

# Virginia, there is a Santa Claus

This week, we look back at the work of veteran newsman Francis Pharcellus Church, who penned history's most reprinted newspaper editorial, which ran in the New York Sun in 1897:

"DEAR EDITOR: I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in THE SUN it's so.' Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus? VIRGINIA O'HANLON. 115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET

"VIRGINIA, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

Merry Christmas to you and yours from the Tribune & Georgian staff!

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The bigger thing is the right thing

Dear Editor,  
As I drove away from the Dec. 7 Camden County Planning Commission hearing, I was outraged, as were many others, at the lack of preparedness and the candid "wink-wink" of some commission members in regard to the Lumar LLC request for "hardship variance" on Cumberland Island.

I surely thought many questions would be posed, much concern raised and not only heartfelt comments but solid, factual information from both sides of the issue would be brought forth during the meeting.

I was very wrong. Lumar LLC talked only of nostalgia and the strong past efforts of the families on the island to protect it and of the important stewardship they felt toward the Island. Meanwhile the planning commission showed their lack of preparedness, brought no information to the table; instead they offered awkward silence and an obvious predetermined mindset to pass the request.

I have sat at the computer many times after that meeting writing this letter to the Tribune & Georgian, each time managing to rekindle the outrage from that evening and, so, did the logical thing. I deleted my anger and walked away thinking one more day would surely help to soften the disappointment my county officials demonstrated to me on the 7th.

It was frustrating trying to express what I feel and many others feel about this very sensitive issue and, indeed, about the very sensitive island that we all, on both sides of this issue, love and want to protect.

Then along came Jacqueline Eichhorn's letter in



A gift that still shines bright...

last week's Tribune, a letter that most eloquently conveyed both sides of the issue at hand: The protection of Cumberland Island for the future versus the wants of a small group that seems to understand the extent of their special request but still feel their desires to be good stewards of the island, like their forefathers, is enough to warrant special dispensation.

What I would like to remind each and every reader of this letter is that we, too, all of us, are stewards of this wonderful place called Cumberland Island. Remember, as American citizens, we all own a small part of this place. It is a national seashore and wilderness area.

Many times in life, we need to put aside our own personal desires and wants for the betterment of the whole — something my parents taught me as a child. Sometimes we must realize there is a bigger picture, sometimes more than just "me" is involved and that to do the bigger thing is to be the better human being and, in this instance, maybe the better American citizen.

Monty Baus  
St. Marys

### Government should buy acres

Dear Editor,  
Save the natural and wild nature of Cumberland Island. The island is a unique gem in the chain of coastal islands of the Eastern United States.

Yes, there are private parcels and homes on the island and these owners and families should be saluted for their contribution to the creation of Cumberland Island National Seashore.

It is now time for the National Park Service, Camden County, the State of Georgia and private/public conservation groups to "pony up." In this I mean, through legal process, acquire and purchase, at fair market value, the 87.51 acres and merge into the park to preserve it in its natural state, a reasonable cost to preserve a unique national treasure.

Jan Friedman  
St. Marys

### Trump won't gain loyalty with tactics

Dear Editor,  
Congratulations to President-elect Trump. He has

been duly elected president of the United States, the most powerful position in the whole world.

Both President Barack Obama and Secretary Clinton have magnanimously called to congratulate him and pledged their support to his presidency. In addition, they have both called upon all citizens to loyally support him as president. I plan to do so. But he makes it difficult to do so when:

1. He makes broad slaps at our election process by stating that "I won the popular vote when you discount the thousands of fraudulent votes which were cast." He has not documented where any of these so called "fraudulent votes" were recorded.

2. He characterizes Secretary Clinton as a "criminal who should be locked up" without identifying any criminal activity. I find such a statement reckless and unacceptable for a candidate for the presidency of the United States.

3. He threatens to ban the immigration of all Mexicans and all Muslims. We have many very loyal American citizens who are either of Mexican origins or are of

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## December brings perspective

The end of the year always brings recollections and introspection. It also brings a focus on the new year with anticipation of opportunities and challenges. We moved forward in 2016 and the momentum will continue full steam ahead in 2017. Things are looking very good for the City of St. Marys and its residents.

Following diverse opinions and passionate citizen input, the city determined a future direction for the former Gilman/Durango mill site. We are already seeing our initial requirements for property cleanup well underway with the pond landscaping in the final stages and the working fountain adding great visual impact as you round the Osborne curve to enter downtown. The utilities for the monument sign welcoming everyone to the historic district are installed and the construction should be completed in January.

The Camden County Joint Development Authority is engaged with developers in a number of potential project concepts, some that harken back to our maritime building history. This should bring good news to the city as the JDA works diligently to market St. Marys as an ideal location for business ventures.

After more than a decade and a half of debate regarding the status of the local airport, St. Marys made it



**John Morrissey**  
Guest columnist

clear to federal officials in Washington that the Navy and the Federal Aviation Administration were the only entities that could resolve the limbo situation the city, airport tenants and St. Marys citizens have been facing for years.

Legislation (House Bill 4949) to close the airport and allocate funds to the FAA for future relocation has now passed both the House and the Senate with overwhelming margins. It is anticipated the president will sign the bill and with that mandate the Navy and FAA can move forward. In anticipation of new usage for this city property, we have already initiated work with the Joint Development Authority and our city development authorities to begin outlining a plan for the highest and best use for those 278 acres as prime light industrial development property for St. Marys and Camden County. Earlier this month the

city, with input from many stakeholders, revised its temporary sign ordinance after local businesses argued their case that a more business responsive ordinance would help them better market their products and services. This change is in line with the master plan steering committee's early recommendations that many of our ordinances would benefit from review and modification so we should anticipate more positive changes in 2017.

As we look forward to 2017, I am encouraged by the upswing in home construction — both new builds and improvement to existing properties — that we are seeing throughout the city. Winding River, Cumberland Harbour, the downtown area and Osprey Cove all have multiple projects underway and more on the drawing board. This is a clear indicator that individuals are investing in St. Marys as their choice of a place to call home and open businesses.

We see all types of new businesses beginning to open throughout the city. We see tourists returning now that the Exit 1 Georgia Welcome Center is back in operation and the word is out that Cumberland Island is back in business after a short and remarkable effort to keep the island accessible for visitors. All these factors reflect

positive momentum to start a new year and I am looking forward to a very successful 2017. I plan to provide more details in my annual state of the city address scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 5, at the St. Marys town hall meeting in city hall. I encourage all residents and business owners to attend to offer comment and suggestions.

In this season of goodwill and fellowship with our friends and neighbors, we reflect on the warmth of family gatherings and cherish times with those we value. It is a time in which all of us, regardless of our beliefs, can come together and celebrate our universal wish for peace on earth and kindness to all.

I extend to all Tribune & Georgian readers best wishes from your neighbors in St. Marys for a happy holiday season and the hope that we will all enjoy a healthy, productive and enriched 2017 for ourselves and our loved ones.

May the new year be a fresh start, a renewed awakening and an opportunity to reach out to our neighbors to celebrate those things we share in common rather than our differences. This is a time to come together and I am confident we will do so in a common spirit of optimism and hope.

John Morrissey is the mayor of St. Marys. He can be contacted at john.morrissey@stmarysga.gov.