



# Heritage Library News

*Historical and Genealogical Research*

Winter 2005

Volume VIII Issue 4

## **From the President Bill Altstaetter**

*My very special thanks to each and every one who helped to make 2004 such a special year for the Foundation and Library.*

Of 2004's major accomplishments, improving the computing network tops the list. The result of hours and hours of effort on the part of volunteers and suppliers all the "patron machines" are now new and packed with the latest in software applications. The six located adjacent to the book stacks are reserved for the regular use of library patrons. The two training units in the Main Reading Room are also available as backup when the others are busy. With eight state-of-the-art Pentium 4 machines readily available at all times the researchers using the Heritage Library should find searching on the Internet enjoyable and relatively hassle free. Also, the Internet Service Provider was changed and the network itself was completely rewired to improve both

*Continued on Page 2 Column 2*

### **Inside this issue:**

Member Hotline	2
Member/Patron Questionnaire	4
Feature Article— The Gullah Culture of the	5

## **CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE IN JOINT PROJECT WITH HERITAGE LIBRARY**

Recent discussions between the Library and the Civil War Roundtable led to the formation of a LCWRT committee to help the Library with its Civil War holdings.

The committee, consisting of Bob Eberle, Bob Zabawa and Bill Trapp will work initially to refine the holdings of the Library's collection of books and papers to be better oriented for research than at present.

They will also assist in an on-going effort to make Civil War researchers aware of the Library through notices in appropriate publications.

A major long term goal is to provide a source for as much information on the officers and men of both the Blue and Gray who served and fought on Hilton Head and throughout Beaufort County during the years of the Civil War. Eventually the Library will house a collection of regimental histories of universal appeal to researchers and students of Civil War.

## **FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES COOKBOOK PROJECT**

Heritage Library Press, a division of the Heritage Library Foundation will publish a cookbook now in preparation by a select committee of Library volunteers consisting of Pam Bredin, Joanna Boginis, Joan Keating, Joan Nations, and Barbara Vernasco.

In an interview Bredin, who is heading the project, said, "This is not just another neighborhood cookbook." The theme for the project selected by the team will be "remembering our ancestors with recipes which have been passed down through the generations," and more importantly have a story to go with them.

The team is hard at work collecting recipes, so if you want in on the fun use the form found in this Newsletter or pick them up at the Library.

Net proceeds from the sale of the cookbooks will be used to help support the Library.

## **YARD SALE SUCCESS**

*Once again the World's largest Yard Sale provided the Library with an opportunity to raise some much needed funds.*

*Many thanks to all of you who contributed sale items—without you there would be no sale. We also appreciate those of you who came and purchased some of the treasures. We especially want to thank the chair person for the event Joanna Boginis and her two assistants Gwen Altstaetter and Connie Blain.*

*Other volunteers who worked hard on the set up and selling the items deserve a special word of thanks also. Louise Lawrence, John Griffin Bill Altstaetter, Bob Smith, Ben Russell, Cheryl Echols, Joan Keating, Lori Flanagan, Beth Altstaetter Shirley Forder, Pam Bredin, Lisa and Greg Goldberg and the crew from WestWind Construction.*

**THE HERITAGE LIBRARY**

The Courtyard Building, Suite 300  
32 Office Park Road  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928-4640

Library Telephone—843-686-6560  
Fax Line—843-686-6506  
E-mail—webmaster@heritagelib.org  
Website—www.heritagelib.org  
Hours—Monday, Thursday, Friday &  
Saturday—9 am to 3 pm

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29928-4640

**From the President**

Continued from Page 1 Column  
speed and reliability.

A significant change occurred with our Online Services. Ancestry Library Service replaced the individual machine licensing and the full service packages from HeritageQuest and Genealogy.com were obtained to round out the full array of available genealogy databases.

How to Use the Facilities of the Heritage Library is a multi-chapter guide to researching in the Library. Under the inspired direction of Bob Smith, our Vice President and Librarian-in-Charge on Mondays “How to” is a great new research tool added to the wealth of information on hand to assist the patrons.

Found not just in hard copy the full book is on our website and only “a click” away at all times to help explain the intricacies of the family search process. We encourage anyone planning a visit to our library to examine this splendid “How to” guide. ***Congratulations to Bob are in order as are our sincere thanks.***

2004 also saw more members continuing their memberships resulting in significantly fewer member drop outs. The membership stands at an all time high of 349. It should be noted that some 27% give their permanent residence address as more than 50 miles from Hilton Head Island. The same percentage holds true for daily patrons. WELCOME Tourists!

Space within Suite 300, as all our recent patrons and the staff are well aware, is at a premium. The book and periodical shelves are filling rapidly due to the continuing donations of our members and friends. On very busy days researchers using the computers sometimes feel like sardines.

Continued on Page 7 Column 2

**The Member Hot Line ~**

*What's New-By and For the Members*

**from the Membership Desk**

**Gwen Altstaetter**

Be sure to give a warm Hilton Head Island welcome to the following new members of The Heritage Library Foundation. We have started 2005 with a bang with 19 new members coming from several different states and from across the “pond.”

From Scotland comes Alistair MacFarlane, a resident of Montrose, Angus.

Other “out-of-staters” include Jackie Spurrier from Maryland, Katy Young from Maine, Walter Clayton, Wilford (Bill) Klotzback, Carol and Doug Langenfeld from Ohio, Donna Whipple and Mary Jane Archer from Indiana, William Baillie from Pennsylvania, Al Steindorff and Betsy Flanagan from New York, also Tom and Anne Senf from Georgia.

From various parts of Beaufort County and elsewhere in South Carolina come Edwin Ward, Leonard Law, Emory and Emma Campbell, Jacqueline Ford, Mark and Jenelle Dove, Janet Morris, David and Martha Crowley, Cynthia Joyner, Steve Hesling, Albert Burns, Jim Sims, Katharine Dietrich and John Webb.

In addition we welcome back Janet Nutter Alpert, Mary P. Logan and Joe Bunch to our active membership. Per usual I want to thank all the members who are renewing their memberships. We need you all to help keep the Library up to the standards we have set.

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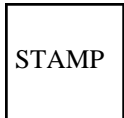
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Return Address

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THE HERITAGE LIBRARY  
32 OFFICE PARK ROAD—SUITE 300  
HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC 29928-4640

ATTN: Planning Group

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*Here is a chance to let us know what you need and want from The Heritage Library and to tell us how we're doing. Take a few moments to complete and return a –*

## **Member's and Patron's Scorecard**

We need to know:

What you think of the Library?

What you need and want from us?

What we are doing wrong or right?

And most importantly, **WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING BETTER!**

1. What can we do to better serve your research needs?

2. What improvements would you like to make to the facilities? ( To what extent would you be willing to pay for expanded services or facilities?)

3. Looking at our present services and programs, what would you wish to see done differently? (suggestions, PLEASE)

4. Anything else you can think of?

5. Will you help us do these things by volunteering at the Library? If so, how much time and how often?

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Phone Number

## *Feature Article—The Gullah Culture of the Lowcountry*

### *The Voice of Gullah - Part One - The Origins, Its sights and Sounds*

The vocabulary of the African Gullah culture is steeped in words familiar to islanders but foreign to newcomers. Terms like “hoodoo” and “grave goods” refer to the spiritual beliefs Africans brought here in earlier centuries. They worshipped in buildings called “praise houses,” and celebrated their religion dancing in “ring shouts.” The “coiled baskets,” made from marsh grasses reflect an ancient skill that crossed over on slave ships. In their new land, Africans drummed English words into a native pulse, rolling out a new language that even today stumps its listeners. That language, its history, food, arts, customs and beliefs represent the Gullah culture, America’s last link to Africa.

The sea islands that rim the coast of Georgia and South Carolina, and the land that extends inland about 30 miles is known as the Lowcountry — Gullah is the name of the slaves who lived there in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Also called Native Islanders, Gullah refers to the language and culture and to their descendants who keep alive its traditions. Known as Geechee in Georgia, their total population numbers about 500,000 nationwide. Hilton Head is home to almost 3000 Gullah people. Most live in the neighborhoods of Chaplin, Stoney, Marshland, Jonesville, and Baygall, on land purchased by their forefathers, freed after the Civil War.

To highlight their people, the Hilton Head’s Native Islander Gullah Celebration kicked off its ninth year in February. The event cele-

brates the African contribution to art, food, spirituality and survival in the Lowcountry. All month long, attendees sampled Gullah foods, hear Gullah dialect, claped along with Gullah storytellers, or listened to the Hallelujah singers in concert. The festival promotes attention to present day Gullah life and achievements while highlighting the historical pressures that shaped the Gullah culture. More information is found at [www.gullahcelebration.com](http://www.gullahcelebration.com).

#### **Early Roots of Gullah**

Slave traders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries plied the continental bulge of West Africa, to satisfy demand for slaves in the Lowcountry. Traders plundered Sierra Leone, Senegambia, and along the Ivory, Windward and Gold Coasts, for Africans with specific skills and abilities that landowners wanted. They pushed further south to Angola and the Congo region and were brought from as far away Mozambique and Madagascar.

Ship records reveal that over 120,000 Africans entered legally through Charleston between the late 1670’s and 1807, when the trade was finally banned. Unofficially, perhaps 80,000 more were smuggled in through the Sea Islands, a marshy haven of unlawful activity. Records from the ship, Wanderer reveal an illegal transport of 400 Africans, mostly young men and boys, to Jekyll Island in 1858, fifty years after the slave trade was abolished! The point is that fresh blood regularly infused the slave population with renewed skills, old memo-

ries and African traditions. Old world ways did not die out nor were they assimilated into American culture as were the slaves on the mainland.

Most historians think the word, “Gullah” comes from “N’Gullah,” as Angola was named, home to thousands of Lowcountry slaves. Others posit that Gullah stems from the Gola tribe of Liberia. The first time a word similar to “Gullah” was seen in print was in a 1739 ad for a runaway named, “Golla Harry,” indicating the word was already in use to describe Angolan slaves. Between 1714-1744, the era known as South Carolina’s “Early Period” of slave importation, over half of the 19,852 slaves shipped into Charleston came from Angola.

Africans were brought here initially to harvest rice, which they had been growing for several thousand years. Their knowledge of tides, rivers, sluice gates and dykes made them instrumental to planters raising “Carolina Gold” rice. In the 1740’s planters started farming indigo to complement the harvesting of rice. It was these early slaves, growing crops native to their homeland on farms thousands of miles away, who sowed the first seeds of Gullah culture.

#### **Gullah Language**

Out of necessity, the various African tongues rolled into English and formed a pidgin-type language that allowed blacks to speak to each other as well as to whites. As Africans filtered in to the plantations,

*Continued on Page 6 Column 1*

**Feature Article—Gullah Culture***Continued from Page 5 Column 3*

their vocabulary, word structure and intonation congealed into a more complex dialect. The words were primarily English but the cadence and rhythm remained distinctly African.

The black population increased substantially in the eighteenth century and whites grew fearful of their expanding numbers. A slew of uprisings and rebellions brought about further anxiety that the 1740 slave law intended to ease. To quell disturbances, the law outlawed black education, including the teaching of religion. Offered no choice, their belief systems remained fixed in African root medicine, hexes and hoodoo, assuring the transplant of their spiritual attitudes in the Lowcountry.

**Gullah Culture Deepens with Sea Island cotton**

The roots of Gullah deepened further when Sea Island cotton was introduced on Hilton Head Island in 1790. The cotton's labor-intensive nature kindled the demand for more workers, and plantation owners lobbied successfully to reopen the slave trade. Between 1804 and 1807, almost 30,000 Africans were hauled into Charleston and sent to work on cotton farms. Over half of those captured came from Angola.

Contrary to the slaves who farmed cotton further inland, those along the Sea Islands worked the "task system," which stemmed from Africa. In this system, slaves worked in groups and the stronger helped the weak. An inherently efficient system, each person had a particular plot or task that was usually

finished by mid afternoon, and they spent the remaining hours raising crops of their own or fishing and shrimping.

The concentration of new African-born slaves, accompanied by the rise in anti-slavery sentiments, presented new problems of unrest in the early part of the nineteenth century. Many did not bend readily to the yoke of slavery and they ran away to Spanish Florida or rose up on the plantations. Of the many uprisings, the most famous occurred in 1822 when Denmark Vesey, a free black man and Methodist leader, conspired with a slave, "Gullah Jack," to lead the charge in the escape of 6000 slaves from Charleston to Florida. The plan unraveled at the last minute, thwarting the great escape, which ended with the hanging of thirty-seven conspirators, including Vesey.

Coinciding with the massive infusion of African-born slaves was a new and dreaded disease called "swamp fever" that ravaged the sea island summers. While blacks were fairly resistant to malaria, the disease forced whites onto higher ground, leaving behind a large number of Africans to continue cultivating their native ways in the land.

**Influence of Language and Stories**

As the slave population doubled, then tripled, their dialects merged into a common language called Gullah. Linguists have traced words and sounds from 32 African languages. Everyday words like "tote", "goober," "gumbo" and "coota," which means turtle, are rooted in Africa. "We glad to see oonah," is a standard Gullah salutation. Islanders who have "been here" on the

island a long time are called "binyas," as opposed to newcomers, referred to as "Comyas."

The African trait of changing the intonation of a word to alter its definition merged into Gullah. In this way, they could signal secret messages to each other that whites could not understand. For example, a slave might chastise a fellow runaway for being "baaaad" when he was actually flaunting praise for the escapee, right in the master's face.

This subversive style of getting the best of superiors is typical in African tales and reflected in Gullah roots. Tales about small, humble animals that outwit bigger ones likely symbolized their enslavement and helped to lighten the load. A story about a clever turtle that outruns a horse rings a familiar chime heard in American tales. The Uncle Remus character, "Brer Rabbit," inherited his sly ways from the tricky "Cunning Rabbit" in Africa. Another legend explains the origin of the eclipse as caused by an argument between the sun and the moon. Stories, usually led by one person, get others involved by singing, clapping or repeating a specific phrase. Wrapped in a circle of safety, storytelling reflects one of the most deeply rooted African customs that sustained them throughout slavery.

*Gullah Culture—Part Two will appear in the next issue of The Heritage Library News.*

**May  
is  
Bravo  
Month**

**Voices from the Past—Sanskrit proverb**

*"Yesterday is only a dream, and tomorrow is only a vision; but today well-lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness, every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well, therefore, to this day."*



## **GULLAH CULTURE HIGH-LIGHTED AT FEBRUARY 13TH SYMPOSIUM**

Three Hilton Head Island Gullah families shared their results and joys of researching their family roots at the Cultural Symposium Sunday, February 13 at the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina. Richard Oriage, Annette Jones, and Louise Cohen discussed the findings of their research that was completed with the assistance of the staff at the Heritage Library.

Cohen and Jones related fascinating stories of their ancestors' Civil War service and subsequent settlement on Hilton Head while Oriage shared his family ancestral tree of six generations on Hilton Head Island.

James Mitchell, President and CEO, Native Island and Community Affairs Association said the symposium helped show current generations, "particularly our youth" how their Gullah ancestors overcame tremendous obstacles to achieve their goals.

Library staff members John Griffin and Gordon Kiddoo presented visuals including photographs, archival interviews and family trees rounding out the evening with a narrative of Kiddoo's ancestor General Joseph Barr Kiddoo.

Report of the Symposium was picked up from the Carolina Morning News and recently appeared as a feature in Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter Plus Edition.

### ***From the President***

*Continued from Page 2 Column 2*

Recent efforts to add space have been unsuccessful. The Board will be looking at several options later in the year. Anyone with ideas, let us hear from you.

Turning to the present and future a number of issues are facing the new Board of Directors as they begin their work. The need for more volunteers is as critical as ever.

Regular readers of these pages know well, we are always on the outlook for persons with a passion for books, a love of history and an obsession for ancestor research willing to make the time to spend a few hours a week or month with us in the pursuit of local heritage and family ancestors. The need has become more significant with the recent loss to other demands of three key staffers. From a corps of 30 we're down to 27, that's 10% of the staff. If any readers have the time and the inclination, come on in. No experience is necessary, we will provide the training.

We need regular staff in the library to assist patrons and hold down the reception desk and Book Store.

The Foundation needs persons with experience in accounting, advertising & public relations as well as those with public speaking skills willing to make local appearances to present the Heritage Library to the local community.

Fundraising to support both the on going programs, their related expenses and capital requirements will occupy the attention of the Board more than ever in the upcoming months.

As those of you who regularly follow the Hilton Head Island scene in the pages of the local press know, public funding in the form of Town

Grants from the 1% tax on accommodations, was severely strained this year with most requestors including the Heritage Library Foundation receiving substantially less than asked. That said, the Foundation is extremely grateful to the Town of Hilton Head Island for their continuing support.

Unfortunately the reduced level of funding from the Town will require major "belt tightening" in both operating and capital plans for both 2005 and 2006 fiscal years, and more importantly place a greater emphasis on the membership to help take up the slack. It will also push back by at least a year any hope of conducting a conference. *A major blow to our financial plans for 2006.* A review of possible funding sources and alternative revenue opportunities is now underway. You will be hearing more on the subject in future issues of the Heritage News.

Finally, we often hear some form of the following, "you (meaning the Library) are the best kept secret in the Lowcountry." "You have a great facility here, why haven't I heard of it before?" My only answer is, "I don't know." We advertise, articles about the library and our programs regularly appear in all the local print media. We regularly publicize and hold classes and workshops. We'll talk to any group of interested people, anywhere, anytime, well almost. It just doesn't seem to be enough. So, we plan to try something new to tell the Heritage Library Story. During the next twelve months it is our goal to have speakers from the library appear before every reachable Lowcountry civic group telling our story. If you have a group needing a program or wish to gather some friends for an interesting as well as entertaining evening at home to hear about history and family heritage call the Library and let us know.

*The Heritage Library is home to The Hilton Head Island Genealogical Society which meets on the second Tuesday of each month from September through May of each year at 9:30 am. and to The Island Writers' Network which meets on the first Monday of each month at 7 pm. Persons interested in these organizations may reach them by contacting The Heritage Library at 843-686-6560.*

*The Heritage Library Foundation, Inc.*  
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Hilton Head Island, SC 29928-4640

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Heritage Library News

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***CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE HERITAGE LIBRARY***

***April***

Monday, April 4th—7 to 9 pm—*Island Writers Network*—Regular monthly meeting—Visitors Welcome  
Monday, April 11th—9:30 to 11 am—*Second Monday Series*—Free Family History Program—Introduction to research at the Heritage Library  
Tuesday, April 12th—9:30 am to Noon—*HHI Genealogical Society*—Regular monthly meeting—Visitors Welcome  
Tuesday, April 12th—1:30 to 3 pm—*Heritage Library Foundation*—Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting  
Monday, April 18th—4 to 6 pm—*HHI orchestra League*—Board of Directors Regular Meeting  
Monday, April 18th—7 to 9 pm—*Island Writers Network*—Regular monthly “Open Mike” meeting  
Tuesday, April 19th—1 to 3 pm—*Computer Workshop*—Using FamilyTreeMaker 2005  
Wednesday, April 27th—4:30 to 6:30 pm—*Librarians Association of Beaufort County*—Spring Meeting

***May is BRAVO CELEBRATION Month***  
***A month long celebration of the Arts and Culture of***  
***the Lowcountry***

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***Watch for the Spring Edition of Heritage Library News***  
***for full details***