



# The Heritage Observer

## News from The Heritage Library

*Bringing the Past to Life*

Vol. 3, No. 3

MAY 2011

## Bravo Events at the Heritage Library in May



*Natalie Hefter (at the podium) drew a capacity crowd for her discussion of the hunting lodges of the Thirties. She was introduced by Iva Welton (r)*

### Natalie Hefter on the Hunting Era

As one of a series of talks during the Bravo celebration in May, Natalie Hefter of the Coastal Discovery Museum talked about the large hunting estates and parties that covered much of Hilton Head Island during the Thirties.

One of the most famous of these was the lodge and preserve owned by William Leonard Hurley which had its heyday in the 30s. Hefter showed a number of photos including some early motion picture footage of guests activities, riding, hunting and picnicking.

### Heritage Library will be closed July 1.

In order to accommodate some schedule conflicts among our faithful volunteers, we will be closed on Friday July 1. This will give us all a long weekend, since Monday is the 4th. Thank you for your understanding and we'll see you when we reopen on Thursday July 7.

### Louise Cohen on the Gullah Heritage

Famous "story-teller" Louise Cohen spoke of the evolution of the creole language<sup>1</sup> Gullah, with some examples of the creativity that has gone into its development. She also told how her ancestors were put on the auction block, and described a great-grandfather who escaped from Bluffton, using a boat se-  
creted at the present location of the Sea Trawler restaurant, and ended her talk with a recitation of the Twenty-Third Psalm in Gullah.

Wikipedia has pointed out that the Gullah phrase "Kumbayah" ("Come By Here") has become well known throughout the worldwide — though many who sing Kumbayah are unaware of its linguistic antecedents.

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<sup>1</sup> creole language: one that has evolved from the mixture of two or more languages and has become the first language of a group



### Altstaetter, Smith on History

Bill Altstaetter on the early history of Hilton Head Island and Bob Smith on the developments leading up to the Civil War completed the Library's history survey of the Island.

These popular lectures drew capacity crowds.

*We will repeat them, plus a new talk on the modern development of the Island, this fall and winter.*

## A CONNECTION TO MITCHELVILLE

## St. James Baptist Church Unveils Historical Marker

Iva Welton, John Griffin and Barbara Muller represented the Heritage Library when our Mayor, Drew Laughlin, assisted by members of the church, unveiled the historical marker at St. James Baptist Church at the corner of Dillon Road and Beach City Road.



*Tom Laughlin, mayor of the Town of Hilton Head, was among those who unveiled the marker, which has been approved by the S.C. Department of Archives and History in collaboration with the S.C. African American Heritage Commission.*

The St. James Church, established in 1886, was one of several that grew out of the historic First African Baptist Church, established in Mitchelville in 1862 and presently located at 70 Beach City Road.

The historical marker notes the Mitchelville connection: "This church, founded in 1886 by former members of the First African Baptist Church, is one of the oldest surviving institutions remaining from the town of Mitchelville, a freedmen's village established here by the United States Army in 1862."

Emory Campbell, president of the Gullah Geechee Coalition and a member of the Heritage Library Advisory Board, was quoted in the *Island Packet* remarking on churches as an organizing force after the Civil War.

"They were the center of the communities, everything went on from the church," Campbell said. "They were the moral compass of the neighborhoods."

St. James Baptist Church was the second church



*A large crowd gathered on the lawn of St. James Baptist Church under an ancient live oak tree for the dedication of the historical marker at the corner of Beach City Road and Dillon Road.*

built in Mitchelville, after the First African Baptist Church, which was established by the Rev. Abraham Murchison, the mayor of Mitchelville.

The First African Baptist Church has since moved, so that St. James "is the only standing institution representing Mitchelville, a community formed for formerly enslaved people," said Deacon Perry White.



*This drawing of a typical two-story wooden church is on the Web site for the First African Baptist Church. We hope to have an article on the histories of Mitchelville churches in a future issue of Glimpses.*



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## Memorial Day Observations



*Wreath laying at Zion Chapel of Ease cemetery. L to R: Atlee Compher (SAR), Mary Ann Compher (DAR), Basil and Judi Romeo (Pilgrims), and Nancy and Joe Burke (Pilgrims).*

**At Zion Cemetery:** On Memorial Day representatives of the South Carolina Branch of the National Society Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims, the Captain William Hilton Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the George Mosse Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, met at the Zion Chapel of Ease cemetery to honor the Revolutionary War patriots buried there. A wreath was placed at the site and Nancy Burke presented a short talk on the military service by Charles and James Davant, Captain John Stoney, and Isaac Baldwin.

Also at Zion Cemetery, William Leitner placed a representative selection of flags that have flown over South Carolina, shown in the photo below and in another view in the next column.

Starting from the left, we see the Grand Union Flag, believed to be the first flag of the United States. It had thirteen stripes and the British flag in the canton (the upper corner, where today we see the stars). Next is the “Join



or Die” flag in black and white. This flag, based on a cartoon drawn by Benjamin Franklin, was first used in the Revolutionary War, as well as later in the Civil War. Next is the Betsy Ross Flag, with thirteen stars in a circle in the canton.

Then there is the famous Gadsden Flag, featuring a coiled rattlesnake on a yellow field, and designed by South Carolinian Christopher Gadsden. It was used in the Revolutionary War. Next is the first flag proposed for South Carolina. Finally we see the First Navy Jack, thirteen stripes with a rattlesnake and the words “Don’t tread on me.” It is used today in the War on Terrorism.

**At Fort Mitchel:** William Leitner placed two significant flags at the site of the old fort. The fort itself, built by the Union army, was never under the Stars & Bars (the Confederate flag on the right) though the rest of the state was. The flag on the left is the Union Calvary Guidon; its 36 stars in the canton represent the 36 states fighting the Confederacy.

We thank William Leitner for placing these flags to honor those fallen in the service of the country. A future article in *Glimpses* will tell more of the rich history behind South Carolina flags..



## THE LIBRARIAN'S CORNER

**Hail to Volunteers**

The Heritage Library could not operate without the help of a dedicated group of volunteers. We are indebted to their enthusiasm.

Nancy Burke has been volunteering for several years, taking care of the map and CD collections as well as giving many hours for workshops and

talks. Workshops are also conducted by Carol Clemens

Barbara Fleischmann, Karen Gobrecht, Diana Luellen, Anne Marie Meyerink, Ed Nash, Steffani Walther and Sunni Winkler are all engaged in researching and organizing specific projects. John Griffin is our go-to person for African-American and military information.

Paul and Marty Anthony, Pre Moore and Marge Pratt are involved in checking our databases and files.

Susan Mason keeps her eye on the physical appearance and condition of our collections.

Linda Piekut is putting her expertise in computers to valuable use, while Sheila Buck and Pre Moore are helping out in the financial field. Janice Niver assists in keeping the membership files current.

Molly Green, Jeanne Hickey and Hedy Moore man the Reception Desk, and will tackle any task they are asked to do. Priscilla Russo backs up in the Public Relations area, while Tom Senf sees that our brochures are distributed around.

Rosemary Staples has written for *Glimpses* and is interested in helping to produce our monthly publications.

Some of our volunteers are “snow birds” whose help is welcomed whenever they are here: Dorothy Arwe, Connie Blain, Phyllis Boyd, and Faye Leach.

Foundation president Barbara Muller and vice president Iva Welton are spending much of their time on library matters too. But the countless hours given by Treasurer Bill Altstaetter and Membership Chairman

Gwen Altstaetter since the founding of the Library are especially deserving of recognition. They know more about every area of Library operations than anyone else. They are invaluable!

Thank you all!

ISOBEL BITNER

*Editor's addendum.* No article on volunteers would be complete without citing the heroic efforts of Isobel Bitner herself for the Library.

As head librarian, she is not only responsible for the Library three days a week, but also works with library volunteers, teaching them the inner workings of the library, and guiding the digitizing and indexing of old records.

She works with patrons who come here in search of historical or genealogical information. There's almost no way to summarize the range of requests that cross Isobel's desk. Volunteers may be asked to transcribe old documents; for example, recently an English earl sent us the will of Alexander Trench, who had been appointed in the early 1700s as agent for the barony granted to Bailey in Hilton Head. The document is crafted in beautiful 17th-century penmanship. We'll have more on this interesting item as more information becomes available.

BARBARA MULLER

**Plans for Fall and Winter**

You will want to watch for announcements on the Web site, in the library, and in our publications for our fall and winter line-up, which promises to be a busy and interesting season.

Details are still being worked out, but we expect to expand our lecture offerings with more depth and an additional lecture, one on the modern development of Hilton Head. We are working on plans to commemorate the November 1961 invasion of Hilton Head by the Union forces. We will again be offering genealogy classes. Details as they become available.

**Tell Friends about “Find My Ancestors”**

See details of this popular program on Page 6, and encourage friends to sample the delights of genealogy.





## From the Membership Desk

May was a busy month for the Heritage Library. Our participation in the Bravo Celebration brought many new faces to the Library. The lectures were mostly sellouts and they brought us people who did not know we were here.

Many thanks to our expert presenters Louise Cohen, Natalie Hefter, Bob Smith and Bill Altstaetter, all volunteers of the Library.

Our staff is busily setting up the schedule for the Fall. Be sure to watch the Web site in the next months and make plans to join us.

The following have joined as members since the last *Observer*: Hedy and Jerry Moore from Bluffton, Kathleen Wiese from Beaufort, and Lynne Armfield, Roger Irvine, Thelma Williams and David Schofield from Hilton Head. Welcome to you all and we hope we can help you in your family research. Also thanks to those of you who faithfully renew your membership as a way of supporting us. Let us know when we can be of help in your search.

Remember to mention the Library when you are out and about. As I have said, your support is our best publicity.

GWEN ALTSTAETTER

## New Friends from NGS

We had a number of visitors at our exhibit at the National Genealogical Society in May. Thanks to the efforts of Linda Piekut (shown manning the booth at the upper right) we also added significantly to our mailing list. Many of our new friends are from similar organizations and/or libraries.

They will now be receiving our newsletters and other communications sent through Constant Contact.

It was encouraging to us to see the growing number of people who are becoming aware of the contributions to history and family research being made by the Heritage Library.

BARBARA MULLER



## Heritage Library at NGS

*Editor's Note:* Paul and Marty Anthony, Linda Piekut and Barbara Muller were among representatives of the Heritage Library at the National Genealogical Society's 2011 annual conference in Charleston. Heritage member Patrick Crippen was also there with the Ohio Genealogical Society. Linda shares her observations.

The National Genealogical Society selection of Charleston for its annual conference this year afforded many of us from the Heritage Library the opportunity to attend one of the premier genealogical conferences in the country.

The conference was four days packed with programs, luncheons, dinners, and exhibitions of all the latest offerings in the field. I attended several of the programs in the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCS) track, with some "side trips" to military records, a program on Footnote.com, and a program on my software program, Rootsmagic.

I left Hilton Head believing that I knew something about genealogical research, but I returned realizing that I have so much more to learn! It was a humbling, but energizing experience! I would encourage anyone who is interested in genealogical research to attend a conference at least once a year.

There is so much to learn from top-notch presenters who have specialized in their fields.

LINDA PIEKUT

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## Genealogical Query: Senf

One of our members, Tom Senf, is looking for information on **Johann Christian Senf**, born in Saxony, who came to this country at the time of the American Revolution and wound up in South Carolina, where he died in 1806.

Senf is a distinct name which means “mustard” in German. Johann Christian Senf was notable for his skill in canal building, including the Santee Canal which connected Charleston and Columbia.

Tom Senf has done a great deal of research on Johann Christian Senf, whose father was Lucas Senf, but has not located any possible siblings or other relatives. He will be grateful for any information you can supply. Send your information to the library ([info@heritage-lib.org](mailto:info@heritage-lib.org)) and we will pass it on to Tom.

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## Find My Ancestors

One of the benefits of membership in the Heritage Library is free assistance with your genealogical research. Trained, knowledgeable, and helpful volunteers are glad to assist. One never knows what nuggets of information may come up.

For those who are not members, here is an opportunity to get a free sample of genealogical research. The Library is currently running a “Find My Ancestors” promotion during which time you can get a free one-hour appointment with one of our volunteers to see what fascinating nuggets of information turn up in your family.

To arrange for such an appointment, download the Family Information Form from our Web site, fill out as much information as you have available, and then call 843-686-6560 for an appointment.

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