



# The Heritage Observer

News from  
The Heritage Library

*Bringing the Past to Life*

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## Heirs Property Project

This month, the Heritage Library, in partnership with the Town of Hilton Head Island, the Gullah Geechee Culture and Land Preservation Task Force, and USCB Hilton Head will open an office to assist families working on settling their heirs property issues and claims.

Heirs property is land that has been passed down from the original deed holder to future generations without benefit of a formal process (will or probate). Even though the family members know the land is theirs, their claim has not been established by the county which leaves the family without a title. This land is then restricted from development and vulnerable to exploitation, no matter who lives there or who pays the taxes.

According to the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (CHPP), "Heirs property owners do not own a piece of the family land. They own a 'percentage' of the whole property. That percentage is determined by where each heir falls in the family tree. The family tree is the first thing that the family has to create in order to begin the work of resolving heirs property." CHPP and other organizations and legal teams then use this information to work with family members and educate them on the rights and responsibilities of the land ownership and establish an agreement on the fate of the property. The process for gaining a clear title and moving forward can be a long and arduous process but is necessary for protecting the property and family members. Families on Hilton Head Island have been working through heirs property issues for years and the Library will now be able to offer some assistance in that process.

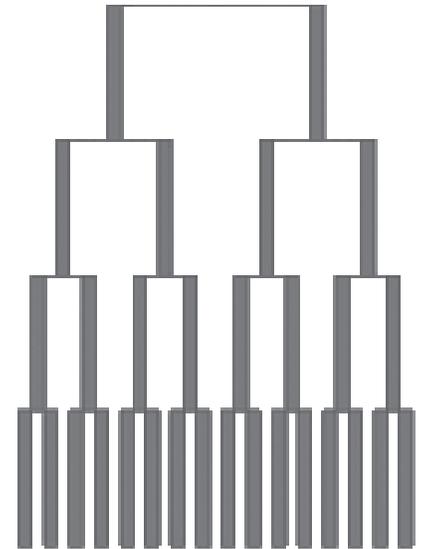
We are pleased to announce the opening of a family research office at the USCB Hilton Head campus to help our Hilton Head families identify their living relatives and establish the necessary family tree including documentation. We will be accepting new families through referrals from Dr. Sheryse DuBose, the Historic Neigh-



**Linda Piekut**  
*Leader*

borhoods Preservation Administrator for the Town of Hilton Head Island. Volunteer genealogists including Linda Piekut, Murray Christopher, Grinnell Griffin and Rick Bart will work directly with families to research and organize the information required for the first part of the process necessary to gain clear title of properties. This will be interesting research for our volunteers – they will be searching for living family members – much of the research that we do on a day-to-day basis is searching the past and looking for those who have passed.

The goal of this project is to provide a necessary service to families while supporting and complementing the important work done by the Gullah Geechee Culture and Land Preservation Task Force. The Task Force will be a partner, helping us to move this project forward and determining how we grow along the way. USCB-HH is a most gracious host, providing us with office and conference space so that families have the privacy needed when meeting with us and discussing family matters. This is one more way in which the University



*A Family Tree*

is supporting our community. In addition, the Town is helping to support this project through Dr. Dubose's office. The development of the partnerships involved – the Town, Gullah Geechee Task Force, USCB-HH and the Library – means that families seeking heir property assistance can do so at no cost. The Library is proud to be a part of this effort.



*Ezra Callahan and Linda Piekut prepare to move equipment as we get ready to set up the USCB-HH office.*

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## From the Executive Director



**By Barbara Catenaci**  
*Executive Director*

Our Island is rich in history and this summer we will be helping residents and visitors learn more about our storied past. We are publishing new guides that will showcase the

historical sites on the Island as well as the resources that are available at the Library.

The Library volunteers are reviewing all the wonderful resources that are here and we will publish a guide to the Library and those resources. The guide will be in printed format and will also be up on the website before the end of the summer. This will provide everyone with a snapshot of what is actually here at 2 Corpus Christi and the ways in which our resources can be used. We have books, databases, vertical files, periodicals, maps, and more – it is all very interesting and very useful as you research your family and community history.

The Library is working on a project with Culture HHI and Hilton Head Christian Academy to add QR codes at Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery and Ft. Mitchel. The students at the Christian Academy are researching our local history and creating content including videos that provide historical information and learning activities at each of our sites. Rome wasn't built in a day so expect to see the codes begin to appear later this summer and into the fall. You will also see QR codes at other historic sites and public art sites. This technology will help us to tell our story across the Island and provide the capability to update content and continually improve the visitor experience.

We are adding video content to our website and building a YouTube channel as well. We will be posting videos that tell the stories of Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery and Ft. Mitchel. We will also have a new series of videos that feature individual and family stories that focus on our Island's history. Video is helping us to bring our history to life.

We have a new brochure that features a listing of many of the Island's historic sites, a map showing you where those sites are located and additional resources for those wanting to take a self-guided tour and learn more about all that Hilton Head Island has to offer. This resource gives you the information you need to tour at your leisure and the addition of QR codes at many sites will only add to the fun. Don't forget that the Library offers docent-led tours at Zion and Ft. Mitchel and that is one more way to get to know our Island's fascinating story.

Last, but not least, we have an incredible team of volunteers who are at the Library Monday-Friday, 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM. They are experienced in helping you get started in ancestry research or if you are an experienced genealogy enthusiast, they can help you learn new tricks and break through brick walls. Call and make an appointment to spend some time with a member of this knowledgeable team – they have so much to share with you.

We hope you take advantage of all that the Library has to offer this summer. Come in and learn more about your family and Hilton Head Island – we promise to make it fun and interesting.

# Don't be Afraid to Go Exploring

**D**o you use only Ancestry.com or Family Search to trace your ancestry? There is a lot more available online that may be helpful, but people often don't know where else to look and assume, incorrectly, that if info is not on one of the paid sites, it is not available. Sometimes finding a source that doesn't help you ends up providing you with another source that does. Here is an example of how "exploring" can produce results.



By Carol Clemens

of allegiance, Rebel passes, reminiscences, life sketches, photographs, etc., etc. What a wealth of information.

## Genealogy Gophers:

<https://www.gengophers.com/#/>

I had never come across Genealogy Gophers before, so I went exploring. When checking the database, I found it a wonderful resource that allows you to search over 80,000 genealogy books. The books are online, so once you find a match, you

can go directly to your desired page in the book. This site led me to several records on land transactions by my Vrooman ancestors. An unexpected find.

Never be afraid to explore new sites, even if you don't think they will help. You never know when you will stumble onto a gem.

Want to submit a question that might be answered in a future article, contact me, [cclemens318@gmail.com](mailto:cclemens318@gmail.com).

One site you may not know is the **US Genealogy Records Directory:** <https://ldsgenealogy.com/dir/>

The intro states: "Our records directory lists 1,133,862 records sources from 1,528 websites and archives. All sources have been organized by state, county, city, and record type. Only actual genealogy records are listed. Both online and archive sources are included."

If you explore their directory and spend some time searching, your efforts may be productive. For example, here is a partial listing of New York State.

I selected Military Records and found there were many links to subscription online data bases such as Ancestry, Family Search, My Heritage, and Fold3. However, some were free and one caught my eye, the 108th Regiment NY Volunteers. The database was new to me – a complete military history record from 1862 to 1894 together with roster, letters, Rebel oaths

**New York Genealogy**  
USA (1,133,862) > New York (56,695)

**By Record Type**  
Record Type Help ?

Birth Records (794)	Mar. Records (2,088)
Cemetery Records (16,075)	Marriage Records (7,072)
Census Records (4,394)	Military Records (886)
Church Records (5,794)	Minority Records (193)
City Directories (5,978)	Miscellaneous Records (328)
Court Records (0/1)	Newspapers and Obituaries (11,579)
Death Records (1,365)	Probate Records (464)
Histories and Genealogies (3,996)	School Records (5,031)
Immigration Records (450)	Tax Records (80)
Land Records (793)	

**By County**

Albany County (1,742)	New York County (571)
Albany County (1776)	Niagara County (885)
Bronx County (482)	Oneida County (1,772)
Broome County (1324)	Oranoga County (1,330)

## Sunni Bond – More Than Just A Gifted Genealogist

If you are a member, volunteer, board member or patron of the Heritage Library you have probably worked with Sunni Bond. Sunni has generously offered her skill, insight and talent to the Library since 2011. This month, Sunni announced that she will be retiring from the Library and moving out of the area to be closer to family and begin another chapter in her life. Everyone at the Library offers sincere thanks for all of the outstanding contributions she has made not just to the Library and the Hilton Head community but for all the times she touched us individually as well.

When the late Dr. Robert Peeples moved from his home to a senior community, he donated his private papers to the Heritage Library. In sorting and filing his records, we found, among the family genealogies he had amassed, several manuscripts about families and events in the Lowcountry. Sunni volunteered to transcribe those stories so the Library could compile and publish them. The resulting book, *The Peeples Chronicles* is available in our bookstore.

Sunni worked with members of local DAR chapters to recreate the 1890 census for our local counties. That project took them to cemeteries throughout the region where they recorded all the information they could find that was relevant to the census. Once the data was collected, she recorded it in hard copy and an electronic version. It was a project that took years to complete and is ongoing. Her attention to detail is evident in her indexing and transcribing.

She also gives her time to Coastal Discovery Museum, the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department and her church. This is just glimpse of what she does as she gives back.

The Library thought it only appropriate



that the folks who brought her to the Library with her genealogy knowledge should be the ones to offer our thanks and good wishes. So, Bill and Gwen Altstaetter send this letter to Sunni, a true friend of The Heritage Library.

To a Dear Friend and Colleague,

A boyhood hero of mine used a somewhat famous line from an old-time song when he closed his farewell to the nation before the Congress way back in 1951. It struck a chord with me then. Today when I think of saying farewell to a dear friend and trusted colleague of long standing at The Heritage Library it seems appropriate for Sunni Bond – “Old soldiers, read genealogists, never die, they just fade away.”

Back when I was considerably more involved with the day-to-day operations of the Library than at present, I would speak to any local audience who would listen, explaining what the Heritage Library was all about.

At one such event Sunni first appeared on my radar. It happened at HHP's Plantation House during a luncheon for the new

members of the Plantation's Women's Club. Sunni tells this tale on herself thus I am sure many of you readers already have heard it. But just for the record, I will pass along my version.

Opening the program, the Master of Ceremonies began by introducing each new member with the request to rise and tell the audience a little something about herself. When it came her turn, an extremely vibrant attractive lady arose at one of the front row tables and started to describe her many and varied interests. As she proceeded down a somewhat longer than usual list every third one was “and genealogy”. It should be noted that this was before anyone had said a word about the Heritage Library or family history research. She was, of course, Sunni Bond.

When concluding my usual sale pitch on behalf of the Library. I looked her right in the eye and invited her down front, now saying something like “It is time to put your money where your mouth is. The Heritage Library needs you.”

**WAS I EVER, RIGHT!**

**She is one outstanding genealogist!**

# Sharing the Heritage

## The Kirk Plot

The late Dr. Robert Peeples, past president of the Hilton Head Historical Society and caretaker of Zion cemetery, stated in a 1980 *Islander* magazine article, “funds for the preservation and beautification of historic Zion, as well as volunteers willing to donate time and energy for caring for this haven of quiet are always welcome.” These words certainly hold true today.



By Iva Roberts Welton  
Board Member

dates many of the burial sites. It is interesting to note that the design is thought to be a variation of the fleur-de-lis. Many of the finials and iron balusters are missing, as well as much of the entire fence, as it has weathered storms and vandalism over the years. It needs to be renovated.

Walking through the Kirk plot you will see many tablets, one which is simply marked “infant/1827” and five others which reveal the birthdates of children who didn’t live past six years of age.

The marker for Florence W. Kirk, is not particularly large but it is unique within the cemetery topped with an elaborate cross-work tympanum, the only one of its kind in the cemetery. There are two carved scrolls, recalling the volutes of an Ionic column’s capital.

A small acanthus leaf is carved at the center of the tympanum where the scrolls meet. The incised marker notes that Florence was the daughter of James and Gabriella Kirk.

The largest and most impressive monument in the Kirk Plot, standing approximately seven feet tall, is constructed of brick and marble, and is raised on a three-tier base. Due to time and weather, the structure has shifted and is cracked, chipped, eroded and stained. The obelisk that once topped the monument is gone. The monument honors both James Kirk (1780-1850) and Mary Kirk, James on the north and east side of the monument and Mary on the south side. The Kirk’s epitaphs are inscribed in the areas devoted to them. The east side of the monument explains the origin of the marker and reads “Their children have caused this monument to be erected to the memory of their parents as an evidence of their sense of great debt of gratitude they owe them.”

The last Kirk epitaph erected was to honor Dr. James Kirk, well known physician of Cherry Hill Plantation on Hilton Head Island, son of Mary and James.

It is fascinating to read about the stone carvers in this cemetery – very few – but they nevertheless had great dedication to their craft.

Cleaning historical stones must be done in a careful and precise manner. The historical integrity of these can be destroyed so easily. To clean a stone takes a special person who is aware of the instructions issued by the SC Dept of Archives and History who administers the National Register of Historic Places which includes Zion Cemetery. Also, just blowing the grounds has to be done carefully so that dust and dirt is not blown into the precious carvings on the tombstones.

At the Heritage Library we are dedicated to the preservation, restoration and sharing of our historic sites for the enjoyment and education of residents and visitors today as well as for our future generations. There is a great need for funds to be able to continue the restoration and repair of the Kirk plot.

Please contact the Library for more information at [heritagelib.org](http://heritagelib.org).



Kirk Plot

We are focusing on the Kirk Plot today. From my perspective, the saddest of the sights in the Cemetery. It is an area comprised of footstones, tablets, gravestones and obelisks, commemorating Kirk Family members and Isaac Baldwin who married Sarah Kirk in the late 1700’s. The Kirk family members were also well-known plantation planters on Callawassie Island and Rose Hill Plantation. It is interesting to note that Kirk’s Bluff was the original name of Bluffton. The Kirks also owned and donated the property for the carpenter gothic Church of the Cross, in Bluffton.

The Kirk family plot is partially surrounded by a cast iron fence (c.1840) that likely post-



Current Restoration



Genello and White at Work

### Restoration is Underway

Frank Genello, American Building Restoration Company, is working on securing the Kirk monument base, leveling the structure, and repairing the steps. Also, work will be done repairing some of the other damaged stones within the plot. Eventually the obelisk will be replaced. We plan to continue preservation work when additional funds are raised.

## Explore Your Heritage

Let's take a look at some of the printed resources available in the Library. There are books from the various states, more for South Carolina than any other state obviously. The Library has bound copies of *South Carolina Historical Magazine* from 1960 forward, the *South Carolina Magazine of Ancestral Research*, bound copies of *The Islander* (no longer in publication) and other local magazines. There are books for virtually every county in South Carolina.

For Virginia, a state often researched here, we have *Genealogies of Virginia Families, Cavaliers and Pioneers, and Adventurers of Purse and Person*, all very valuable sources of information, as well as many other volumes of interest. There are similar well-known volumes for many other states as well.

Our sections on the Revolutionary War and Civil War provide resources that



By Sunni Bond  
Volunteer

have proven invaluable to individuals seeking information for applications to join various lineage societies. There is a huge collection of notebooks which contain information about deaths on Hilton Head Island during the Civil War. There are also bound copies of the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* from 1960 forward and the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* from 1967 forward.

The Vertical Files maintained by one of the volunteers contains information on Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, and South Carolina in general. These files contain, for example, clippings from recent newspapers and magazines to which the Library does not subscribe but which have been supplied by volunteers and members. There are also files on U.S. Colored Troops Pension Applications which have proven invaluable to many of our researchers. The Library also maintains a rack of current

genealogically-linked publications, such as *The DAR Magazine*, *The SAR Magazine*, and *Internet Genealogy*.

Finally, there is a set of notebooks on genealogical research that we especially encourage beginners to investigate so they may become familiar with other websites not on our computer Desktop. Since some of these websites are in foreign languages, there are foreign language dictionaries to help with translations if needed. The genealogical research notebooks carry information on how to research certain cities and states as well as providing interpretative listings of such things as names of diseases from the colonial era. These notebooks also provide many articles of information on doing research in general.

Patrons can make copies of any material they find in the books or other printed materials at a cost of 25 cents a page.

The Library is open 10-3, Monday through Friday – just waiting for you!

## Hilton Head Churches

### Holy Family Catholic Church

Holy Family Catholic Church began as a mission of the Catholic Diocese of Charleston in 1961 when a few Catholic businessmen invited Father John Simonin to come to the Island to celebrate Mass. The Mass was held in the former William Hilton Inn with about 40 in attendance – many were visitors to the Island. As attendance at Sunday Mass grew, it became necessary to move the services to larger space at The Adventure Inn.



By Richard Chalk  
Volunteer

The Fraser family of Sea Pines Company gifted land for a permanent location and in December 1971 ground was broken for the first building which would seat 340. The Church dedication was held on February 25, 1973.

A Religious Education Building/Parish Hall was added to the campus in 1977.

The number of parishioners grew along with the increase in Island residents and plans were developed in 1985 for the construction of a larger worship center.

Once the plans were approved by the Diocese and permits obtained construction was begun. A dedication Mass was held on October 30, 1988. The former church building was converted to a multi-purpose use facility.

Notable additions to the Church campus are the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Stations of the Cross Boardwalk.

There are about 550 active families who call Holy Family their church home.

To learn more about Holy Family you can visit the Church's website: [holyfamily-hhi.org](http://holyfamily-hhi.org)

# History Department

The weather is changing, people are getting outside, and so are the history characters and docents. We are back at Zion and Ft. Mitchel sharing the rich history of our National Register sites. If you haven't been for a while, we would love to have you come to one of the tours. Zion tours are on Tuesdays at 10:30 and Ft. Mitchel tours on Thursdays at 10:30. Each tour will have a docent and history characters. There are benches available for seating at BOTH locations. Thank you to the Boy Scouts for building these.

We would like to add students to some of the tours this summer. If you know of some middle school or high school students interested in Island history, have



**By Richard Thomas and Dee Phillips**  
History Dept. Co-Chairs

them email Dee, [deep9497@aol.com](mailto:deep9497@aol.com).

Classes have finished until the winter semester when we will present them both online and in-person. Watch our website and Facebook for more

information about upcoming programs and classes.

Events planned for the fall include The Ghosts and Myths (October 21-23), a Revolutionary War Forum (November 12), and the Historic Holidays (December 6-12).

As always, we appreciated your support during this past year and hope to see you at the Library's fall events. If you are interested in volunteering at these events or as a docent or as a character, let us know. Phone Heritage Library at 843-686-6560.

Continue to stay safe and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine.

## Orlando Family Visit

On Saturday, May 22, Marc Orlando (the new Town of Hilton Head Island Manager) and his family visited Zion Cemetery. This was a stop on an Island-wide tour that was promoted on social media through Culture HHI. Dee, Diane, Kathy, Larry and Tom were great hosts and made the visit an educational and fun stop for the Orlando family.



Marc Orlando and his family, Dee Phillips, Tom Martin, Kathy Smith and Diane Larsen

# Heritage Library Membership



By **Laurette Doscher-Benfante**  
Membership Chair

Welcome to 11 New and 49 Renewal Members who have joined our Heritage Library Family.

## NEW MEMBERS

### South Carolina

#### Bluffton

Josefina Daniello  
Jeffrey Glazer

#### Hilton Head Island

Sheila Broadbent  
Troy Chisolm  
William Davidson  
Stephen Gallaher  
Timothy Hays  
Janice McKelvey  
Barbara and Gerry Popovsky  
Richard Sheridan  
Eizabeth Van Alstyne

## RENEWAL MEMBERS

### South Carolina

#### Beaufort

Elizabeth Anne McKinney

#### Bluffton

Alfred Beam  
Glenda Blakeney  
Elaine Ouellett

#### Dataw Island

Diane and Joseph Roney

#### Hilton Head Island

Janet Alpert  
Lynne and Richard Armfield  
Sunni Bond  
Jo'anne and Ron Bardley  
Nancy and Robert Breckinridge  
Nancy and Dr. Joseph Burke  
Audrey and Ezra Callahan

Heather and Robert Cherichella  
Carol and Robert Clemens  
Beverly and Thomas Conner  
Pamela and Peter Cooper  
Marie Danforth and Stephen Appell  
Barbara Enrico  
Jan Ferrari  
Mary Agnes Garman  
John Geisler  
Virginia and Robert Ghirardelli  
Roma Holms  
Elizabeth and James MacLeod  
Sally McGarry  
Ellie and John McLauchlin  
John McReynolds  
Lynne and Richard Miller  
Patrick Murphy  
Beth O'Keefe  
Dee Phillips  
Joe Player  
Joyce Rappaport  
Leslie and James Richardson III  
Elizabeth and Barry Riordan

Nancy and Henry Schwabrow  
Vernie Singleton  
Connie Swett  
Arthur Wallace  
Georgia and Henry West  
Sherry and George Westerfield  
Mark Whalen

#### Okatie

Roger Anderson  
Julia Parish

#### Out of State

Cheryl and Stephen Keller  
Boone, NC  
Paul Loucks  
Potsdam, NY  
Karen and Tom Rush  
Charlotte, NC  
Patricia and Benjamin Russell  
Colfax, NC  
Francis Ward & Bonnie Gutman  
Washington, DC



## Women in Philanthropy Keep Giving

Women in Philanthropy recently visited Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery to celebrate their contribution to the cemetery and take a picture with the brick paver bearing their name in recognition of that contribution. We thank them for this donation and all that they do in our community.

Back Row Left to Right: Margaret McManus, Jean Henderson, Cindy Smith, Kaye Black, Clair Craver, Iva Welton. Front Row Left to Right: Martha Anne McDonald, Elizabeth Loda, Tammi Blank