



HERITAGE LIBRARY

News

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Spring 2007

Heritage Library News

CIVIL WAR PENSION RECORDS A MOTHER LODE OF REGIONAL HISTORY

On May 6, 1902 on Hilton Head Island, William Simmons, alias Ira Sherman, appeared before R. J. Austin, Special Examiner, to apply for a pension increase based on a disability relating to his Army service during the Civil War some forty years earlier.

Simmons was about 70 years old at the time of his May 1902 pension hearing. He was uncertain of his exact age. He was a former slave and a veteran of Company B, 21st U. S. Colored Troops. This would be Simmons' second hearing on his pension request. The first hearing - six months earlier with a different examiner - produced no action.

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Outstanding Volunteer Awards for 2006 Presented at Annual Volunteer Appreciation Day Celebration



Award recipients Cassie Sanders (left) and Lyman Wooster (right)

Cassie Sanders of The Long Cove and Lyman Wooster of The Cypress received the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Awards at the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Day ceremonies held Sunday, April 15th at the home of Clara and Jason Stevens.

Sanders received the Distinguished Service Award for her work in digitizing and indexing more than 2,000 microfilm images of selected Beaufort County land tax sale records from the closing days of the Civil War. This significant body of data will form the core of new genealogical data bases to be made available to members on-line over the coming months thru the Heritage Library website.

Wooster was presented the Directors Award for his feature writing efforts for Heritage Library News throughout 2006. Completing four feature articles on topics ranging from a Revolutionary War ancestor,

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Spring Program Calendar At the Library

Sundays with Your Ancestors

SUNDAY, MAY 6—3-5 PM

Under the Branches of the Talbird Oak

A lecture by Rev. Dr. Robert E. H. Peebles about Revolutionary War Hilton Head Island.

Intermediate Genealogy Workshop

TUESDAY, MAY 15—2-3:30 PM

A problem solving session for users of FamilyTreeMaker software led by Bill Altstaetter of the Library staff.

The Library's 2006-2007 classes and lectures conclude with the May programs.

Watch for announcements of the 2007-2008 Schedule in the Summer issue of Heritage Library News and on our website at—www.heritagelib.org



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President's Column

By Bill Altstaetter

This is a "Good News, Bad News" message.

The Good News is that the Library's work has never been more highly regarded, or its patrons more pleased with the services and resources we provide. Also, important segments of our community are becoming increasingly involved with the Library and its work.

We have been very successful in obtaining grants for important projects. For example, the acquisition of the Civil War pension records of veterans of the U. S, Colored Troops from this area was funded by a grant from the Heritage Classic Foundation. That foundation has also funded the planning work for the renovation of the Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery.

Those are project grants, however. They don't pay the rent! Which brings us to the Bad News!

There has been a dramatic change in the Library's financial circumstances in 2006 and 2007. From 2001 through 2005, the Library received a total of more than \$125,000 in Accommodations Tax (ATAX) grants from the Town of Hilton Head Island. Those grants covered most of the Library's facilities-related expense (rent, utilities, taxes, insurance, etc.). Since 2005, organizations like ours – organizations that do not generate very large volumes of overnight visitors to Hilton Head

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Island Visitors make up 45% of 1st Qtr Library Patrons

A quick check of the guest register found at the Library's main desk recently, disclosed that 447 patrons signed in during the months of January, February, and March. The average patron spends about 3.5 hours researching at the Library during a normal visit. These visits represent over 1,560 hours of historical or genealogical research.

Of the 447 first quarter 2007 patrons, 203 or 45 percent fell within the "tourist" category, part-time residents or short term visitors, ie. : persons living more than 50 road miles away from Hilton Head. The other 55% were permanent residents of Hilton Head Island and the surrounding Beaufort County communities of Beaufort, Bluffton, Ridgeland, and Sun City.

Listed by Patrons as their home states were Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Canada was represented by persons from Ontario. Eleven patrons signed in from locations in South Carolina more than 50 miles away.

If you see a strange face, say "Hello" anyway and introduce yourself, they just might be someone from *your old home town.*

Goings on and about



A Sampling of Current Gift Opportunities

GIFTS FROM GENEROUS DONORS MAKE A SUBSTANTIAL AND LASTING DIFFERENCE TO THE HERITAGE LIBRARY

These are a sampling of various budgeted items of the library that are at risk due to the unexpectedly heavy increase in fees from the landlord.

Binding and Repair of Donated Materials. From time to time we receive materials that have been transcribed from handwritten documents or original research that should be placed on the shelves for easy patron access. Due to their lack of substantial binding, they are too fragile to do so, and thus often are overlooked. We also bind yearly collections of several periodicals such as The South Carolina Historical Society Magazine—a wonderful source of both S.C. community history and family information. Occasionally books need to be repaired.

Commitment: \$250

Mailing The Heritage Library News for one year. When polled our membership preferred to receive this newsletter in the mail. They are sent third class mail, four times a year.

Commitment: All or part of \$350

The Library Catalog on the Web. It is a major asset to have a current listing of the library's catalog on our website. It brings

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Current Project Underway

As we go to press, volunteers at the Heritage Library are involved in a number of different projects. Here is a brief summary.

1. Tax Commission Land Sales, 1863-1864. These sales were ordered to release land to freedmen during and after the Civil War. The Library has obtained microfilm of the sale certificates for sections of Beaufort County, and volunteers have been in the process of digitizing the records prior to their being added to our collections available "on-line."

2. Hilton Head residents in the Civil War era. In conjunction with the Land Sales project, we are checking several books of contemporary writing, to extract names and other relevant information, of people living and working in this area at that time—such as freedmen, military personnel, etc. Included are such books as "Dear Sister" by Eliza Summers, "Dear Wife" by Jack Davis, and "Census Department of the South, 1864" taken at Jacksonville, which also covers Beaufort County.

3. Bibliography of Beaufort County. Bibliographies of material on Hilton Head and Beaufort County which already exist are being checked, to bring them up-to-date, and with the hope of obtaining as many citations as possible, for inclusion in our collections. Bibliographies in such books as "Hilton Head" by Virginia Holmgren, "History of Beaufort County" by Lawrence Rowland, and Walter Edgar's history of South Carolina, as well as the books listed in item #2 above, are

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Dowsing

By Patricia B. Smith

Reprinted with permission from the Indiana Genealogist – September 2006

"This researcher uses wires to find Unmarked Graves."

Is it dowsing, witching or divining? The most traditional reference is dowsing for water. Pioneers used the fork of a green willow branch to tell where to dig for a well. Genealogists use it to find unmarked grave sites in cemeteries.

In burial grounds over one hundred years old, grave markers often have slipped underground due to burrowing of moles, foxes, groundhogs and other animals or from freezing and thawing.

A land owner called saying that there were five rocks on a hillside. The rocks had no marks on them and were not obviously in rows. Could this be a burial ground? With dowsing we were able to find 10 rows with 10 bodies in each. Not all graves were marked with a creek rock. Yes, the unnamed burial ground was mentioned in the deed. This farmer thanked us for showing them their "silent neighbors".

Dowsing makes use of the fact that grave sites are most often oriented to the east, regardless of whether the burials are 2000 year-old Native Americans or "Europeans".

How is dowsing done? Take two lengths of wire about 24 inches long. Bend the wires into an "L" shape. The handle is the short side of about 4 inches. Hold wires waist high by the handle ends with the wires parallel in front of you.

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President's Column

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Island - have been largely excluded from ATAX funding. As a result, the Library lost its largest single source of revenue at the same time that its occupancy costs were sharply increasing. To make matters worse, our landlord retroactively billed the Library, in 2007, for more than \$3,000 in unexpected charges he had neglected to bill in 2006!

The upshot of all this is that we could face a cash flow deficit as large as \$27,000 this year unless we can significantly increase the support we receive from members and other sources.

The Board is aggressively seeking funding from a variety of public and private sources. We are confident those efforts will be successful, but we can't be sure how successful or how soon. This makes it essential that those of us who particularly value the Library do all we can to increase our own support.

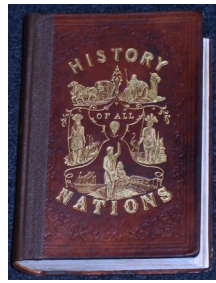
Financial support from members has two components: dues and contributions.

Effective July 1, annual dues will increase ten dollars for new and renewal memberships in each category: Regular Annual will increase to \$55.00 per year, Family Annual will go to \$65.00 and the Annual Premiere will be \$75.00. Even with these increases, dues income will cover less than 20 percent of the Library's annual operating expense. Dues will remain a substantial bargain.

The Library's Annual Operating Fund Campaign will be launched immediately. In 2006, the Library received about \$30,000 in individual contributions, much

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Library Receives Rare Edition of World History



Latest addition to the Library's collection of World History is an 1850 edition of the *History of All Nations* by Samuel G. Goodrich printed by Miller, Orton and Mulligan of Auburn, Maine & Buffalo, New York in 1854.

Presented to the Library by Carol and Bob Clemens, the edition was restored by National Library Bindery Co and now resides in the Rare Book Collection.



Research Projects

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among those to be checked.

4. Hilton Head Island cemeteries. A list of these cemeteries is already posted on our Web site, but volunteers are searching for additional information to be added, such as a list of burial names, and a history of the cemetery.

5. Historic sites. Work is underway on several island historic sites. The Fort Mitchel site is to receive new signage. The grounds have been cleared of undergrowth revealing the 1862 earthworks. Minor repairs have been made to the foot bridge. Another project concerns the rehabilitation of the Zion Chapel

of Ease site together with the development of an adjacent "Patriots' Park" recognizing Revolutionary War resident patriots.

6. U.S military burial records, Hilton Head Island 1861-1865. An index to these records has been prepared, and further work is being done to extract relevant information.

There are additional projects underway and others on the back burner awaiting talented volunteers to take them in hand. If you have any interest in the history of this area, and could help with the work or would consider underwriting a portion of the costs, give us a call at 843-686-6560.

Dowsing

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Elbows should gently touch your waist at your side. Grasp the wires loosely and walk slowly across the ground, allowing the wires to move at will.

The dowser walks slowly from east to west the length of the graves. The wires will clearly cross and uncross. The wires stay

crossed for about six feet for an adult and about 2 feet for an infant or small child. One should remember that one hundred years ago people tended to be shorter in stature than the average person today.

When the dowser walks north to south down a row, they are walking across the width of the grave.

Dowsing may not be conclusive proof but it is a handy, inexpensive, useful tool.

Feature Article — *The American Revolution, Loyalists, and Canada*

By Nancy M. Burke

When I first started to research my husband's family, neither of us had any idea of the extent of his ties to Canada. He knew that his father had been born in Ontario, but there were no real contacts with any extended family there. He also knew of the family legend that the Burks had been driven to Canada because they were Loyalists. What we learned over the period of my research led to an interest in discovering who the Loyalists were and how they had figured in the American Revolution. The Revolutionary War was, we found, the catalyst for the departure of thousands of loyalist colonials from the United States. For my husband's family it meant leaving homes in New York and Virginia and settling in Canada. In fact it seems that the Revolution not only brought about the establishment of this country; it also laid the foundation for the development of Canada as a new nation.

Let's review a little geography and history to set the stage. From the earliest days of the exploration of the New World, the French, Spanish, and English had fought over possession of these new territories. The wars were frequently global in scale and the treaties which ended them usually redrew the map of North America. The end of Queen Anne's War in 1713 brought recognition by France of Hudson Bay Company claims in Rupert's Land as well as ceding Newfoundland and Acadia to the English. The end of the French and Indian Wars in 1763 effectively cost France its remaining holdings in North America. France ceded what it called Canada and all its holdings east of the Mississippi to Great Britain. It also gave the Louisiana territory to Spain as compensation for Florida which Spain yielded to Great Britain. Thus in 1763 the British colonies consisted of the 13 colonies that would become the United States, the colonies of Quebec and Nova Scotia, and other holdings including Newfoundland and East and West Florida. The vast trans-Appalachian area was reserved for Indians and settlement by colonists was prohibited.

The acquisition of Quebec provided a challenge for the British. A non-English people with a different culture and language populated it almost entirely. The assumption that settlers from New York and New England would flock in proved unfounded. Governor Guy Carleton, who would play a major role in the resettlement of

Loyalists after the Revolution, engineered a new policy for Quebec and in 1774 the British passed the Quebec Act. This enlightened piece of legislation enlarged Quebec to include the area between the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, made French an official language, restored French civil law, and allowed Roman Catholics to hold office. This new law was conciliatory toward the French Canadians but menacing to the American colonies where the new province was seen as a continued threat from French and Indian predators and from Roman Catholics. Moreover, many American land speculators were enraged to lose the opportunity to expand their holdings to the west of the Appalachians.

The Coercive Acts in Massachusetts soon followed the Quebec Act and in response the First Continental Congress was convened in Philadelphia in September 1774. Three colonies did not attend: Quebec, which was not invited, Nova Scotia, and Georgia. Delegates were sent to convince Nova Scotia and Georgia to attend. After a change of heart toward Quebec, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and John Brown, were dispatched to Montreal in search of sympathetic Englishmen who would bring Quebec to the table as well to support the protest against Great Britain.

To the surprise of Congress, the Canadians were not interested. Quebec, Roman Catholic and French, had little in common with the lower 13 colonies and were far more satisfied with life under the English than under the French government. French Canadians were free to practice their religion, which was forbidden in all the American colonies except Maryland and Pennsylvania, and were able to hold political office, a right denied to Catholics in all 13 rebellious colonies. Nova Scotia, in spite of the some 8000 New Englanders who had settled in that colony in the 1760's, was the home of the British fleet in North America and showed no inclination to join the other colonies in protest. Rebuffed by their northern neighbors, the Second Continental Congress authorized, on June 27, 1775, an invasion of Canada. British forces under Governor Guy Carleton soundly defeated that campaign, led by, among others, Benedict Arnold, and Ethan Allen. The inglorious

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failure of that invasion did, however, have the effect of defining what the boundaries of the Revolution would be. The flag of the new republic had thirteen stripes; the 14th and 15th colonies would not join the rebellion.

Congress was reluctant to acknowledge the loss of Canada to the new union and the Articles of Confederation, drafted in 1776 and adopted the following year, preapproved Canada as a member of the United States, should they decide to join. Obviously, Canada never accepted the offer.

There is no need here to recount the campaigns of the American Revolution. The part of that story which is often neglected, however, is that of the extent to which that war was also a civil war between those loyal to the crown and the patriots seeking independence from the mother country. Estimates vary but perhaps half a million, or 20 percent of white Americans, opposed the rebellion. Some 80,000 loyalists left the country during the war or after. Given that these were considered to be a minority of loyalists, the total number must have been quite large. Nearly 20,000 served in regiments of the English army and thousands of other served in local loyalist militias. On the other hand, many obviously felt it was sensible to keep their sentiments quiet and avoid conflicts with their patriot neighbors.

The loyalists came from all economic classes and occupations of society, although many of them came from upper political and social levels. Many were office holders or merchants profiting from trade with England; many were Anglicans. They were a minority in New England and Virginia, but on the western frontiers, where hostility to those along the coast was long-standing, they were more numerous. They were also found in large numbers in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and the South.

The lot of the loyalists was a difficult one. By mid 1774 the colonies were in effect ruling themselves. There were colonial congresses, colonial militias, and committees of safety to protect

against conspiracy and subversion. These congresses began to unify by establishing the Continental Congress, and in most colonies patriot committees required everyone to take oath of allegiance to the United States. Those who refused were suspected of being opposed to the liberties of Americans. Loyalists throughout the colonies were shunned, tarred and feathered, driven from their homes, stripped of their property and means of livelihood, sent to jail and even hanged.

Faced with harassment or worse, many Loyalists went into exile. One of the first to leave was Thomas Hutchinson, a native of Massachusetts, a long-time leader of that colony and eventually the royal governor. Considered by the patriots of that colony to be a conspirator against the people, Hutchinson left for England in June 1774, to be followed by many other loyalists hounded from their homes. When Gen. Howe evacuated Boston in 1776 for Halifax, he took hundreds of loyalists with him, many of whom had previously fled to Boston from outlying areas in fear for their lives. When Howe later sailed back to New York in hopes of reasserting British control over the rebellious colonies, many of those loyalists returned with him, expecting a British victory. The massive British presence made New York a safe haven for loyalists. Thousands of them fled to New York, coming from all parts of the colonies to seek the protection of the English army. New York was spared from the fighting after 1776 and became the de facto capital of loyalist America.

Loyalist and British hopes were eventually dashed by the defeat of Cornwallis. Talks began in Versailles in April 1782; the British negotiators considered the most pressing problem to be that of the refugees. The Americans promised to make good property lost by American loyalists and allow them to return. The British accepted the pledge, which was in fact never kept. In fact, most of the states were preparing laws to evict remaining loyalists and to transfer their property to friends of the new governments.

The negotiations moved on to drawing new boundaries between the American nation and the remaining British colonies. Benjamin Franklin proposed at the negotiating table that the simplest

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solution was to give the entire continent to the United States. The English declined, noting that Nova Scotia was full of loyalists who needed settling and that Quebec was receiving refugees as well. The United States came out the clear winner, however. Vermont received the mountains to the north; Maine expanded to the St. Croix River; New York gained the Mohawk Valley and all the land west of it to Ohio; Quebec lost the entire upper Mississippi Valley. It was, as one author put it, “the slaughter of one nation, Canada, to feed another.” Callwood, p. 74)

By the time of the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, England had been dealing with the problem of resettling the loyalists for several years. Guy Carleton, the defender of Quebec, and now Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, had been sent to Long Island in 1781 after the defeat of Cornwallis to deal with the refugees gathering there. The ranks of those who had already spent the war there under British protection were further swollen with those fleeing their homes in the wake of the loss of the war including a few hundred who came from St. Augustine and were described as “the poorest and most distress’d of all beings, without a shilling, almost naked, and destitute of every necessity of life.” Carleton estimated there were more than 35,000 refugees in Long Island and offered them a choice of destinations: England, the West Indies, or Halifax. Wealthy Americans tended to choose one of the first two; the rest chose Halifax.

The first group to head for Nova Scotia left in the fall of 1782 and spent the winter talking to local officials and sending reports back to New York. Likely sites for settlement were explored. In preparation for the arrival, streets were laid out and emergency housing was erected for those lucky enough to obtain it.

As the signing of the Treaty neared, Carleton announced that his troops would not leave New

York until all who wanted to leave had been evacuated. He rounded up every vessel that the Navy and commercial fleets could provide and wrote to Britain and Nova Scotia urging that lands be prepared, supplies stockpiled, and funds made available in anticipation of one of the largest mass migrations seen in the New World. Civilian loyalists organized themselves into associations designed to aid in the trip. Groups of families, neighborhoods, church congregations, and business groups selected leaders to aid them in moving not as individuals but as support groups.

In April 1783 the first of the associations boarded ships, having been told that each family would receive 200 acres and two years of provisions. The exodus had begun. About 32,000 civilian loyalists left New York that summer for Nova Scotia. 1300 sailed for Quebec, another thousand went to the Bahamas and perhaps a thousand went to Britain. In September the provincial regiments followed and in October Carleton and the remaining troops left New York to General Washington.

“Nova Scarcity” was the nickname given Halifax by the refugees. Disease, inflation and shortages were the order of the day as the loyalists waited for the assignment of land. The earliest arrivals were wealthy New Englanders, including Edward Winslow, whose family had been governors of the Plymouth Colony and John Coffin, who traced his line back to the Mayflower. The next group comprised tradesmen and soldiers. Entire regiments filled the streets including the King’s American Dragoons, the Queen’s Rangers of Virginia, the King’s American Regiment of North Carolina, the New York Volunteers, the Loyal American Regiment, the New Jersey Volunteers, the Pennsylvania Loyalists, the Prince of Wales American Regiment, the King’s Orange Rangers of New York, the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment and former slaves freed to fight in black regiments.

Loyalists were assigned land in Port Rosemond, the Annapolis valley and the “back part,” that area north of the Bay of Fundy. By the end of 1783 there were some 14,000 settlers in the “back part,” and a strong separatist movement developed to break away from the control of Nova Scotia. In

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1784 the colony was split and the “back part” became New Brunswick.

While Nova Scotia was struggling with the settlement of some 35,000 Americans, Governor Haldimand of Quebec was facing a different problem. Most of the loyalists for whom he needed to find room were already in the province and had been for several years. A Swiss-born soldier whose career eventually took him to the British army, he ran his province as a military administration. Concerned about the loyalties of the French Canadians, the protection of the outposts along the St. Lawrence River, and the ambitions of the colonies to the south, he found the answer in his loyalist troops. Loyalist corps had been forming ever since the American retreat from Quebec. In the fight for control of the northern borders of New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont, the loyalists found it convenient to move north to Quebec to regroup. Gradually these loyalists brought their supporters and families to Canada; by the end of the war nearly 10,000 Americans, mostly soldiers and their dependents were established there. These settlers were quite different from those in Nova Scotia. They were largely from upper New York, especially the Mohawk valley, and were simple frontier people, driven from their homes by rebellious neighbors. They settled in a part of the continent that was still largely forested and unsettled by white men. They were joined over the coming years by settlers known as the Late Loyalists who were attracted by the proclamation in 1792 of Lt. Governor John Graves Simcoe, offering free land to anyone willing to clear a portion of it, build a road across the front, and swear allegiance to the Crown.

Their settlement transformed Quebec much as Nova Scotia had been. The new inhabitants were not satisfied to be governed by the Quebec Act of 1774. Their petitions for English civil law, freehold tenure of land and elected assembly resulted in the Constitutional Act of 1791, which split Quebec into Upper Canada and Lower Canada (later

Ontario and Quebec), the latter being French dominated and the former English in culture.

On Nov. 9, 1789 in the Council at Quebec City, Sir Guy Carleton, now Lord Dorchester and Governor-in-Chief of British America, gave special recognition to the first Loyalists to come to Canada, declaring that “Those Loyalists who have adhered to the Unity of the Empire, and joined the Royal Standard before the Treaty of Separation in the year 1783, and all their Children and their Descendants by either sex, are to be distinguished by the following Capitals, affixed to their Names: U.E., alluding to their great principle The Unity of the Empire.” These people are commonly known as United Empire Loyalists.

The British government was not insensitive to the losses of the Loyalists. For seven years, from 1783 to 1790, a commission interviewed thousands of claimants, compiled data on lost properties in all 13 States and awarded compensation.

— *To be continued* —

Civil War Pension Records

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The transcript of that earlier interview is revealing. It is clear that Simmons had two hurdles to clear in that interview. The first hurdle was the difficulty the examiner had in understanding Simmons’ Gullah speech. The examiner states, “This man’s enunciation and articulation are so defective that it is almost impossible to understand him”. Not a good way to start out!

The second hurdle: How could Simmons persuade the examiner that he, William Simmons, was the same person as Ira Sherman – the name in the service records on which his pension entitlement depended? Simmons undoubtedly realized he was dealing with a skeptical examiner who couldn’t understand him anyway. So either Simmons did not tell that examiner the full story of how Ira Sherman came to be his “Army name” or the examiner failed to understand him. In either case, that interview got him nowhere. The “name” issue dominated the interview, and the subject of his disability got little attention.

Now it was six months later, and Simmons had his second chance. We can sense from the transcript of the second interview that Simmons now intended to lay out the whole story of his two names, no matter how odd

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Civil War Pension Records

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that story seemed. We can also sense that R. J. Austin, the second examiner, was a more open-minded listener than his predecessor. There is no reference in this transcript to Simmons being difficult to understand. What's more, the reader gets the impression that Austin made a real effort to produce a clear and understandable record of Simmons' verbal testimony.

What follows are some excerpts from Mr. Simmons' story.

I was born a slave of Ella May Barnwell. I was born on Beaufort Island. My mother was Silby Smith. I don't know what my father's name was. I named myself William Simmons after I grew up just because I like the name, and William Simmons is what I was known as before the war. I was a laborer on (Mistress Barnwell's) farm. I minded or herded cattle and hogs for my owner.

[Note: Mistress Barnwell and most other residents of her farm left the Beaufort area when occupation by Federal forces seemed imminent. Simmons stayed behind. The following excerpts from his hearing refer to what happened next.]

Before I enlisted I was a cook (for the U. S. Army) on Morris Island near Charleston. I did not enlist then, but was just hired to cook. I got a furlough to come back to Hilton Head to see my family. While I was home I contracted small pox and could not return to (my cook job). And when I got well, I took a notion to enlist.

I enlisted in Company B, 21st

U S Colored Troops at Fort Walker on Hilton Head Island. No one could go into the Fort without a pass. I went to a man who had a pass because he sold oysters and berries to the soldiers. His name was Ira Sherman. He gave me his pass with his name on it and I went and handed the pass to the guard, who took me at once to the Provost, and without asking me a single question my name went down as Ira Sherman, and I answered to that name during the whole of my service. I never saw the real Ira Sherman again. He was a refugee on the Island as were a great many others.

Simmons' testimony goes on to provide much detail about his service. He states the names and ranks of his commissioned and noncommissioned officers, and even recalls their promotions. He names his fellow soldiers, several of them from the Hilton Head area. He describes his Army duties: He had served as a guard at Morris Island for an extended period. Later he was assigned as a small pox nurse because of the immunity he had as a small pox survivor.

He describes the disabling rheumatism he began to suffer while in the Army. He traces it to the extended period of guard duty on Morris Island during extremely cold and damp conditions. Simmons says he saw the regimental surgeon at Morris Island, a Dr. Hawk, who gave him some medicine. Simmons names fellow soldiers Renty Gibson and Bram Garrett as persons who can attest to when his medical problems began.

The examiner then reads a list of soldiers' names and asks Simmons to identify those he knew. Simmons names those he remembers and says he doesn't recall the others. He makes a point of saying that "Simon

Grant, Friday Albright and Mat Jones all knew me as William Simmons before the war, and Simon Grant, Mat Jones and others remember me as Ira Sherman during the war."

So that's how William Simmons, on May 6, 1902, explained the events that turned him into the soldier known as Ira Sherman nearly forty years before. His story is just one example of the historical treasure discovered in the pension records the Heritage Library has obtained from the National Archives. A grant from the Heritage Classic Foundation in 2005 made possible the purchase of the records acquired so far – veterans of the U S Colored Troops residing on Hilton Head Island after the war.

John Griffin, the Library's Director of Research, said the Library will be seeking funds to purchase copies of the pension files of hundreds of other former slaves from Pinckney Island and the Bluffton area who also served with the U S Colored Troops.

Griffin points out that the records are valuable not simply for human interest stories such as William Simmons', but because they shed so much light on the circumstances of the former slaves and their families. The records cover an extended period of time. Renty Miller, who died in the 1920s, is believed to have been the last surviving veteran of the U S Colored Troops on Hilton Head Island. Since pension eligibility also extended to spouses and minor children, the range of needs and circumstances described in the records is impressive.

Property transactions involving the former slaves are of particular interest. Griffin reports that very few former slaves – none on Hilton Head – received the grant of "forty acres and a mule" ordered by Gen-

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Civil War Pension Records

(Continued from page 9)

eral Sherman. President Lincoln countermanded Sherman's order soon after he learned of it. Lincoln then issued a proclamation setting forth the terms by which landowners in the Confederacy could reinstate their citizenship (which had been revoked) and reacquire their land (which had been confiscated). They could do so by pledging their loyalty to the United States, paying specified taxes and assessments, and agreeing to negotiate terms by which any former slaves living on their land could continue to live there.

That last requirement was usually met by allowing the former slaves to work the land as tenant farmers. Former slaves who ended up owning land had to purchase it in almost all cases. Records indicate that in some cases it was the pension income that enabled veterans or their survivors to purchase their land. William Simmons, incidentally, owned 15 acres in May 1902 when his interview took place. Heritage Library's John Griffin is currently working with several Native Islander families in researching the land transactions involving their ancestors.

How the Veterans' Pension Project Began

In 2003, Randy Holcomb (then Director of the Heritage Library) and John Griffin learned of two books by John Gourdin based on the experiences of former slaves during the years leading up to and following emancipation. Gourdin's ancestors had been slaves in Berkely County, South Carolina. Much of Gourdin's research was based on pension records of the U. S. Colored Troops in the National Archives.

Holcomb and Griffin arranged for

Gourdin to come to Hilton Head and present a seminar at the Library. The Native Islander community was well represented at Gourdin's seminar. Gourdin identified the names of many of the Colored Troops veterans who had roots in the Hilton Head region and whose pension records were at the National Archives. That seminar sparked the interest of several Native Islander families in acquiring records that pertained to their ancestors. With Griffin's help, those families acquired abbreviated versions of the pertinent pension files.

Those abbreviated files demonstrated the richness of the information available from the pension records. That, in turn, inspired the Library to set a goal of ultimately acquiring full copies of all Colored Troops pension records pertaining to veterans from the Greater Hilton Head region. The Heritage Classic Foundation's grant in 2005 set that effort in motion. The records acquired so far - copies of the original hand written documents - fill two four-drawer filing cabinets.

Griffin, along with fellow-researcher Barbara Vernasco and members of several Native Islander families have spent hundreds of hours reading through these records and transcribing items of special interest from the standpoint of historical perspective and Native Islander genealogy.

Griffin makes clear how much remains to be done. He points out that there are at least several hundred more pension records to be acquired...and then there are the records from the Freedmen's Bank...and then there are the land transactions...and then..... It's clear that the enthusiastic researchers at the Heritage Library don't give up when there is important history to be uncovered!

President's Column

(Continued from page 4)

of it from members. But member support is not broad-based. Only about one-fourth of our members contributed in 2006, and three-fourths of the contributed funds came from just fourteen individuals. We must increase both the breadth and the generosity of that support.

Please respond promptly with your contribution or pledge when you receive our Annual Appeal letter. Be as generous as you can because the need is great. The Library is a vital resource to our members and to the community at large. With your help, it will remain healthy and growing - *and I will have only "Good News" to report when the results are in!*

A Sampling of Current Gift Opportunities

(Continued from page 3)

requests for information from all over the world.

Commitment: All or part of \$250

Subscriptions to Computer Research Sources. Being able to have a complete library subscription to Ancestry Library Service, Heritage Quest, Genealogy.com and other subscription sites cost close to \$2,400 per year.

Commitment: All or part of \$200—the cost for one month of subscriptions.

About Our Members and Volunteers

from the Membership Desk
By Gwen Altstaetter

Wow! The word must be getting out! Since our last Newsletter we welcome 33 new members and 6 renewing after taking some time off from researching. From out of state we have Richard Spiers, Amy Guilford, Janice & Marc Brockman and Patricia McGovern from Massachusetts, Barbara Hale from Virginia, Lee Swift Cook from Connecticut and Charles Lillie from Michigan.

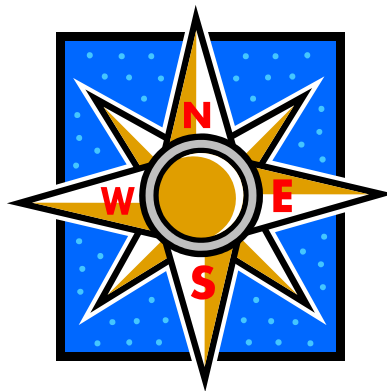
Joining from Beaufort, Bluffton and Hilton Head Island are Jim Buggie, Kathleen and Timothy Crowley, Barbara DeCaro, Marilyn Arline Hayes, Ken and Jennifer Hiatt, Betty Kelchner, Jack Lopez, Tamela and Nicolas Maxim, Myrna Mcknight, Rose Mebane, Karl Michner, Holly Moeri, Alana Morgan, Kathy and Bernie Pennock, Holly and Jim Riley. Donald Robacker, Linda Russell, Martha Alice Siebers, George Stubbs, and Paula Trulley. Returning are Richard Conn, Mary Maddeloni, Ronnie Silett, Janet VanTrigt, Vicki Wayman, and George Williams. We welcome you all and hope we will see you in YOUR library.

New member Jack Lopez has started training to be a substitute Librarian. Thanks so much Jack. We do need more volunteers to help us keep up the quality of service to our patrons. We are flexible and if you can only give one day or ½ day a month that would be appreciated. Please come and share your expertise with others. It is a real joy to have someone exclaim "There he

is!" when they find someone on the census or in one of the other data bases, especially if it is someone who has been hiding.

Call Isobel or Gwen at 686-6560 and set up an appointment! We look forward to hearing from you.

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## Outstanding Volunteer Awards

*(Continued from page 1)*

General David Wooster of Connecticut to Early Churches of the Low Country Wooster shows his writing versatility and research skills.

President Bill Altstaetter praised both Wooster and Sanders for their outstanding achievements during 2006 and offered his personal thanks and that of the other officers and directors of the Foundation to the recipients and to all the members of the volunteer staff. In thanking the assembled volunteers he concluded, "without your faithful service, the work of the Heritage Library would not be possible."

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Note to our Outward Bound Travelers—

Spread the word:

"Come visit

The Heritage Library on Hilton Head."

As visitors to "our Island" discover us, they frequently say how they wish they had known about us before they arrived — "so they could have brought their 'stuff' with them."

Some find our information at the Welcome stops and others find us in the Where to Go or Island Events magazines and still others read about us in the local papers.

Our members and friends, when they travel could become our best sales force—*our roving ambassadors*—if you will!

We would like all you travelers to help spread the word in the areas where you travel. Before you hit the road please stop by and pick up some of our brochures. Most motels have places for this type of advertising and you will also be equipped to give brochures to your friends. It gives them a reference point after you have told them about us.

As one of the prime genealogy and history research centers in the southeast we need to let the rest of the world know—

we are here!

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*Voices from the Past*

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“History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.”

Marcus Tullius Cicero 106—43 B.C.  
De Oratore II, 36



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