



This month's images of Ellen and Anson Dodge were donated to the Coastal Georgia Historical Society archives by Eugenia Price, who told their tale in her novel *The Beloved Invader*.

A June Wedding for Star-Crossed Lovers

In 1868, William E. Dodge and his son, Anson Greene Phelps Dodge, Sr., of New York founded the Georgia Land and Lumber Company, which acquired 300,000 acres of pine timber between the Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers in middle Georgia. The family also established mills at Gascoigne Bluff on St. Simons Island to process the timber for the worldwide market. This enterprise brought young Anson Phelps Dodge, Jr., to St. Simons Island to visit his father. During his stay, the island's Christ Church, in ruins after the Civil War, made a deep impression on Dodge, who was at the center of a controversial romance.

In June 1878, Anson, Jr., had fallen in love with his first cousin, Ellen Ada Dodge, at the Golden Wedding Anniversary cel-

ebration of their grandparents, William and Melissa Dodge. Anson was eighteen and had recently begun working for his youngest uncle in Ontario, Canada. Ellen was only sixteen. Her father, the Reverend David Stuart Dodge, was on leave from his position as professor of modern languages at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, which he had helped establish in 1866. This college later became the American University of Beirut, Lebanon.

After the anniversary celebration, Anson followed Ellen to the home her father was renting near Philadelphia. On September 1, the couple fled to Washington, D.C., with the intention of eloping. The story became front page news in the *New York Times*, which reported that the couple had registered as "Mr. and Mrs. Young," tak-

ing separate rooms in the Ebbitt House Hotel. According to the article, a detective hired by Ellen's father located the couple shortly before Anson returned to the hotel with the marriage license. Ellen's parents arrived later and "a general reconciliation ensued." Anson returned to Canada, but the pair remained committed to each other. They married two years later in London on June 4, 1880.

Unfortunately, Anson and Ellen's happiness was short lived. After visiting St. Simons Island, they embarked on an extended honeymoon trip around the world. In 1883, Ellen became ill and died in Allahabad, India. Anson returned to St. Simons Island and rebuilt Christ Church as a memorial to his late wife. He served as the church's rector until his own death in 1898.

Our monthly images on this page are from the vast archives of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society. The Society's mission includes the "administration, restoration and maintenance of historic facilities and resources ... preserved as a living part of the historical and cultural foundations of our coastal community." Society facilities include the St. Simons Lighthouse and Museum, the A.W. Jones Heritage Center, and the World War II Home Front Museum at the Historic Coast Guard Station. To learn more about the Society, its diverse programs, and the benefits of Society membership, please call 912.638.4666, or visit coastalgeorgiahistory.org.