

Preserving the American Historical Records Act

This act, H.R. 2256, needs South Carolina cosponsors. What it could mean for South Carolina:

* The state could receive nearly \$700,000 a year if a total of \$50 million dollars is appropriated nationally;

* Competitive grants would be available to over 100 local archives, historical societies, public libraries, colleges and universities, and historical organizations and over 300 local governments;

* Grantees could receive funds for such projects as:

- « On-line digital collection of historic photographs, documents, and maps;
- « Online archival records with lessons that support the Department of Education's learning standards;
- « Online name indexes for military service, land ownership, naturalization, and the state census for all of South Carolina.

More information: "Action Alert" at <http://scdah.sc.gov/>

Did You Know . . . ?

The Heritage Library has a growing collection of *indexed* materials on Hilton Head Island history that is not available anywhere else?

Thanks to the tireless work of dedicated volunteers, we now can offer our patrons access to:

- Plantation index. Comprehensive list of named plantations that have existed on the Island.
- 1868 Agricultural Census. Acres planted in various crops; yields; livestock.
- Bibliography of Island residents
- Tax sales immediately following the Civil War.
- USCT Records Project, service and pension records of soldiers of the Union Army regiments raised on Hilton Head island from among the liberated slaves.
- Large microfilm collections of many censuses.

These are only a few of the many records available; new ones are added daily.

Heritage Library
852 Wm. Hilton Parkway
Hilton Head Island SC 29928



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John Griffin answers questions from members of the Aiken-Singleton family during their recent 49th Annual Reunion.

The Aiken-Singleton Reunion

It had begun on Father's Day forty-nine years ago. Children and grandchildren of William Aiken and Maybelle Singleton Aiken held a celebration in honor of their parents. As the celebration continued year after year, the family also looked backwards beyond those grandparents. Then, with the help of John Griffin of the Heritage Library, they were able to recover their history all the way back to Moses Aiken, a slave on a May River plantation. See the story on Page 4.

IN THE NEWS

Monument Sought to Native Islanders

An article in *The Island Packet* on September 8 described an effort to memorialize those native islanders who contributed so much to the life and history of Hilton Head.

Specifically mentioned in the article were two ferry men, Charlie Simmons, Sr., and Arthur Frazier, who for many years provided virtually the only communication Islanders had with the Mainland. It was such boatmen who took local produce to mainland markets, and shopped in those markets for their clients. They also provided a "taxi" service to those wealthy Northerners who came down here to hunting preserves.

Meet Our New President

Robert Smith received a surprise phone call a month ago, informing him that he was now the president of the Heritage Library Foundation.

Smith, who had settled into semi-retirement after six years of volunteering weekly at the Library, was startled. Blanche Sullivan, who had been elected president in March, had sent a letter to the HLF Board of Directors stating that other demands on her time were making it impossible for her to continue as president and board member.

So it was up to Bob Smith, as vice-president, to step into the breach. Like Cincinnatus, he responded to the call of duty. Hardly a day has gone by since then without his presence at the library, spending his time being brought up to date on the many activities going on. "We have a terrific group of volunteers," he said, "and I'm learning all over again how much talent there is in this organization."

Bob began volunteering at the Heritage Library in 2002, making use of a background of some 35 years of genealogical and historical research and helping library patrons with historical and family research.

A native of Virginia, he graduated from VMI and later became a naval architect. His business career includes service as a vice president for a large international firm providing engineering services for heavy industry. Since he and his wife Betty moved to Hilton Head in 1990, he has been active in civic organizations.

He has great faith in the present and future of the library; see more in an interview on Page 2.



This photo of Bob Smith, announcing his presidency, appeared in The Island Packet.

The Heritage Observer Interviews HLF President Robert (Bob) Smith

Heritage Observer: *You have said that the Heritage Library is the site for Hilton Head history and for history buffs in general. Could you amplify that?*

Bob Smith: We have collected, indexed, and made available a great deal of historical information relating to Hilton Head, thus sparing researchers many hours of laborious search.

Our holdings began with materials from the two major components of the Library—the Hilton Head Island Historical Society and the Hilton Head Island Genealogical Society. The former was specially interested in significant events over the years and the latter in the lives of the families who lived and made history here.

The Library is continually acquiring, processing, and making available new data bases, books and papers for researchers who can look to our Library as an authoritative and academically sound resource. Incidentally, we also have a publications arm that is sometimes able to help local authors with their publications.

HO: *Many of those resources were tapped by John Griffin as described in the article on Page 4 for the history of the Aiken family. That was all about Hilton Head Island itself. However, your promotional materials say that the Heritage Library is also a site for regional and other historical research.*

Smith: Those patrons who come to us searching their histories have family origins from all parts of the world. This has meant we needed to search history information everywhere and anywhere. As our books and other holdings grew, we added sections for states, provinces and countries as well as for major war periods. Our reference links to history, geography, genealogy and web sites around the world can be helpful for our patron researchers no matter what part of the world they are interested in.

HO: *How does the work of the Heritage Library*



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Foundation fit in with that of other civic organizations?

Smith: The Foundation has an inherently synergistic relationship with Hilton Head's people, its visitors, its civic organizations and its cultural community. Those who grew up on Hilton Head have many reasons to be proud of the community from which they come. Too often the momentous events that have occurred here are unknown or forgotten:

- A Union fleet of 77 ships invaded the Island during the Civil War. It was the largest amphibious military landing in world history until World War II.
- Hilton Head was a bustling island in the 1860s. A Christmas-day baseball game was attended by some 40,000 fans. The population was more than 57,000 in 1863.
- It is estimated that 35 to 40 per cent of the U. S. African American population has a connection here.

This history can and should be interpreted, not only for our school children and residents but also for visitors. Many visitors find their interest in history sparked by tours of our historic sights, including the two maintained by us, Fort Mitchel and the cemetery at the Zion Chapel of Ease.

Cont'd on Page 3



A winding, tree-shaded path is an invitation to explore the self-guided tour of the Civil War earthworks, Ft. Mitchel. The site, owned and maintained by the Heritage Library Foundation, is right next to the Old Fort Pub in Hilton Head Plantation.

Heritage Library continues its geometric growth, this time into 2,700 square feet

by David Lauderdale
in *The Island Packet*



History just got a new wrinkle in Beaufort County.

The Heritage Library has moved to an airy, 2,700-square-foot location on Hilton Head Island.

That's a long way from the closet in The Seabrook retirement community its holdings occupied 13 years ago. That's when the library began as a genealogical special-interest group of the Women's Association.

When husbands wanted to get involved, it morphed into the Genealogical Society, which morphed into the Heritage Library Foundation in 1997. The Computer Club pitched in from the beginning because the goal was to link to databases from the National Archives and beyond.

Then in 2005, the Heritage Library Foundation absorbed the Hilton Head Island Historical Society and its historic land holdings, the Zion Chapel of Ease and Fort Mitchel.

The new library in the Harbourside Bank Building at 825 William Hilton Parkway is home to 4,000 volumes -- and tens of thousands more via computer. That closet at The Seabrook held 300 volumes.

The Heritage Library charges an annual membership fee, or a daily research fee, and, like every other nonprofit organization in the county, it goes about with its tin cup out for donations, grants and volunteers.

The new location proves there's interest in regional history and genealogy. It proves there's support for this addition to Beaufort County's cultural resources. It's a nice addition beyond the priceless holdings of the Beaufort District Collection at the Beaufort County Public Library.

The Heritage Library -- like the community it serves -- reflects interest and connections to states and regions across America and the world.

But it remains steeped in the Lowcountry, and

wants to be more so in the future. It is helping many descendants of slaves trace their roots. Gullah storyteller Louise Cohen credits the library with helping her learn a lot about forebears she never knew.

Volunteer researcher John Griffin helps families throughout Beaufort County trace their history through federal pension records for the black troops mustered on Hilton Head during the Civil War. It's amazing what can be reconstructed about the lives of former slaves from these and other records.

The Heritage Library remains a squirming baby when compared to the long heritage it helps illuminate. But it has always been proactive in promoting interest in our societal history, including the African-American experience in South Carolina.

Beaufort County has more stories to tell than can fit in all our libraries combined.

It's good to see those stories aren't being hidden in a closet.



Coming in October Glimpses



Only the walls remain of what was the Chapel of Ease on St. Helena Island. In our October issue of *Glimpses*, Lyman Wooster writes about our local chapels of ease.

Dr. James Rose contributes an article developed from the WPA Slave Narratives.

FROM THE HEAD LIBRARIAN



Acquisitions

Among the new donations to our book collections:

IN THE FAMILY HISTORY SECTION:

From Skondabl to Fairvalley by Jay Fairvalley. (2009; 929.2FAI)

Written and published with help from volunteers of the Heritage Library,

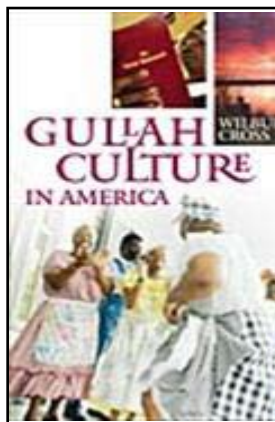
this is a family history of a notable Hilton Head Islander. The author's ancestors were Swedish, and the name Fairvalley is a literal translation of the Swedish name, *Skondabl*, chosen by his great-grandfather when he entered the Swedish Army as being evocative of the place where he lived.

ADDED TO THE SOUTH CAROLINA SECTION:

Short and Tall Tales of Hilton Head Island by Margaret Greer. (2004: 975.799 GRE). This "coffee-table" book is profusely illustrated with photos by Barry Lowes and paintings by Walter Greer. The author, an Islander, weaves factual and not-so-factual tales of the Island since the Civil War with pictorial emphasis on local scenes and wildlife.

NEW IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN SECTION:.

The Gullah Culture in America, by Wilbur Cross. (2008; 301.2CRO) Written by another local resident, with a foreword by Dr. Emory Campbell, this is a comprehensive history of the Gullah language, people, traditions and religion.



The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South, by John Blassingame. (Rev. ed. 1979; 305.4BLA). The

1979 edition incorporates revisions made as a result of criticisms of his earlier edition. Its examination of original sources including white and black autobiographies and observations on southern travels by outsiders results in a balanced presentation

IN THE CIVIL WAR COLLECTION:

Civil War Newspaper Maps by David Bosse. (1993; 070BOS) An examination of how demand for information at the time of the struggle led to the development of quickly-produced newspaper maps. Maps and charts of all the principal Civil War battles are included.

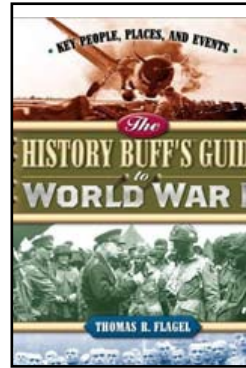
THE WARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

This is a quickly growing category:

The History Buff's Guide to World War II, compiled by Thomas Flagel (2005; 940.53FLA).

This book is organized around "Top Ten" lists of best and worst examples, covering the causes, politics, military life, home front, and conduct of the war.

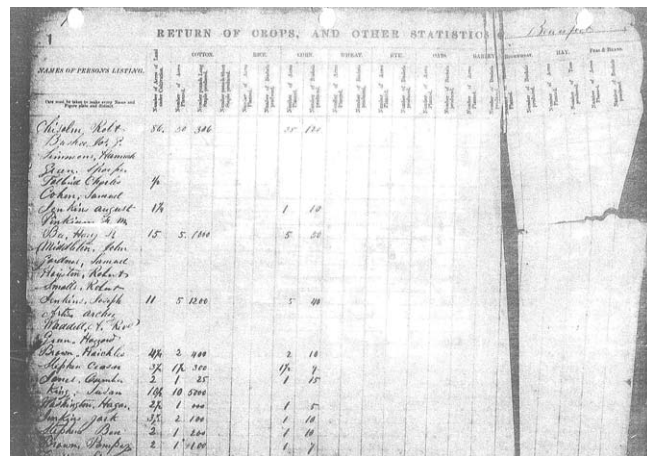
ISOBEL BITNER



"This Island does have a soul. It goes back a long way, to even the Indians. Folks who are coming in now are looking for history and unfortunately don't know how important this island is to United State history."

EMORY CAMPBELL

In *The Island Packet*



It is records such as this page from the 1868 Agricultural Census that volunteers have transcribed and indexed by the thousands. Such records give clues and insights into our past—in this case the world that was Beaufort County soon after the Civil War.

HO Interviews Robert Smith (Cont'd from Page 2)

Teachers, lecturers, video makers, re-enactors and ethnic presenters all use our Library for inspiring and authenticating their work. Many civic organizations are intensely interested in fostering such work to enhance the reputation of Hilton Head as an interesting place.

A couple of examples: our library was recently used by local Girl Scouts for a genealogy project, while our project maintaining the cemetery at the Zion Chapel of Ease dovetails with projects undertaken by local Boy Scouts. You'll be seeing other such projects in subsequent newsletters.

As I've mentioned, our work is not limited to the Island; we also work with organizations in the state and the region.

HO: *What do you see for the future of libraries such as the Heritage in this increasingly digital age?*

Smith: The digital age gives us instant access to a great portion of the world's knowledge through the Internet. Still, it is estimated that some 60% of information is still not readily available to search engines; it takes special skills to dig it out. In our workshops and classes, we teach researchers these skills. We provide instruction for utilizing those history and genealogy sites for much of this hidden information. Further, our Library is pro-actively finding, digitizing or cataloging historical information about our area so as to make it more available.

Led by our Library of Congress, large libraries are participating in the world-wide efforts to digitize books with the long term goal of making incredible amounts of information available to all peoples of the world. Our Heritage library is serving its patrons by instructions in how to access the fruits of these efforts.



As our new president, Robert Smith plunged right into the work!

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP DESK

Settling In

We are starting our sixth month in our new location! Doesn't seem possible, but everyone who has stopped by has commented on the openness and brightness, the restful library ambience.



We have welcomed eleven new members since

the first of June. Ulles Ellis has joined as an Academic member, our membership designated for teachers and students currently enrolled in classes. This free annual membership was created to encourage the use of the Library by the academic community for historical research as well as for family history. Ulles has also volunteered with the Library and hopes to continue in that activity this fall.

Other new members are Cindy DeValle, Ray and Gwen Brownlee, Linda and John Stern, Katrine and Christopher Gobert, James Lee and Theresa Brown. We also welcome back Helen Witlin who stopped by the new location and is resuming her research after a three year hiatus.

A number of our regular members are upgrading their memberships to the Premiere Membership to take advantage of having access to a number of sites, including HeritageQuest, from their home computers, thus saving a trip to the Library.

With the Premiere Membership you also can link to several data bases maintained by the Library, such as *Local History, a Chronology of Hilton Head Landmarks* created by Dr. E. H. Peeples.

We recommend our Premiere Members go to Collection/Research and click on the various links and explore the Census as well as Maps and Land Records.

To those of you who have continued to renew your memberships our thanks; you are our best way of spreading the word on what a great facility we have. Some say we are the Island's best kept secret – let's not keep it a secret any longer.

GWEN ALTSTAETTER.

How John Griffin Found Moses Aiken

It was a long search, and it required some talented sleuthing.

It's all in a white-covered notebook on the shelves of the Heritage Library, a notebook filled with notes John wrote to himself as he came upon another little piece of the puzzle.

Let us begin on Father's Day in 1960. The Aiken family gathered at a potluck dinner to honor their father, William, and Maybelle Singleton Aiken, their recently-deceased mother. This covered-dish dinner grew into an annual tradition, and in 2009 the Aiken-Singleton family celebrated their 49th such reunion honoring their parents.



Left to right: Rose Singleton Campbell, Julia Grant Thomas, and Al-metha A. Frazier look over the record book on the Aiken family compiled by John Griffin of the Heritage Library Foundation.

When William's children were growing up, William worked the fields, raising food for his family and cotton and watermelons for cash crops. Despite rising taxes, he held the farm together, telling his children he wanted there to be a place always for them to come back.

A recent article in *The Island Packet* (June 18th, 2007) remarked that "Until William and Maybelle the Aikens' known family tree was more like a sapling, with a small branch or two. Maybelle was an only child, and William had a brother who never had children."

But beginning with family lore and consulting the usual sources plus the many items of research developed by volunteers at the Heritage Library, John Griffin and members of the family turned the "sapling" into a mighty tree.

We will go back in time, following that research.

William Aiken was located in the 1930 census, with his wife Maybelle and six children: Merriam, Janie, Loma, Annabella, Martha, James, and Joe. William also appears in the 1910 census, then 15 years old. His father, James Aiken, was then 37 years old and a farmer, married to Annie.

James Aiken must have died between 1910 and 1920, for the 1920 census lists Annie as a widow.

The 1900 census is difficult to read, and later transcribers rendered "Aiken" as "Arken" but John could see that the husband and wife are our couple, James and Annie. Little five-year-old William does not appear on that year's census, though his brother Joseph does. William may have been staying with relatives; or perhaps the census-taker made a mistake.

In an 1890 "Special Schedule of Surviving Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and Widows" John found Jane Aiken, widow of one Joseph Aiken who had served in the Civil War. Joseph Aiken had still been living in 1880 and appears on that year's census. Also Joseph's father was then alive, William Aiken, then about 70 years old.

In the 1870 census we encounter legibility problems again; the data provided by AncestryLibrary.com listed the family name as "Siskin." John determined, however, that they are undoubtedly Aikens, for the names and ages match.

Below: This photograph from the Library of Congress shows slaves gathered outside their cabins in Beaufort, South Carolina. Quite possibly some of these men served with Joseph Aiken in Company G.



Joseph Aiken, about whom we are to hear more, was in 1870 about 40 years old. He had enlisted voluntarily in the Army of the United States of America. John Griffin retrieved Joseph's enlistment form, dated the 25th day of April 1864, and signed by the examining surgeon, the commanding officer, and the recruiting officer, who noted that Joseph was 5 feet 8 inches tall. Joseph had enlisted in Company G, Second U.S. Colored Artillery, composed almost entirely of former slaves. The Company performed garrison service at Hilton Head Island and Beaufort, and was mustered out on August 12, 1865.



Posters like these sought to recruit freed slaves for the Union Army.

It is interesting that we find Joseph Aikens [*sic*] enrolled in the 1868 voter registration conducted by the Military Government in South Carolina. We also find him in the 1868 Agricultural Census, raising cotton, rice, corn, and sweet potatoes. Joseph Aiken must have worked long and hard on all those crops, for the census does not list a single horse, ass, mule, or ox—though he did have one pig. (See a sample page from that Census on Page 6.)

One of the most important documents John found, one that tied the records together, was Joseph Aiken's statement to the Freedman's Bank in 1869. He stated that both parents had by that time died: father Moses and mother Annie. It is assumed that Moses Aiken was born at Gaston (or Gascoigne) Bluff on the May River of South Carolina, for all his children were born there, and it is believed that Moses must have been born about 1785.

In this description I have hit only the high spots. John spent many hours consulting national censuses, Freedmen's Bank records, recruitment records, pension applications, and agriculture censuses. He turned up many of the family relatives, including descendants of Cuffee Stewart and Orchard Brown.

Those who are interested are welcome to consult the records John has compiled.

Meanwhile John is off on another search, this time for the ancestors of Maybelle Singleton, the girl next door who married William Aiken of Hilton Head Island.

BARBARA MULLER

Calendar: Events of Interest

October 7 & 14 2009, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Workshop: *Beginning Family Research*. Heritage Library*

October 8, 2009: 12:00 noon Beaufort County Historical Society, Emory Campbell, chairman of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor and member of the Heritage Library Advisory Board, will speak. Visitors welcome. Optional lunch at 11:30 a.m., \$10. Call Iva Welton at 671-4865 for information.

October 16, 2009: 3:00-4:00 p.m. Workshop. Free clinic for family researchers. Heritage Library*

October 21, 2009: 1:30-3:30 p.m. Workshop: *Census Records as an Aid to Family Research*. Heritage Library.*

October 28, 2009: 1:30-3:30 p.m. Workshop: *Genealogy on Line*. For those with intermediate skills. Heritage Library.*

*For more information on events at the Heritage Library, see our Web site, www.heritagelib.org. Check under classes or see our August newsletter.

November 12, 12:00. Beaufort County Historical Society. Stephen G. Hoffius, one of the editors, discusses *Northern Money, Southern Land: The Lowcountry Sketches of Chlothilde R. Martin*. An enchanting mix of gossip and history from the era when parts of the Old South met its new owners. Visitors welcome. Optional lunch at 11:30 a.m., \$10. Call Iva Welton at 671-4865 for information.

Ongoing at Coastal Discovery Museum. Historic walks and talks with nominal fees. Reservations recommended. Information 843-689-6767, www.coastaldiscovery.org.

History Walk: 200 years of Honey Horn history, Mondays 2 p.m.; Thursdays 10 a.m.

After the Bridge: The development of Hilton Head Island since the 1950s. September Tuesdays at 3 p.m.

Union Soldiers at Hilton Head during the Civil War era. Thursdays at 3 p.m.

The Early Years: Hilton Head in colonial and antebellum times. Fridays at 3 p.m..

Discover Daufuskie: Cruise and tour. Coming soon.

Gullah Cooking and Living: Monthly, TBA