

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

St. Catherine's Island  
Guala, Santa Catalina

AND/OR COMMON

St. Catherines Island (One of the Golden Isles)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Between St. Catherines Sound and Sapelo/ Sound

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

South Newport

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

First

COUNTY

Liberty

CODE

179

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- \_\_\_ BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_ SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- \_\_\_ PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- \_\_\_ BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS
- \_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- \_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_ GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- OTHER: **Recreational;**

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Edward J. Noble Foundation (Mr. Alger B. Chapman, Executor)

Natural preserve

STREET & NUMBER

460 Park Avenue - 9th Floor

CITY, TOWN

New York

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

New York 10022

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Liberty County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Hinesville

CITY, TOWN

Georgia 31313  
STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Catherines is an irregularly shaped island lying about 10 miles off the Georgia coast between St. Catherines Sound and Sapelo Sound in Liberty County. About half of the island is salt marsh. Half of the remaining acreage is wooded, and there are fine beaches on the northeast and south sides.

No structures remain from the mission period, but potsherds and other surface debris abound in certain locations. They are most plentiful in the area between Persimmon Point and Wamassee Head, where the 17th-century mission buildings were located. Archeological investigation has been limited to testing accomplished in 1959. Since the island has been in single family ownership since 1876 and maintained as a preserve, it is very likely that the informational yield from thorough excavation would be great.

The main residence on the island is an eight-bedroom house, part of which apparently dates from the 1770's, when Button Gwinnett owned the island and developed it as a plantation. C. M. Kays, who purchased the island in 1929, is responsible for the shape and size of the present structure. First he remodeled the Gwinnett house, retaining its basic shape and preserving many of its original features, including mantels, stair rail, and wideboarded, hand-pegged floors, and then doubled the existing floor space by adding a huge wing in the rear. One-and-one-half stories in height, the present complex is roofed with Ludowici tile. The original section is constructed of "tabby" (a building material made by grinding burned oyster shells for the necessary supply of lime and mixing the substance with sand, shells, and water), while the addition is frame with a stucco finish.

South of the main house are seven guest cottages. Perhaps a dozen slaves' quarters are found in several locations on the island. Built of tabby, most of them date from the early 19th-century, and while many of them are in ruins, a few are in surprisingly good condition. The main concentration of slaves' quarters is at South End Point. Other structures on the island include four residences for employees of the Noble Foundation and several barns and maintenance buildings. Boundaries of old cotton and tobacco fields are readily discernible, as are dozens of Indian burial mounds, including that of Mary Musgrove.

Since St. Catherines has been in preserve status for almost a century, it retains much of its original character and atmosphere. Therefore, St. Catherines Island in its entirety has been included in the landmark, and the boundary follows the shoreline of the island as indicated on the accompanying USGS maps.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1566-20th Century

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

[From 1566 to 1684, St. Catherines Island was one of the most important Spanish mission centers in the southeastern United States. In 1765 it became the plantation home of Button Gwinnett, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. After 1876 it rapidly developed into one of the finest country estates and private game preserves in the nation. Of special interest are the undisturbed site of the Mission of Santa Catalina, numerous Indian mounds, and residences and slaves' quarters dating from the 18th century. Owned by the Edward Noble Foundation, the island is not open to the public.]

In April 1566, eight months after founding St. Augustine, Pedro Menendez de Aviles led an expedition up the coast of Georgia to secure Spanish claims against the French. Stopping at St. Catherines Island, then known as "Guale," Menendez conferred with its Indian inhabitants and took steps to establish a mission. Months later he stationed 30 soldiers on the island, and Spain had its first outpost in Georgia.

In 1568 Jesuits officially founded a mission there called Santa Catalina. During the next century, St. Catherines continued to serve Spain as one of her most important mission centers in the New World, despite Indian uprisings and raids by colonial rivals. Following an English attack on St. Augustine in 1587, Spain abandoned her far-flung outposts and made St. Catherines her northern stronghold. In the next quarter century, persistent recommendations favoring the abandonment of St. Augustine and the relocation of the seat of government at St. Catherines attested to the significance of the island. Repeated attacks by Indian and English forces led to its abandonment in 1684, marking the first step in the diminution of Spanish influence in the Southeast.

Aborigines controlled St. Catherines in following decades. In 1749 Thomas Bosomworth married Mary Musgrove, Empress of the Creeks, and after repeated efforts obtained title to the island. In 1765 he sold it to Button Gwinnett, who soon rose to national prominence as delegate to the Continental Congress and signer of the Declaration of Independence. For a time "President of the State of Georgia," Gwinnett died in May 1777 from wounds received in a duel and the island reverted to Bosomworth, who spent his remaining days there with his second wife.

(Continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 22,265 acres

UTM REFERENCES

E 17, 48, 11, 00 / 35, 02, 88, 00

A | 17 | 48,7 | 45,0 | 35,0845,0

B | 17 | 48,7 | 8,4,0 | 34,9,8 | 7,8,0

C | 17 | 48,4 | 0,3,0 | 34,9,07,1,0

D | 17 | 48,2 | 2,1,0 | 34,9,06,9,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Item #7).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

(Map redrawn and boundary described by Francine Weiss 5/6/76)

NAME/TITLE

John D. McDermott

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

1100 "L" St., N.W.

CITY OR TOWN

Washington,

DATE

7/9/69

TELEPHONE

STATE

District of Columbia

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

8/30/70

June 15, 1970

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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For the next three-quarters of a century, the island belonged to the Walburgs, who thoroughly developed its plantation aspects, and to the Rodriguez family, who sold it in 1876 to the socially prominent Rauers of Savannah. Subsequently the island became one of the finest country estates and private game preserves in the nation. C. M. Kays of New York bought the property in 1929 and made a number of improvements. In 1943 Edward J. Noble, the lifesaver candy king, purchased the island for a winter retreat. After his death, St. Catherines became a holding of the Noble Foundation.

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- Burnette Vanstory, Georgia's Land of the Golden Isles (Athens, 1956).  
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E. M. Coulter, Georgia: A Short History (Chapel Hill, 1947).  
WPA, Georgia: A Guide to Its Towns and Countryside (Athens, 1946).  
John W. Griffin, "Santa Catalina Mission" (NPS, June 7, 1965, Survey Files).  
John Tate Lanning, The Spanish Missions of Georgia (Chapel Hill, 1935).  
John D. Wade, "Button Gwinnett," DAB 8 (1943), 65-66.  
Caroline Cooper Lovell, The Golden Isles of Georgia (Boston, 1932).  
Interview with John Woods, St. Catherines Island, June 10, 1969.