



## Wintering on Jekyll Island

The Jekyll Island Club was formed as an exclusive hunting resort for wealthy northerners, opening for its first winter season in January 1888. Its members viewed their island retreat as a quiet, rustic, and warm escape from their busy lives in cities with cold climates such as New York and Chicago. The Club was popular through the beginning of the Great Depression, when financial reverses and shifting vacation trends began to take their toll. It would eventually close in 1942, in spite of the best efforts of some of its members to keep the tradition of wintering on the Georgia coast alive.

Seeking out publicity was just one of the tactics Bernon Prentice, who replaced J.P. Morgan, Jr. as club president in 1938, used to attract new members and keep the organization afloat. In previous decades the Club had shunned

publicity, preferring to maintain a low profile. A partner in the prestigious Wall Street firm Dominick & Dominick, Prentice was an avid tennis player who had twice chaired the U.S. Davis Cup committee. At Jekyll Island, he publicized the results of golf, tennis, and lawn bowling tournaments to raise awareness of the Club's activities. The Club also sponsored exhibition golf matches featuring professional champions such as Sam Snead.

This month's image from the Coastal Georgia Historical Society archives was taken at the Tea House at the Great Dunes golf course in 1940 and shows (from left) Felipe A. Espil and Hugh Dudley Auchincloss with Bernon Prentice and his wife Josephine. A cropped version was featured in the *New York Sun* on March 23, 1940, probably as a news release from the Club.

Espil was Argentina's Ambassador to the United States from 1931 to 1943 and was married to an American socialite from Chicago, Courtney Letts Borden. Auchincloss, a wealthy stockbroker and lawyer, was at different times the stepfather of author Gore Vidal and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. This image shows that, although in decline in 1940, the Club was still a refuge for America's rich and famous. Despite Prentice's efforts, membership continued to fall, and the Club closed a few months after America entered World War II, never to reopen.

More information about the Club's history can be found in William B. and June H. McCash's book *The Jekyll Island Club: Southern Haven for America's Millionaires*, which features a number of photographs from the Society's Richard Everett Collection.