclay and Grant, in March, 1776, against the rice-laden vessels lying at the wharves at Savannah, and when the expedition had returned to its anchorage at the mouth of Savannah River, Governor Wright, the officers of the fleet, and the King's soldiers frequently went ashore on Tybee Island and utilized for their comfort and enjoyment the houses there situated. This the Republican Council of Safety determined to prevent by the destruction of those edifices.

Accordingly, an expedition consisting of riflemen, light infantry, volunteers and a few Creek Indians—led by Archibald Bulloch, on the 25th of March, 1776, made a descent upon the Island and burned every house except one in which a sick woman and several children were found. Two marines from the fleet and a Tory were killed, and one marine and several Tories were captured. Although the Cherokee man of war and an armed sloop kept up an incessant fire, the "Rebel" party,—consisting of about one hundred men,—sustained no loss, and returned to Savannah in safety having fully executed the prescribed mission.

After the capture of Savannah in December, 1778, by Colonel Campbell, the British constructed a fort near the light-house on the northern extremity of Tybee Island. It was an earth-work, covered now by the site purchased by the United States Govern-