

# SCSL Digital Collections

## The island time forgot

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# ISLAND TIME FORGOT

*By Leslie Westlake*

Nestled between Hilton Head Island, SC, and Tybee Island, Ga., is tiny Daufuskie Island. With no bridge connecting this eight-square-mile treasure to the mainland, it is only accessible by boat. The unpaved roads have seen few cars, and tourists are greatly outnumbered by graceful live oak trees shrouded in veils of Spanish moss

This southernmost tip of South Carolina may be the first Carolina sea island to be inhabited. Native Americans were here almost 5,000 years ago, living on a plentiful supply of fish, shrimp and oysters. By the 1730s, it was home to plantations of indigo and cotton. The large slave population spoke Gullah, a language combining English with various West African dialects which can still be heard, spoken by descendants who live here. With the end of the Civil War, former slaves purchased land and built small homes and farms. For decades the oyster industry thrived here, but many residents left the island to pursue job opportunities in Savannah.

Those who remained knew very little about life on the mainland. In 1953 electricity came to the island, telephones waiting until 1972. In 1969, a young teacher named Pat Conroy came to Daufuskie to instruct the island's mostly illiterate African-American children. He chronicled the experience in his best seller, *The Water Is Wide*, which became the movie "Conrack" starring John Voight. Conroy later went on to write *The Prince of Tides* and *The Great Santini*, among other novels.

Today, the island is home to Daufuskie Island Resort and Breathe Spa, Melrose and Bloody Point, golf communities and Haig Point, a private golf community. The new Billie Burn Museum, located on the island's only paved road, showcases Daufuskie's history.

Day trips to Daufuskie Island may be arranged by boat shuttle from Hilton Head Island. There are small group tours that will allow you to explore the island by kayak and golf cart. You can visit ancient Native American sites, the old Baptist Church and the school house where Pat Conroy taught. It's a lovely way to roll back time a few decades.

## FIND OUT MORE...

For ferry information, contact  
Calibogue Cruises 843-342-8687  
or The Daufuskie Island Resort Ferry  
800-648-6778.

