

NEWCOMERS & Neighbors

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Enrolling in School

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

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Publisher's Letter:

Welcome to Bryan County

BRYAN COUNTY and its communities, such as Richmond Hill, Pembroke and Ellabell, are well known for genuine Southern hospitality. The 2011-12 Newcomers and Neighbors Guide continues that tradition by extending a warm welcome to new arrivals. This guide will help you get to know Bryan County quickly. You'll find valuable information about schools, local government, utilities, churches, civic clubs, recreation, neighborhoods, health care and more.

Bryan County is a place rich with history. When Henry Ford came to the small community of Ways Station in the early part of the century, he laid the foundation for what would become Richmond Hill. Ford built a school, which now houses a museum for the Richmond Hill Historical Society, and a chapel, now St. Anne's Catholic Church.

Pembroke is the county seat and has a rich heritage of close-knit families helping each other create a strong sense of community.

The annual Great Ogeechee Seafood Festival held each October in Richmond Hill is considered one of the finest community festivals in the Southeast, and thousands of people attend the Christmas Parade in Pembroke and Richmond Hill every year.

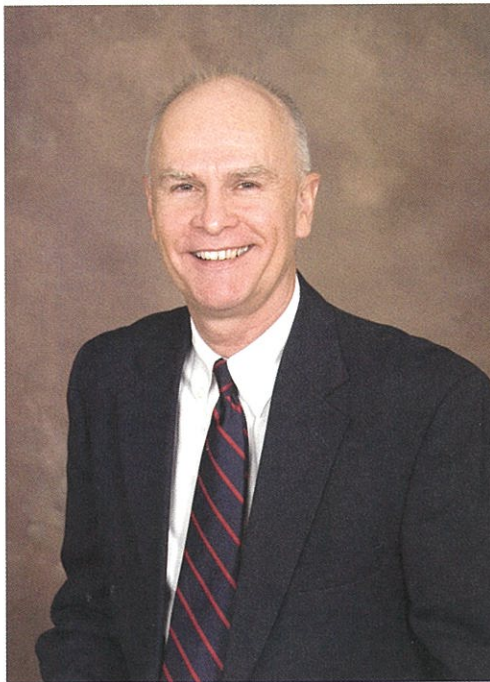
We're proud of our schools in Bryan County. Parents are involved, and teachers and administrators are fully focused on excellence, which helps create superior schools with strong academic standards and well-rounded extracurricular activities.

Our population in Bryan County continues to grow, and it is expected to keep doing so in the coming years. Though the community is a growing one, it maintains the small-town atmosphere it's known for — one where newcomers and longtime residents work together.

So we offer you a warm welcome to Bryan County, and we hope you will get involved in our schools, neighborhoods, churches and civic organizations. When you do, you will find that you'll make more than new friends. You'll also help make a difference.

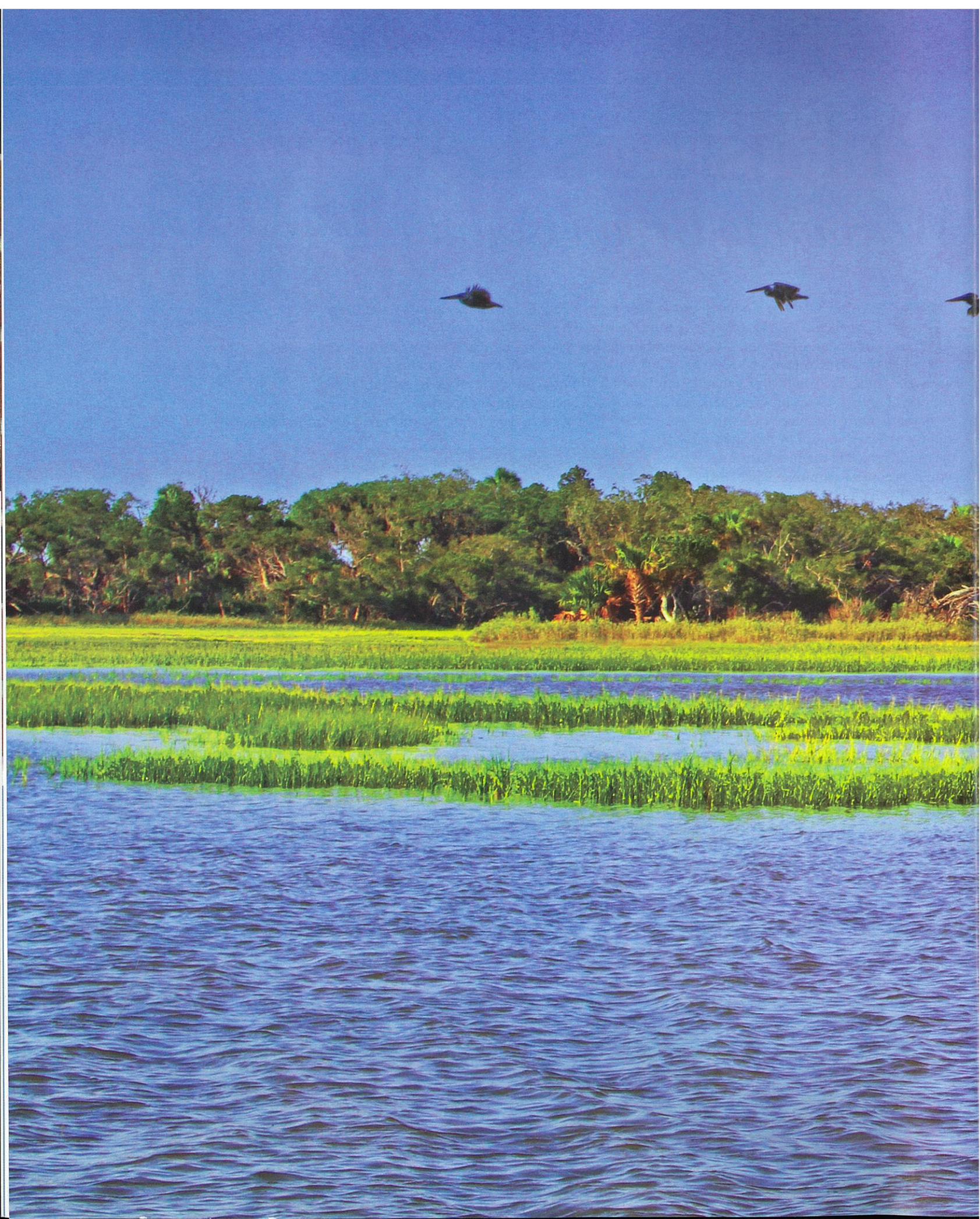
And know that the advertisers in this guide are at your service. As friends in your new community, they stand ready to help you. We thank them for making this guide a true resource for newcomers to Bryan County.

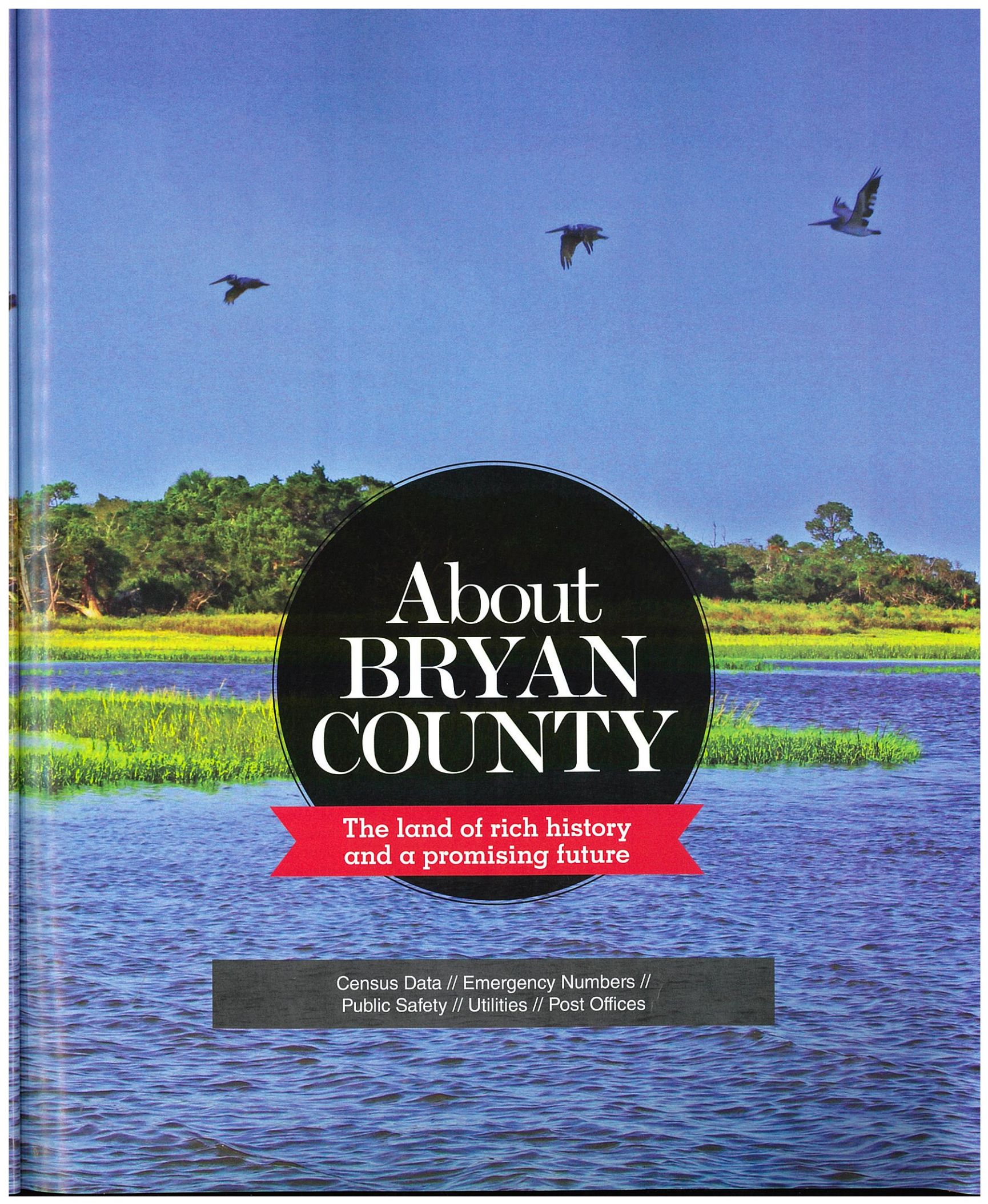
S. Marshall Griffin
Publisher



On the Cover:

Richmond Hill friends and family enjoy a sunny afternoon walk along the wooded trails of J.F. Gregory Park. *Photo provided by Cobblestone Photography.*

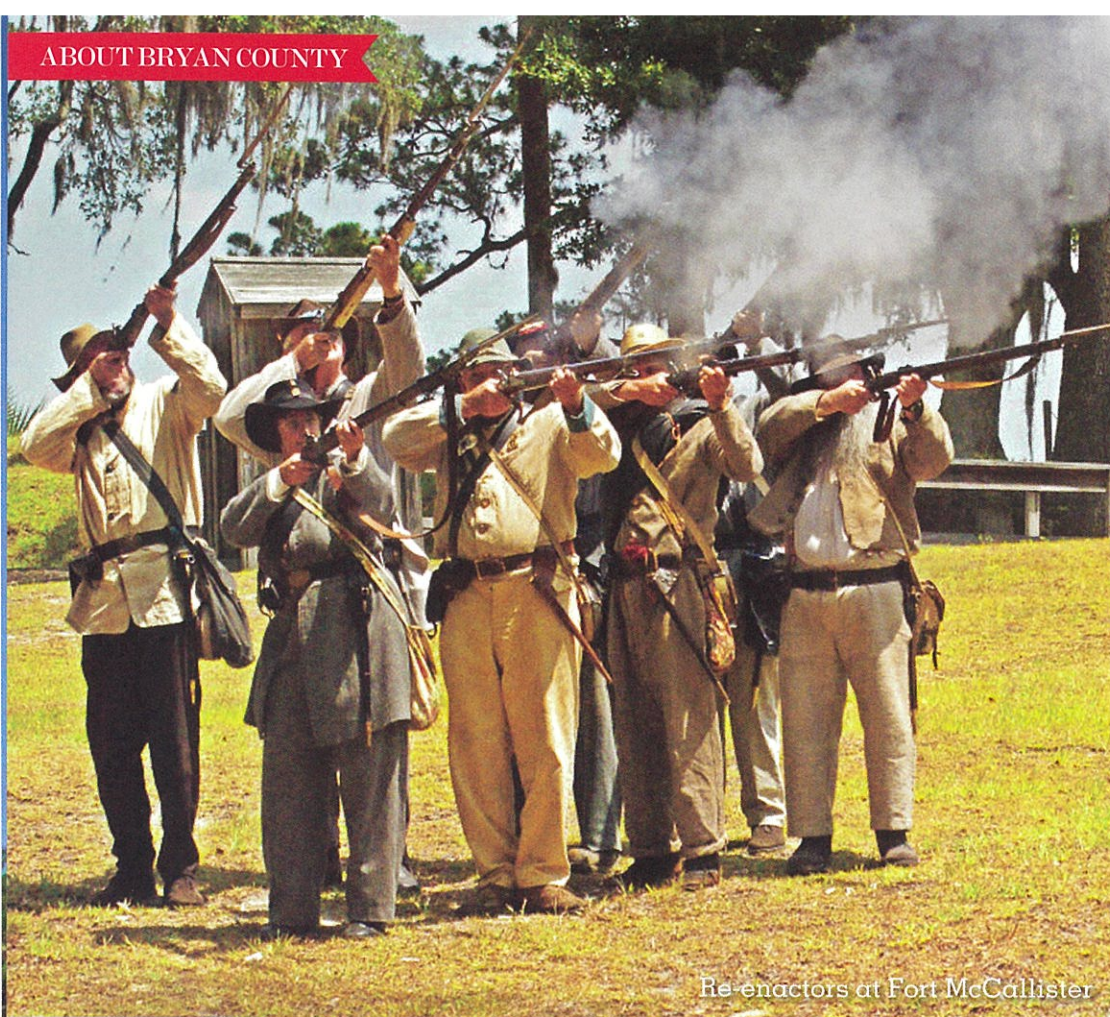




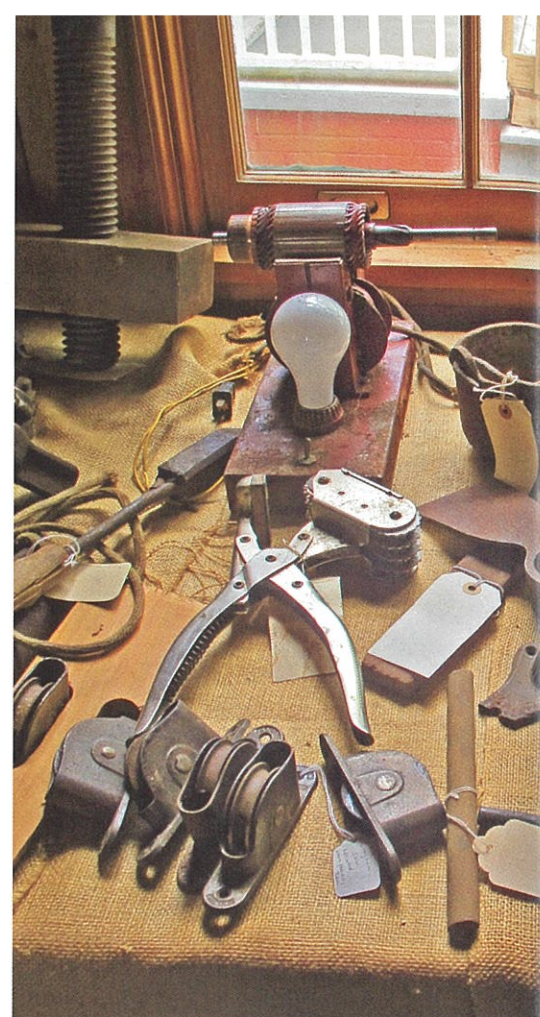
About BRYAN COUNTY

The land of rich history
and a promising future

Census Data // Emergency Numbers //
Public Safety // Utilities // Post Offices



Re-enactors at Fort McCallister



Going Back in Time

by Al Hackle

First Sherman, then Ford

Union forces under Gen. William T. Sherman fought the last battle of their March to the Sea right here in Bryan County when they overwhelmed Confederates holding Fort McAllister. But a later visitor from the North, automobile magnate Henry Ford, left more lasting marks on the area.

Settlement in what is now Bryan County dates back thousands of years, with Native American groups inhabiting the coast. The first known European arrivals were the Spanish, who established a mission at the mouth of the Ogeechee River around 1610. When the British, commanded by James Edward Oglethorpe, arrived to found Savannah in 1733, they built an out-

post called Fort Argyle on the west bank of the Ogeechee (the Fort Argyle historical marker is on Georgia Hwy. 144, 4.2 miles west of the intersection with Hwy. 17.)

Founded in 1793, Bryan County was named for Jonathan Bryan, a colonial settler involved in the creation of Georgia.

Fort McAllister

Fort McAllister State Historic Park displays the fully restored earthen fort. Visitors can explore the grounds and see cannons, barracks and bombproof shelters laid out much as they were during the Civil War. The museum displays other artifacts and shows an interpretive video.

Built by the Confederates in 1862, Fort

McAllister was attacked from the sea seven times by Union ironclads but did not fall until Sherman's land army arrived with a brief but bloody charge on Dec. 13, 1864.

One unusual feature of the fort is its hotshot furnace, used to heat cannonballs red hot before they were fired at approaching ships.

The furnace works but is rarely demonstrated, says Park Manager Daniel Brown. But the park staff does perform musket firings as part of historical demos at 1 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. The park is open every day of the year, even major holidays, with facilities available for camping, hiking, picnics and boating.

While inextricably associated with Sherman, Fort McAllister is also linked to that



Items on display at the Richmond Hill Museum

Bryan County was officially established in 1793 by the state legislature in honor of Jonathan Bryan as one of Georgia's founders.

other prominent northerner who came to Bryan County, Henry Ford. Ford purchased Fort McAllister in the 1930s as part of his vast landholdings in coastal Georgia and restored it before it became state property.

Richmond Hill Museum

Ford, America's first billionaire, came to the Georgia coast looking for a summer home in 1925. He started buying property from various owners and ultimately owned more than 80,000 acres.

Before Ford, the town that is now Richmond Hill was Ways Station, Ga. Plantation owner William Ways had sold land to the railroad before the tracks were laid in 1856, explains Frank Grimm, caretaker of



the Richmond Hill Museum. But the spot where Henry Ford built his mansion in the 1930s was on the former Richmond Plantation. When local people wanted to rename the town for Ford, he declined, and Ways Station became Richmond Hill in 1939.

The Richmond Hill Museum, on the corner of Ford Avenue and Timber Trail Road, occupies a building that Ford built to serve as a public kindergarten. One room of the 3,000-square-foot museum is preserved as a schoolroom. Tour guides note other contributions Ford made to education in the area, such as the old George Washington Carver School he built for African Americans, replacing several one-room schools with a more modern facility.

Another exhibit showcases items made in the local Ford laboratory, which attempted to find plants that could be grown in the U.S. that would supply rubber for tires. Among the items is a pair of socks made of rayon from sweetgum trees.

The museum, operated by the nonprofit Richmond Hill Historical Society, also features displays on the antebellum period and Civil War. It is open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. every day except Wednesday, Sunday and

holidays. Tours are free, but donations are appreciated. Call (912) 756-3687 or visit the website, <http://richmondhillhistorical-society.com>, for more information.

By the way, Henry Ford's mansion still stands on the grounds of the Ford Plantation, now a private, 1,800-acre residential and sporting community with 400 home sites.

Historic Pembroke

The Bryan County seat, Pembroke, proudly exhibits its own historical character as a century-old railroad town. Founded in 1894 as a depot site, the town was named for a prominent early resident, Judge Pembroke Whitfield Williams, and incorporated as a city in 1905.

Pembroke became the county seat in 1937, replacing Clyde, a town that stood within what is now the Fort Stewart military reservation.

Before and after its 2005 centennial, the city of Pembroke has taken an active role in historic preservation. The city purchased the Tos Theatre, a long-abandoned downtown cinema, for \$50,000 in 2001, along

Ways Station became Richmond Hill in 1939.

with an adjacent drug store building. Plans are being made to restore these as a venue for the arts and community events.

Another preserved historic building is the Old City Jail, near the Bryan County Courthouse. The cube-shaped brick jail was built as a one-room structure in 1912. But as its historical marker indicates, the city of Pembroke purchased the town of Clyde's two-cell iron jail assemblage in 1938 and incorporated the iron cells into the jail before Clyde was demolished to make way for Camp Stewart. ■

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Bryan County Courthouse

BRYAN COUNTY — *Where we live*

by Al Hackle

NEIGHBORLY, small-town quiet and safety with suburban amenities. Top-notch schools. Live oaks and salt marsh. Fishing piers and boat ramps.

Add to that the variety of neighborhood settings available, from long-established towns to the trendiest new golf and waterfront communities, and you have the short list of reasons people find for making Bryan County their home.

“The first thing that I think makes Richmond Hill so great is the people that live here,” says Mayor Harold Fowler.

Richmond Hill, with 9,281 residents as

of the 2010 U.S. Census, is home to just under one-third of the Bryan County's population of 30,233, and many other folks who think of themselves as “from Richmond Hill” live in subdivisions outside the city limits.

Those 2010 population counts are probably low-ball by now. Continuing home sales indicate that the county's population growth, which topped 29 percent in the previous decade, hasn't stopped.

“We have a low crime rate — I think that's a direct reflection of our excellent police department, which I'm very proud of — and probably the excellent school system is another huge advantage that makes

Richmond Hill such a livable community,” says City Manager Mike Melton.

Asked to name something unique that city offers, officials described J.F. Gregory Park. The city-owned park, which includes a lake and wetlands, hosts the Great Ogeechee Seafood Festival every year. Crowds for the late October event have grown in recent years to exceed 30,000 guests.

Local people, Fowler observes, believe in helping one another. So they preserve a welcoming small-town feeling in this bustling corner of the Savannah metro area, he says. As evidence, he cites the many charitable fundraising projects held throughout the year.



Pembroke Mayor Judy Cook certainly doesn't disagree with that. Besides the neighborly spirit of the people, she touts her city government's efforts to keep Pembroke green and pedestrian-friendly and to preserve its charm as a century-old railroad town. The 2010 Census counted just 2,196 people within the city limits, but Pembroke holds a bigger-than-numbers status as the seat of Bryan County's government and the hub of its north-end communities.

"Here in Pembroke, we're in walking distance of everything, and we have a lot of people who walk," Cook notes. "And you'll notice we have a lot of green space."

Using special purpose local option sale tax, or SPLOST, revenue and other funding, the city has been systematically buying land for creation of green spaces in the form of passive parks, such as Rosa Strickland Park with its central fountain. Downtown, Pembroke has applied a series of Transportation Enhancement Act grants to install brick walks and classic lampposts. Historic preservation plans include the restoration of the Tos Theatre, now city-owned, as a cultural hub.

Recently developed subdivisions such as Pembroke Place are nestled away in qui-

et corners of town, and McFadden Place provides stylish housing for senior citizens, Cook observes.



"People
move here
because of the
schools, the low
taxes, the low
crime and just
the way of
life."



Outside the cities, Bryan County subdivisions continue to sprout, from Ellabell and Black Creek in the north end to below Richmond Hill in the south.

"What I find just in the real estate busi-

ness is people move here because of the schools, the low taxes, the low crime and just the way of life," says Eddie Warren. "You know, the water, the location, being close to the airport, close to the beaches, on the rivers, the small-town atmosphere."

A uniquely positioned observer, Warren is a real estate agent with ReMax Accent and a member of the Bryan County Board of Education. As he notes, Bryan County schools have posted some of Georgia's top scores on standardized tests for years running and, in addition to millage rates lower than some neighboring counties, the school board and county commissioners provide a homestead exception for senior citizens.

Another factor Warren sees is the proximity to the larger city. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport and Pooler's restaurants, theaters and shopping are a few minutes drive for many North Bryan residents, while Savannah's malls and other southside amenities are equally close to Richmond Hill. He wishes shopping opportunities would expand within the county but notes that the residential real estate market has remained vibrant.

"No matter where you are in Bryan County, it's a great place to live," Warren says. ■

Bryan County Census Data

The following statistical data estimates are courtesy of the Coastal Regional Commission, U.S. Census Bureau, Bestplaces.net and City-Data.com:

Countywide population (2010)

30,233

Ellabell
7,281

Pembroke
2,633

Richmond Hill/South Bryan
11,280



Male

49.5

Under 18

29.7%



Female

50.5%

Over 65

8.1%

Countywide households

10,616

Median family income
\$58,092



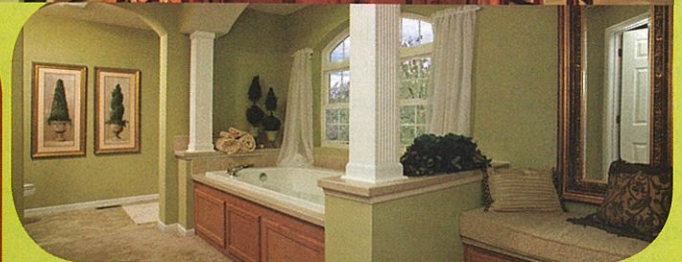
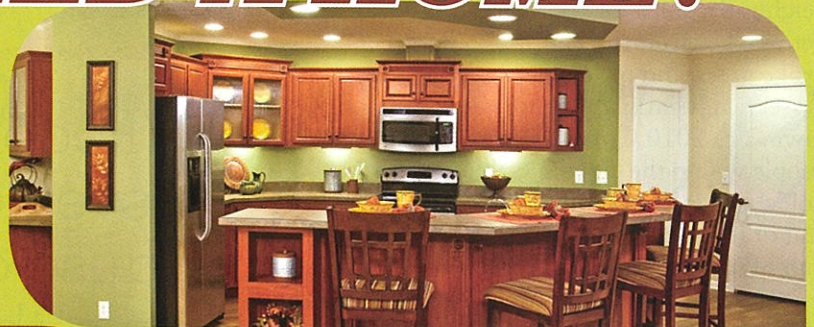
Homeownership rate

75.7%

Projected population by 2015

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Assistant Fire Chief Susan Clark steps into a fire truck at Station 9 in South Bryan.
Photo provided by Bryan County News.



Protecting *Bryan County*

by Al Hackle

BRYAN COUNTY Emergency Services uses social media, email and a well-stocked website, as well as the news media and face-to-face briefings, to help residents prepare for hurricanes and other disasters.

With its headquarters on Hwy. 204, Emergency Services is the umbrella agency that includes the county Fire Department, Emergency Medical Service and the Emergency Management Agency. Emergency Services workers coordinate their efforts and strive to keep the community informed.

"We do public awareness briefings periodically throughout the year and hold exercises for the public safety personnel," says former director Jim Anderson.

Besides updating its website, www.bryancoemergencyservices.org, the agency

maintains a presence on Facebook and Twitter. Citizens who want even more information can use a tab on the EMA page of the website to request inclusion in the Emergency Services email group.

"We blast-email hurricane updates if we're watching one or if we have a big forest fire incident," Anderson says.

Emergencies

Bryan County Emergency Services responds to all emergencies, from missing persons reports to aircraft crashes to hazardous materials incidents.

Separate from the Pembroke and Richmond Hill fire departments, the Bryan County Fire Department operates from nine stations countywide. Full-time, professional firefighters are on duty 24/7, supplement-

ed by volunteers. With cross-training, the combined Fire Department/EMS workforce numbers 35 full-time personnel, and there are about 80 volunteers.

Thirteen firefighters have been trained and certified as hazmat technicians.

The number to call for most emergencies is 911.

Hurricanes: Be Ready

One tradeoff for the sun and usually gentle waves of an Atlantic coastal community is relatively high exposure to hurricanes and tropical storms.

As a storm surge map shows, Richmond Hill and much of Bryan County south of Fort Stewart can be flooded by a direct strike from even a Category 1 hurricane, while a Category 2 would also be expected

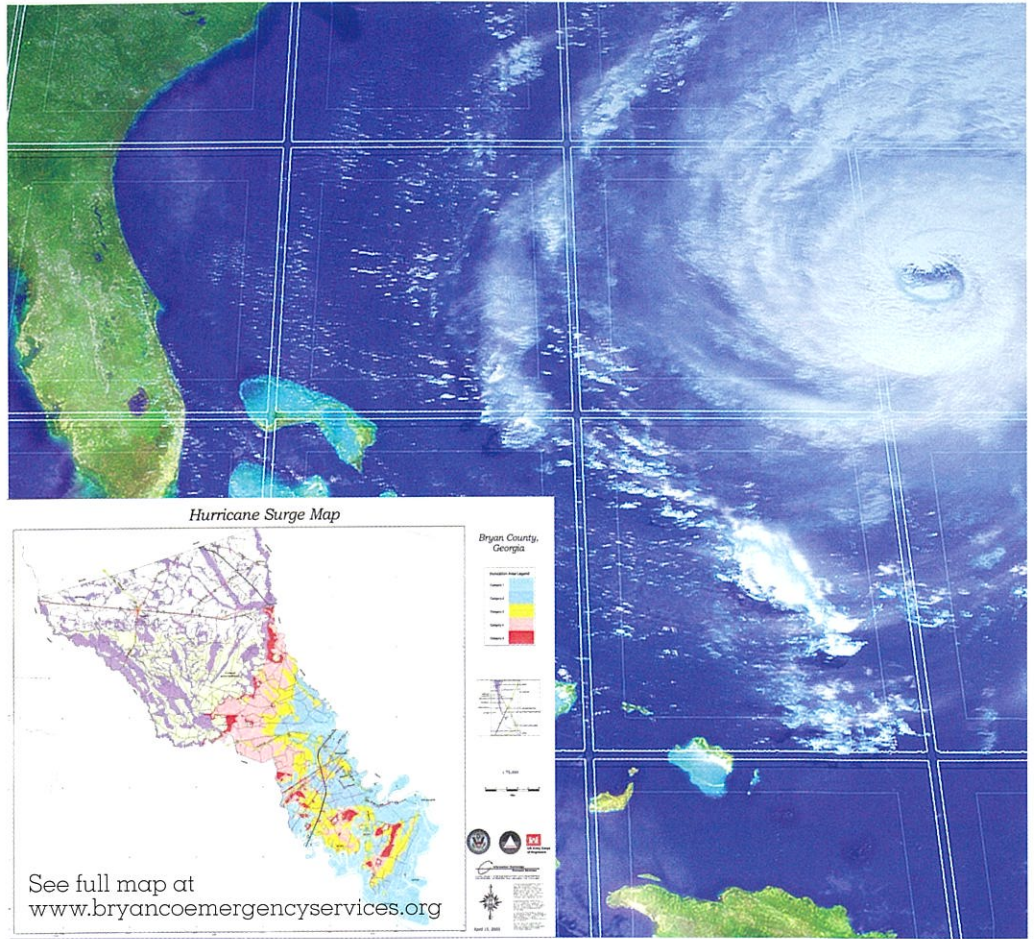
to cause widespread flooding in the northern part of the county.

This makes hurricane readiness a top priority. Each year Anderson and his staff hold hurricane preparedness briefings at announced locations in the northern and southern ends of the county, usually in May, prior to the June - November hurricane season.

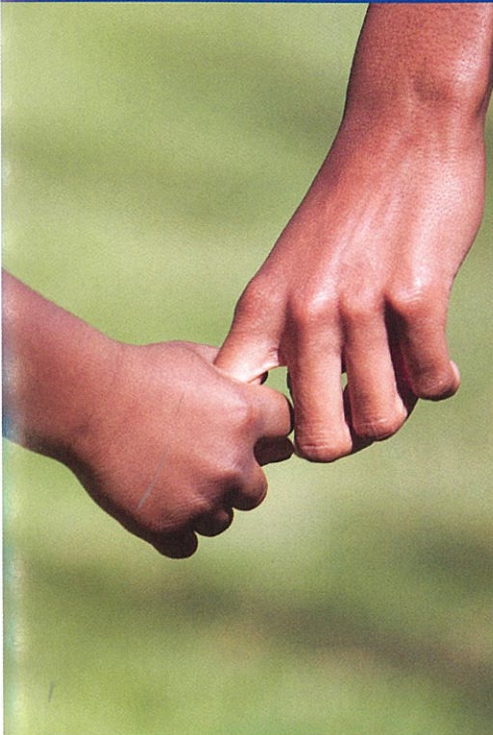
A map of evacuation routes, the storm surge map, instructions for making a disaster supplies kit and PowerPoint slides from Anderson's 2011 hurricane briefing are all available on the website, www.bryancoemergencyservices.org.

Besides keeping a kit with things such as a battery-powered radio and flashlight, bottled water, sleeping bags, canned food and a can opener, residents should know their evacuation routes and have an out-of-area contact ready in case an evacuation is ordered, Anderson advises.

From South Bryan, the main evacuation route follows Georgia Hwy. 144 westward through Fort Stewart. For North Bryan, the routes follow U.S. Hwy. 280 and Interstate-16 westward. Georgia Public Broadcasting carries emergency updates, and the local GPB Radio station is at 91.1 on the FM dial. ■



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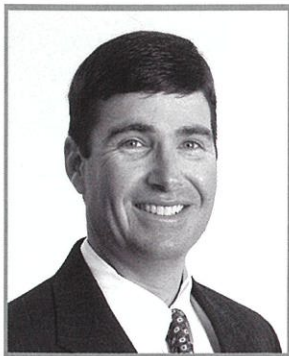
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Law Enforcement

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|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Richmond Hill Police | (912) 756-5645 |
| Pembroke Police | (912) 653-4414 |
| Sheriff's Department (Pembroke) | (912) 653-3800 |
| Sheriff's Department (Richmond Hill) | (912) 756-2282 |
| Georgia State Patrol | (912) 756-2181 |

Fire

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Bryan County Fire Department South Division Station No. 1 | (912) 727-3033 |
| North Division Station No. 5 Forest Fire | (912) 653-4782 (912) 653-4411 |

Bryan County Animal Control

| | |
|---------------|----------------|
| Richmond Hill | (912) 727-3884 |
| Pembroke | (912) 653-3816 |

Other Important Numbers

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Poison Control Center | 800-282-5846 |
| DFCS (Pembroke) | (912) 653-2805 |
| DFCS (Richmond Hill) | (912) 756-4441 |
| Coast Guard Search and Rescue | (912) 786-5106 |
| Drug Abuse Hotline | 800-662-4357 |



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Pembroke, Ga. 31321
(912) 653-3800

Richmond Hill Police

Chief Billy Reynolds
P.O. Box 250
120 Richard Davis Drive
Richmond Hill, Ga. 31324
(912) 756-5645

Pembroke Police Department

Chief Mark Crowe
P.O. Box 790
154 W. Railroad St.
Pembroke, Ga. 31321
(912) 653-4414

Fire Department

The South Division District Chief:
Mike Smith
P.O. Box 430
Pembroke, Ga. 31321
(912) 727-3033

Station No. 1
15735 Hwy. 144
Richmond Hill, Ga. 31324
(912) 727-3033

Station No. 2
95 Daniel Siding Loop Road
Richmond Hill, Ga. 31324
(912) 756-3292

Station No. 3
20580 Hwy. 144
Richmond Hill, Ga. 31324
(912) 727-2101

The North Division District Chief:
Jimmy Cook
P.O. Box 430
Pembroke, Ga. 31321
(912) 653-4772

Station No. 4
Blitchton
4747 Hwy. 80
Ellabell, Ga. 31308
(912) 858-2316

Station No. 5
Mill Creek
7392 Hwy. 280 East
Ellabell, Ga. 31308
(912) 858-2702

Station No. 6
Bacontown
4281 Bacontown Rd.
Pembroke, Ga. 31321
(912) 653-4782

Station No. 7
Headquarters
5995 Hwy. 204
Ellabell, Ga. 31308
(912) 858-2790

Station No. 8
Industrial Park
1400 Oracal Parkway
Black Creek, Ga. 31308
(912) 851-2010

EMS

Interim Director Phil Jones
P.O. Box 430
Pembroke, Ga. 31321
Phone: (912) 858-2799
Fax: (912) 858-2749
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