

# THE HISTORY OF HUNTING ISLAND

(CONT. FROM WEBSITE)

**1863**—The northern portion of Hunting Island was purchased by Henry McKee.

**1874**—Positioned  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the ocean, a new lighthouse was built and quickly criticized for being too far from the shore. (It had to be moved in 1889 because of erosion.) The plans for the lighthouse considered the possibility it would need to be moved, and it was built of curved cast iron panels that weighed about 1,200 pounds each. They were interchangeable in any location in the tower. The interior was lined with brick linked to iron flanges on the shell, and cast iron stairs and decks filled the circular structure. The light, a second order Fresnel, sat 133 feet above average high tide. Only one class of lighthouse had a more powerful beacon or a first-order Fresnel. At the time, first-order Fresnel lights existed at St. Augustine, FL, Block Island, RI, and other dangerous and well-trafficked coasts.

**1876**—The Fripp Company's portion of Hunting Island, confiscated by the Union forces, was sold for \$100 at public auction.

**1878**—A traveler wrote that Hunting Island, "which seems to have been reserved as a park for the sporting gentry, was the scene of many a glorious day's sport. The mode of hunting was for drivers with the hounds to proceed in the hollow between two ridges and beat up the deer. "The hunters kept pace on the outer side of the ridges, and as the deer

mounted to the crest they blazed away.”

**1889**—The lighthouse was disassembled and moved after only 14 years.

**1920s**—Two out-of-state people and the federal government owned Hunting Island. Dr. Arthur Wells Elting, Albany, NY, and James M. Cameron, Harrisburg, PA, maintained the island as a hunting preserve.

**1926**—The first bridge connecting Beaufort and Lady’s Island was completed.

**1929**—Plans to complete a bridge to Hunting Island were thwarted when the stock market crashed.

**1933**—The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a relief program established by Franklin D. Roosevelt to assist those ravaged by the Depression by putting them to work on the nation’s natural resources. Hunting Island was one of 16 state parks built in South Carolina by the CCC.

**1935**—Several Beaufort citizens traveled to meet with the island’s owners in New York and Pennsylvania and convinced them to donate the land to Beaufort County for a public park and game sanctuary. The idea of a public park was revived.

**1936**—Beaufort County acquired the entire island when the federal government granted the lighthouse property.

**1938**—Discovering the costs of building the park too costly, the county deeded Hunting Island to the South Carolina Commission of Forestry. The

CCC worked from April 1938 to April 1942 building the Hunting Island Causeway across two miles of marshland, constructing picnic shelters, the CCC camp, oyster ovens, and drinking fountains. The African-American facilities were on the north end and the White facilities were on the south end. The most difficult part of the work was battling mosquitoes. In April 1942, the US entered World War II, and the CCC halted its work on Hunting Island. Except for the causeway, most structures built by the CCC have been destroyed by hurricanes and erosion. During a hurricane in 1938, workers took shelter in the lighthouse from the 90 mph winds and 12-14 foot tides. On June 9 of that same year, a massive fire broke out that took three days to control, even with the help of Marines. It destroyed the lighthouse quarters and burned 2/3 of the island.

**1940**—Hunting Island was hit by another devastating hurricane.

**1940-1941**—Records show that the public was starting to use Hunting Island for recreational purposes: 1387 cars and 5717 people visited the island from July 1940 until June 1941. It was brought to a halt by the outbreak of World War II

**1942**—On April 15, 1942, the Army Air Corps began using the lighthouse as a radio station. In November, the Coast Guard took over the island to protect the coastline. The park remained closed to the public until the end of the war.

**1947**—DDT was used during World War II to eliminate malarial mosquitoes at battle sites. Although areas of malaria in the US had been greatly reduced since the 1800s, the coastal south was still heavily infected. Beginning July 1, 1947, DDT was applied to eliminate malaria in the US south and by 1949, the country was declared free of malaria. This made

places like Hunting Island much more hospitable. However, DDT was a double-edged sword. In 1962, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* published the effects DDT had on wildlife, especially birds, whose shells became too thin to support the parent's weight. By 1972 it was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency and many bird populations rebounded.

**1950s**—Electricity was run to the island and construction resumed. Bathhouses were constructed at the north end for African-Americans and at the center for White-Americans.

**1966**—Facilities at Hunting Island remained segregated until July 1966, when all South Carolina State Parks were desegregated after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**1962**—The beach receded 100 feet during winter storms.

**1967**—The South Carolina Forestry Commission transferred ownership of the island to the newly formed Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

**1993**—Friends of Hunting Island was formed as a non-profit organization to support the work done at Hunting Island State Park.

**2016**— Hurricane Mathew hit Hunting Island on October 8th, causing widespread damage, and closing the park for nearly 9 months.