



HERE LIES GEORGE HATCH, the only white man to be buried on St. Vincent Island. Hatch owned the entire island the latter part of the 19th Century.

Tracing the evolution of Florida's St. Vincent Island

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St. Vincent Island is a natural barrier island located eight miles from Apalachicola Florida on its eastern end and only one third of a mile from the continent at Indian Pass on the western end of the island. St. Vincent is a national wildlife refuge with headquarters in Apalachicola.

Though owned by the federal government now, for most of the history of the United States, St. Vincent has been under ownership of private companies or individuals, including one multimillionaire patent medicine manufacturer. This is a history of St. Vincent Island, up to the year

Robert J. Floyd, who purchased the island in 1858.

During the Civil War, a Confederate Fort was established on the island, called Fort Mallory after Stevens Mallory who was Secretary of the Confederate Navy.

Manning the fort was the 4th Florida Infantry, organized in August of 1861. Fort Mallory consisted of a Confederate camp, three companies of regular soldiers and six out dated cannons.

Apparently the towns people of Apalachicola didn't think too highly of the force on St. Vincent Island. When Union gunboats approached, the entire town was abandoned.

Following the death of Floyd,

plain English; or, Medicine Simplified.

Also marketed was "Dr. Pierce's Pellets." An ad placed by the World Dispensary Medical Association (circa 1888) made it quite clear that Pierce's pellets would help nervous women not be as afraid of mice, as well as helping women overcome the "peculiar weakness" incidental to their sex.

It was Pierce who introduced the large Asian deer known as sambur to St. Vincent Island. The sambur stags reach a weight of 700 pounds. About 150 of the exotic deer still inhabit St. Vincent today.

After Pierce died there was an attempt by land speculator Ver-

ufacturer. This is a history of St. Vincent Island, up to the year that it was bought by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

When the first white explorers came to St. Vincent Island it, as well as most of the region surrounding the Apalachicola River, was inhabited by the Apalachee Indians.

Around 1633, Franciscan Friars, moving westward, entered Apalachee country. The friars came to establish missions for the indians. It was they who gave St. Vincent Island its name.

The missions and the Apalachees existed until 1704. In that year the English, and Indian raiders from the north, wiped out both the missions and the Apalachee villages. The few survivors were driven away and the Apalachees ceased to exist as a tribe.

The void created by the loss of the Apalachees was filled by the Creek and Seminole Indians. These Indians claimed and occupied St. Vincent Island.

It is believed that during the 18th century, St. Vincent was visited by pirates. Treasure chests are even reportedly still buried on the island.

The island remained in Indian hands until 1811, when it was bought from them by John Forbes and Company. In 1828 the island was again sold, this time to Carnochan and Mitchell. Both Forbes and Company and Carnochan and Mitchell were mercantile houses.

It should be noted that in those early purchases, St. Vincent was not the single tract for sale. The entire area changing hands included Forbes Island, which exists in the Apalachicola River near the mouth, and Cape Sa Blas along with St. Vincent Island.

The first individual owner of St. Vincent Island was Colon

abandoned.

Following the death of Floyd, St. Vincent Island was bought at a public auction in 1868 by Colonel George Hatch. The price paid for the 11,000-plus acre island was \$3,000.

Hatch died in 1875, and was buried on St. Vincent Island. He is the only white man to ever be buried on the island. St. Vincent was sold by Hatch's widow, Elizabeth, to Edward Alexander for \$12,500, on June 12, 1890.

Ten acres of St. Vincent had been previously sold by Mrs. Hatch to the U.S. Government as a site for building a lighthouse. Alexander later sold the government the right to erect and maintain two beacon structures for a cost of \$70. However, there is no mention in historical records of any lighthouse structure ever existing on St. Vincent Island.

In 1907, Dr. Raymond Vaughn Pierce, the most famous of the island's owners, bought St. Vincent. Pierce constructed an entire residence complex on the island in 1908-09.

The doctor was a physician from Buffalo, New York. He became a millionaire by selling patent medicines to a generation of people without the benefit of Food and Drug Administration or "truth in advertising" laws.

Besides tonics known as "Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery" and "Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription," the good doctor also had published a medical text for home use. It was simply titled *The People's Common Sense Medical Advisor in*

After Pierce died there was an attempt by land speculator Vernon-Price Williams to develop St. Vincent Island from 1925 to 1939. Williams, along with the Big Four Investment Company, however, went broke before any development could take place. The Pierce estate regained control of the island.

It was in 1948 that Henry and Alfred Loomis bought St. Vincent Island for the price of \$140,000. The Loomises wanted to make the island a game preserve.

The Loomises brought zebras, eland, black buck, and a variety of exotic birds, including peacocks, to the island.

It was on Oct. 15, 1967 that the *Tallahassee Democrat* reported that St. Vincent Island would "be spared the desecration of the developer's dredge and bulldozer to be preserved forever in its natural state."

The federal Migratory Bird Conservancy had decided to buy St. Vincent Island as a managed refuge for migratory waterfowl. The conservancy paid \$2.2 million for the island. The exotic species, with the exception of the Sambur, were all removed from the island.

Title to St. Vincent Island was officially transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on July 9, 1968 at a cost of \$2,035,000, and St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge was created.

[The information for this article comes from the history files at the St. Vincent National Refuge Headquarters in Apalachicola Florida. Next week: St. Vincent Today.]