

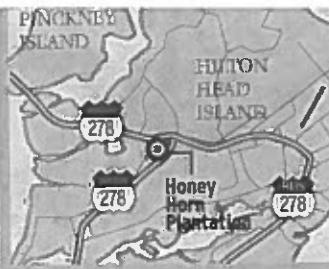
# Carolina Morning News.

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## LIFE AT HONEY HORN

"At Honey Horn, Loomis enjoyed playing the country squire. He recreated Highfold, Stimson's gentleman-farmer's estate on Long Island where he had spent his happiest times as a boy. Over the years, with the help of a devoted manager named Ted Armstrong, he and Thorne transformed Honey Horn into a working farm, adding stables, servants' quarters, a guesthouse, and laundry room. It was a totally self-sufficient compound, with its own milk cows, chickens, and a large vegetable garden."

From "Tuxedo Park" by Jennet Conant

## IF YOU GO

**What:** Book signing with Jennet Conant, author of "Tuxedo Park: A Wall Street Tycoon and the Secret Palace of Science That Changed the Course of World War II."

**Where:** Coastal Discovery Museum

**When:** 6 p.m. May 16

**Call:** 689-6767, ext. 225.



# CHANGING HISTORY

Book details landowner Alfred Lee Loomis' role in winning World War II.



File/Carolina Morning News  
Honey Horn Plantation was once owned by Alfred Lee Loomis, the subject of the new book "Tuxedo Park."

**By Ruth Ragland**  
Carolina Morning News

While Alfred Lee Loomis is not a household name today, at one time he owned the most prominent residence on Hilton Head Island — Honey Horn Plantation.

Loomis, a Wall Street tycoon who saw the crash of 1929 coming and cashed out, played a strategic role in the development of radar during World War II, earning the gratitude of the governments of both the United States and Great Britain.

His place in history is explored in a new book, "Tuxedo Park: A Wall Street Tycoon and the Secret Palace of Science That Changed the Course of World War II" by Jennet Conant.

Conant's pursuit of the story of Loomis' life was a personal quest. Her grandfather, a former president of Harvard University, had worked with Loomis as administrator of the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb.

Her great-uncle had worked as a researcher for Loomis at his laboratory in Tuxedo Park, a gated community 38 miles outside New York City. Loomis established the private lab in 1926 and used his fortune to nurse his inter-

Conant had grown up hearing about Loomis from her father and she thought he was embellishing the story.

But after researching the man, "I was shocked to discover that he actually existed, that he was a tycoon, that he had owned a secret laboratory, that he was this larger than life character and that he completely was real — I wasn't prepared for that," she said.

Conant describes Loomis, who was in his 40s when he took up science full time, as a mathematical genius who always had a knack for inventing.

Loomis was related to Henry Stimson, who served as secretary of war during both World War I and II. When Loomis joined the Army in 1917, Stimson recommended him to serve as head of research and development at the Aberdeen Proving Ground because of his fascination with and knowledge of tanks. Loomis invented and patented the Aberdeen chronograph, an instrument for measuring the speed of shells, that was used to determine how long it would take to hit a target.

His other accomplishments were many. He did groundbreaking work with E. Newton Harvey on the electroencephalograph at Tuxedo



**"I was shocked to discover that he actually existed, that he was a tycoon, that he had owned a secret laboratory, that he was this larger than life character and that he completely was real — I wasn't prepared for that."**

Jennet Conant

# Loomis

Continued from page 1A

Park and would patent the microscope-centrifuge and the Long Range Navigation system, or Loran.

Loomis led a life that reads like a movie script. Born well-to-do and well-connected in 1887, he became a corporate lawyer who made an extraordinary amount of money in rural electrification, so much money after the crash of 1929 that "he felt a great desire to give back when the war came," Conant said.

She describes him as "the ultimate insider" who held an almost unparalleled position in terms of access to power, knowing the captains of industry through his work on Wall Street, and President Roosevelt through his cousin, Stimson.

He was also an avid yachtsman and sportsman. With his brother-in-law and partner, Landon K. Thorne, Loomis purchased 17,000 acres on Hilton Head in 1931 for about \$120,000. The Thorne family had owned land and hunted in South Carolina for generations, Conant said.

(Landon K. Thorne III, a descendant, lives in Beaufort and serves on the board of the Coastal Discovery Museum. Honey Horn Plantation is owned today by the town of Hilton Head and is a part of Coastal Discovery.)

Asked to name a figure comparable to Loomis, Conant mentioned Howard Hughes, also an enormously wealthy man of influence who was gifted with technological expertise and helped in the war effort.

Loomis' money allowed him to draw the top talent in science to his lab in Tuxedo Park. The scientists and researchers lived a pampered existence.

But an affair he had with a researcher's young wife would

for some in his social circle overshadow the work he had done on behalf of his nation. In 1945 he divorced his wife of 32 years and married his mistress the same day, becoming a social pariah in the process.

In 1948, Harry Truman awarded Loomis the Presidential Medal for Merit, the nation's highest civilian award. Loomis was also honored by the British, receiving the Medal for Service in the Cause of Freedom.

After the war Loomis led a quiet life in Tuxedo Park, serving on the board of the RAND Corp., a nonprofit group for scientific, educational and charitable purposes for the public welfare and security of the United States. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, served on numerous other boards and was honored by Yale University as "the Benjamin Franklin" of his day.

Loomis and Thorne sold Honey Horn for \$11.2 million in 1950 and Loomis died in 1975.

Conant, who was finishing work on "Tuxedo Park" when the World Trade Center was attacked on Sept. 11, sees parallels between Loomis' time of crisis and today.

"Pearl Harbor was very similar in that people kept saying to Americans, 'You're not separate from this war, your radar systems are not good enough,'" she said. "We were caught off guard at Pearl Harbor because our radar systems in fact were not good enough and we were sort of sleeping at the wheel.

"I think it would be great if we could have some men similar to the men we had then who would step forward and say, 'This is how we need to protect our society and this is what we have to do,'" she said.

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TREASURED ISLANDS

**Bull Island**

# Winter retreat for legendary American family

By SARAH BOWMAN  
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Before his death in 1975, Alfred Lee Loomis held many titles. New York attorney. Philanthropist. Investment banker. Wall Street tycoon. Gentleman scientist. Technology pioneer who helped win World War II thanks to his work in military radar usage.

In the early 1900s, Loomis added a lesser known title to the mix — Lowcountry landowner — when he purchased 17,000 acres, or about two-thirds, of Hilton Head Island, along with his business partner and brother-in-law Landon Thorne.

Like other wealthy Northerners of the time who found cache in buying Southern plantations for hunting retreats, Loomis and Thorne set up their own private preserve for horse riding, hunting, fishing and boating on the island. The centerpiece of the property: the old Honey Horn Plantation.

While they sold the land to a group of Georgians around 1950, Loomis' family still wasn't ready to be done with the Lowcountry.

In 1962, his son, Alfred Loomis Jr., made the hop across the Calibogue Sound and bought the nearly 2,000-acre Bull Island.

For the next 40 years, Bull



**Water traffic on Calibogue Sound, including a parasailer, passes by the wooded shore of Bull Island on Wednesday in this view taken from atop the Harbour Town Lighthouse.**

Island was the Loomis family's winter retreat.

"Our family has been in the area for a long, long time and there was no other home like it," said Alfred Loomis III, who grew up hunting on the island. Following in his grandfather's

footsteps, he is an attorney in New York and still occasionally visits the area.

As the family did when it owned much of Hilton Head Island, they left Bull Island largely untouched when they sold it in 2002 — so untouched that it still

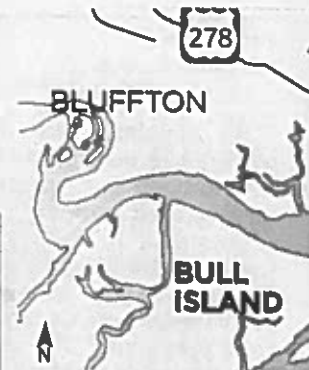
has Civil War-era rice paddies at its center.

The island has also been home to exotic animals.

The owners before the Loomis family, the Crosleys, brought several buffalo and wild sheep to the island. Loomis III's father

also added zebras to the menagerie, garnering much media and tourist attention. But the exotic animals did not flourish in the Lowcountry and soon died.

The Loomis family decided to sell Bull Island in 2002 after Loomis III's parents died. The



couple's tombstones sit on island's north end, overlook the sound to Hilton Head.

"It's a beautiful part of world and natural and just untouched, wild place," Loomis III said.

The island's current owner is Birchwood Acquisition holding company created the Chilton family of Stanfo Conn., who bought Bull Island along with the nearby Skid a Raccoon islands for \$12.25 million. The company also owns Colleton County's White Horse Plantation.

Its president, Richard Chilton told The Island Packet in 2014 that the family would preserve the island and continue the tradition of using it just for recreation and bird hunting the family and their guests.

"(The holding company) is family members. There are outside shareholders," he said. "We're preservationists, not developers."

Follow reporter Sarah Bowman at [twitter.com/IPBG\\_Sarah](https://twitter.com/IPBG_Sarah) and at [facebook.com/IPBGSarah](https://facebook.com/IPBGSarah).

JAY KARR • Staff photo