

Cumberland Island – A Mystery Transformed Over Time:

A Research Paper Proposal

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## Cumberland Island – A Mystery Transformed Over Time

“The greatest and most lasting value of the Island is its ability to change us. It is a place of transformation. It is this intangible feature that seems to be the most important benefit which Cumberland Island has for its guests.”<sup>1</sup> Down by the coast of Saint Mary’s in South Georgia lies the state’s largest barrier island and best kept secret. Often ignored by the Jekyll island traveler, this quaint surprise intertwines history, geography and the environment to tell a colorful story.

For my place paper project, I chose to research Cumberland Island in terms of its history, geography and its environment. The island has a rich history; from the original inhabitants of the island about four thousand years ago, Spanish missions in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, plantation owners who brought with them slaves, the influence of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Carnegie family and finally, the development of the National Seashore and John F. Kennedy Jr.’s wedding.<sup>2</sup>

The geography of the island ties in with its diverse environment. I will create a GIS map of the parts of the island that I explore, what important markers I find in these places and how those markers relate to my project. Then, I will overlay this map over the available data of the island in order to give the viewer a more comprehensive understanding of the island and its features.

Both the geography and history of the island have an impact on its environment. The introduction of horses by the Spanish, invasive species such as hogs that devastate the island’s

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1 "Home." Cumberland Island. January 1, 2014. Accessed January 20, 2015. <http://cumberlandisland.com/>.

2 "History." Cumberland Island. January 1, 2014. Accessed January 20, 2015. <http://cumberlandisland.com/the-island/history/>.

ecosystem, armadillo that migrated to the island from the West due to habitat loss<sup>3</sup> – all link together with history and geography. For this environmental component of my paper, I will attempt to compare and contrast native and invasive species in relation to the island's history, as well as discuss the impact of plantations and the Civil War on the island.

I hope to effectively capture information by taking pictures and creating an effective map of the areas I explore. I also would like to consult with the rangers and other professionals working on the island by asking questions about the island. In addition, I seek to amplify my research by using old documents, maps, pictures and/or records of the island from the University system of Georgia libraries.

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<sup>3</sup> "History." Cumberland Island. January 1, 2014. Accessed January 20, 2015. <http://cumberlandisland.com/the-island/history/>.

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