

Our Woods, Our Waters, Our Way of Life

GEORGIA UPDATE | FALL 2011

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Our New State Director

The Future of
the Georgia Coast

Our 2011 Supporters



nature.org/georgia

CONSERVATION WITHOUT BORDERS



THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IS THE KIND of organization that sticks with you. As a supporter, you know this: Our work *lasts*. We are in the business of caring for our woods, waters and coast for the long haul.

The future holds so much possibility, and The Nature Conservancy looks beyond borders, enabling us to make progress faster for the benefit of nature and people.

Along those lines, I am happy to be sharing my thoughts with you as the new state director for The Nature Conservancy in Georgia.

I was born and raised in Jesup, Georgia, a stone's throw from the mighty Altamaha River. I grew up playing with cousins and neighbors in longleaf pine forests, listening for my grandmother's call to dinner. I am honored to return to Georgia to lead The Nature Conservancy's work to protect the natural resources that have sustained my family and friends for generations.

I revere The Nature Conservancy. I am proud to be a member, and many years ago I made a commitment in my estate plan for

I always felt I was destined to end up back in my home state to help conserve its beauty and biodiversity.

The Nature Conservancy in Georgia. My wife, Gabrielle Horner, made the same pledge for her home state of Minnesota, where she led government relations for the Conservancy for 16 years.

I have enjoyed a long career in conservation, most recently leading fund raising for the Conservancy in the greater Washington, D.C., area. But I must confess that throughout my career, I have watched The Nature Conservancy care for the places that were the setting of my childhood, and I always felt I was destined to end up back in my home state to help conserve its beauty and biodiversity.

I have impressive shoes to fill: Shelly Lakly, who formerly held this post, is now leading the Conservancy's work in Florida. She moved her family south to tackle new challenges, but we will work together on many shared initiatives like caring for the Atlantic Ocean and restoring longleaf pine forests.

I know you share my deep love of Georgia's wild places. I invite you to become even more engaged and to help us protect our state's natural treasures. Thank you for welcoming me home, and for your commitment to conservation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Abner". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Abner
STATE DIRECTOR, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN GEORGIA



Our well-being is tied to nature and family. Mark's grandmother, Georgia Knight, instilled in him a love of fellowship over good food. Check out the back cover for their family recipe for Crab Stew.

MILESTONES ACROSS GEORGIA

1



Water sampling © Katie Owens/TNC

RESEARCH RESULTS

Through careful research, the Conservancy has identified elevated levels of metals and nutrients in the Conasauga River. Likely culprits include runoff from farms and septic tanks. Next steps will focus on working with farmers to improve water quality.

2



Tami with zebra © Maritza Roessler/TNC

GEORGIA TO AFRICA

Tami Willadsen, senior associate director of philanthropy, was invited to participate in a learning expedition to Zambia, where the Conservancy's work focuses on abundant and diverse wildlife that not only reflects a healthy ecosystem, but also can drive tourism to bring dollars directly to local communities. This experience will help Tami connect local and global conservation efforts.



3



LEAF interns © Karime Agner

TEENS AND TREES

Thirteen seniors from Arabia Mountain High School in Lithonia participated in the Conservancy's Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF) program. Some students worked as far away as North Dakota while others stayed in Georgia.

4



Coastal sedge © Michele Elmore/TNC

NEW ROOTS

Coastal sedge was recently discovered on a tract of land The Nature Conservancy is working to protect near Columbus. Found in a pitcher plant bog, this rare plant is found in other states, but this is the only known population in Georgia.

5



Scientist and shad © Steve Herrington/TNC

HELPING FISH MOVE

Dams can serve as impediments for fish, cutting them off from feeding and breeding areas. The Conservancy is expanding successful efforts to encourage fish to migrate upstream past the dam at Lake Seminole into the Flint River.

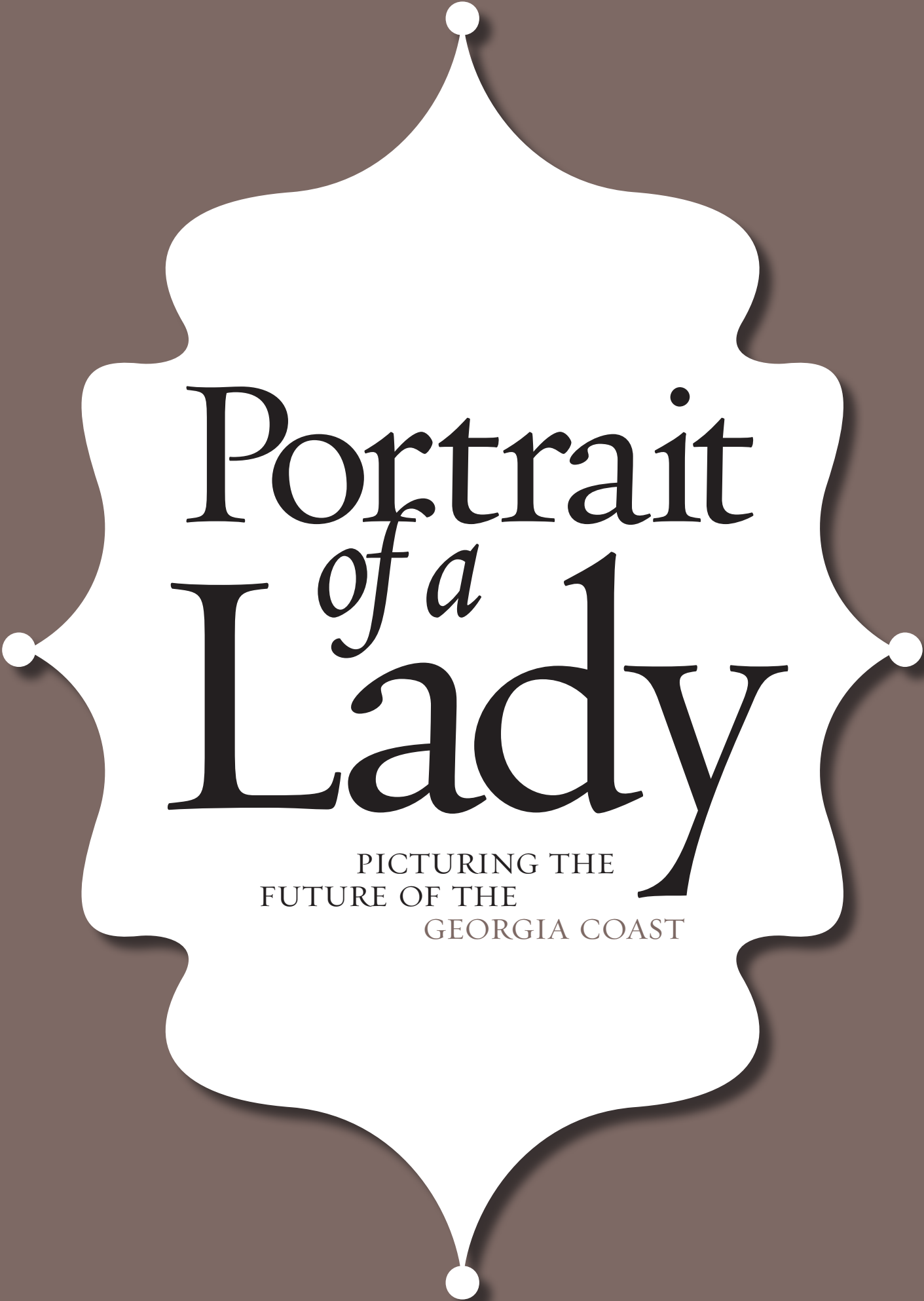
6



Interns © Eamonn Leonard/DNR

FIGHTING INVADERS

Two Conservancy interns work on a project funded in part by a grant from Georgia-Pacific to remove invasive plants like phragmites around the Altamaha River. Invasives are a threat to native flora and fauna.



Portrait
of a
Lady

PICTURING THE
FUTURE OF THE
GEORGIA COAST

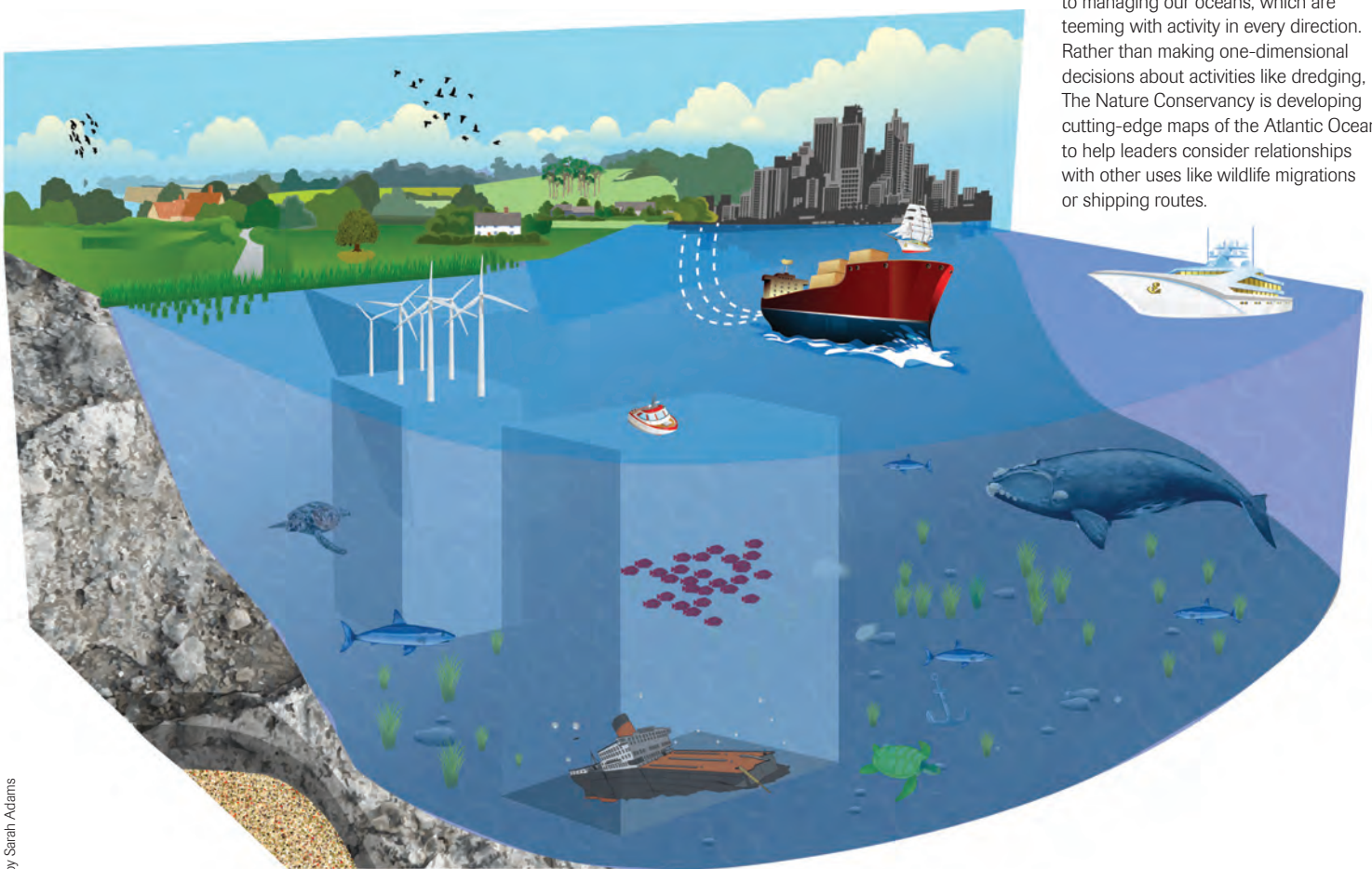
Coastal Georgia has a reputation.

With cooling breezes and the soothing rhythm of waves lapping the sand, she lulls those who journey to her shore into “island time.”

But that tranquil image is only part of her story. ➤

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Careful planning based on science can help avoid conflicts when it comes to managing our oceans, which are teeming with activity in every direction. Rather than making one-dimensional decisions about activities like dredging, The Nature Conservancy is developing cutting-edge maps of the Atlantic Ocean to help leaders consider relationships with other uses like wildlife migrations or shipping routes.



From the family-friendly shores of Tybee Island to the remote and near-pristine Little St. Simons Island, coastal Georgia does not disappoint vacationers in search of respite and relaxation.

But beneath the water's surface and beyond the horizon lies a level of activity that is complex and continuous. Whales journey to and from warmer waters on their annual migration, and birds soaring overhead do the same. Enormous barges carrying the products we buy in stores lumber into port. Turtles and fish swim in and out of reefs. Clammers and oystermen steer their boats into prime areas. And people squint into the sun, wondering if windmills will ever churn in the distance.

How do we ensure that the Atlantic Ocean will be able to maintain all of these forms and functions? From coastal development to overfishing and ever-growing waterway traffic, the risks are numerous for the Atlantic Ocean and all who depend on it.

MAP QUEST

"It can seem overwhelming," said Mary Conley, The Nature Conservancy's southeast marine conservation director. "So, as a first step, we decided that we need some maps, a way to visualize the variety of resources and uses."

Sounds easy, right? Well, this isn't exactly a map you can pick up at a gas station. "The Nature Conservancy and several partners are combining migration

paths and shipping routes, wind patterns and fisheries data, and much more, creating a tool that will help us see how the ocean is really being used," Mary said.

Similar maps have been completed along the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions of the Eastern seaboard, and Mary is leading the process for the southern section from North Carolina, past Georgia, and down to the tip of Florida.

LIGHTING THE WAY

Extending for about 100 miles, Georgia's fragile coast is recognized as one of the most naturally diverse and intact near-shore habitats in the world. The Altamaha River delta alone is visited each year by thousands of shorebirds such as red knots, whimbrels and piping plovers.

Rare birds and other wildlife aren't the only visitors who flock to the area. Coastal Georgia tourists in search of sand and sun generated more than \$1.6 billion in travel expenditures with \$117 million in tax revenue in 2010.* The cargo-laden ships that dock at Georgia's ports in Savannah and Brunswick support almost 300,000 full- and part-time jobs and generate \$15.5 billion in income.**



The next time you visit the beach or choose seafood for dinner, know that your support helps to ensure that those resources will endure. Visit nature.org/georgia to find out more about how you help restore and improve Georgia's coast.



MARY CONLEY

Once a wide range of data is collected, these multilayered maps can help avoid conflicts and offer opportunities to improve ocean conditions. For example, decisions

about shipping routes can be made without interfering with important areas for wildlife.

“Ultimately, we want to align our uses of the ocean with the places where those uses are most compatible,” said Mary. “Once this product is created, we will share it with leaders who make decisions about our oceans so they can make more informed choices in the future.”

This multifaceted approach means a great deal for the Georgia coast, helping to ensure that her serene image and complex reality will endure.

* Georgia Department of Economic Development
 ** Georgia Ports Authority



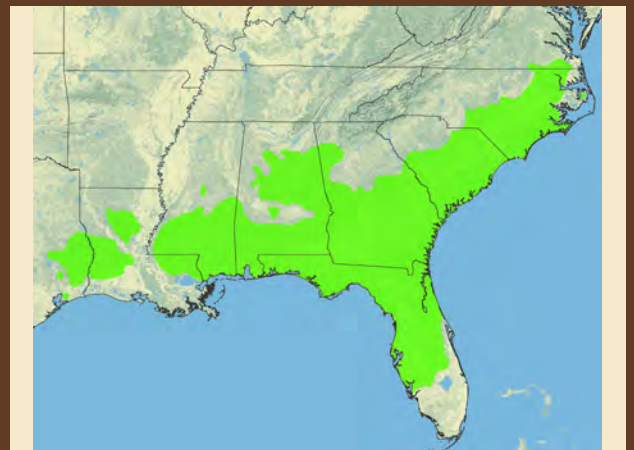
THE BIG PICTURE

Mapping the uses of the Atlantic Ocean is one example of how The Nature Conservancy is evolving. “It’s time to think big,” said Mark Abner, state director for the Conservancy in Georgia. “Rivers don’t stop at state lines, and forests don’t know if they’re in Georgia or Alabama.”

The Nature Conservancy’s commitment to science is driving us to a whole-system approach, which encourages large scale, multi-state conservation plans and outcomes. “From organizations like ours to federal and local agencies and other partners, we are taking bold steps and working across borders to ensure that nature has room to adapt as conditions change,” Mark said.

In addition to the Atlantic Ocean, other examples of this approach include the Mississippi River, the Appalachian Mountains and the longleaf pine ecosystem, where The Nature Conservancy in Georgia is leading the way.

Longleaf pine forests once stretched across nine states, yet only 3 percent remains of the 90-million acre original system that harbors rare species like red-cockaded woodpeckers, Eastern indigo snakes and gopher tortoises. “We are beginning to collectively plan land purchases and efforts to restore longleaf pine,” said Troy Ettel, the Conservancy’s newly hired director of the longleaf pine initiative. “Much has been done over time, but we now are thinking about how to do more, faster.”



ORIGINAL RANGE OF LONGLEAF PINE FORESTS

The overwhelming majority of longleaf pine forests have been lost to logging and development. Yet efforts to protect remaining stands, plant new seedlings, and restore rejuvenating fire are helping bring back these majestic trees. In Georgia, **visit the Moody Forest Preserve near Baxley** to see some old and new longleaf pine trees.

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The Nature Conservancy in Georgia is honored to recognize donors who have supported our work in the last fiscal year, July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011. We deeply appreciate every gift and regret that space limitations prevent us from listing all of our donors. Thank you for your support of The Nature Conservancy.

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OUR FAMILY TABLE CRAB STEW

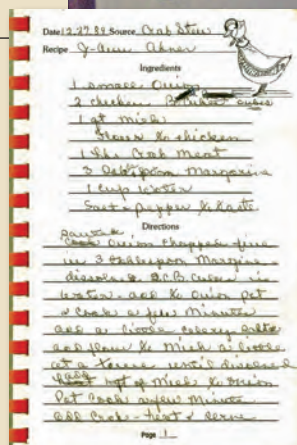
On a cool fall day, there's nothing as comforting as my grandmother's velvety Crab Stew. This special-occasion dish is a reminder of how important it is to use the resources of our oceans wisely. Look for crab meat harvested off Georgia's shore, and shop at farmer's markets for local ingredients for your holiday feasts.

Mark Abner
STATE DIRECTOR FOR THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN GEORGIA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 chicken bouillon cubes
- 1 quart milk
- Flour to thicken
- 1 lb. crab meat
- 3 tbsp. margarine
- 1 cup warm water
- Celery salt to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste

Dissolve bouillon cubes in water; set aside. Melt margarine in large pot and sauté onion until soft, and then add a little celery salt and flour. Cook while stirring for a couple of minutes. Add milk a little at a time, stirring to dissolve flour. Once this mixture is warm, add in water with dissolved bouillon. Bring stew to a slow simmer, and then add in crab meat and salt and pepper to taste.



Mark Abner's grandmother, Georgia Knight, was a celebrated local cook.