



# The Heritage Observer

News from  
The Heritage Library

*Bringing the Past to Life*

Vol. 13, No. 1

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## A Greater Sense of Self

As a recent transplant from Florida, I've spent my life, like most people, wondering who I am. Especially, where did my ancestors come from and what character traits did I inherit that make me, well, me. My oldest daughter began to ask some of the same questions when she became a teenager. So, to answer her questions as well as my own, we decided to start on a journey of self-discovery together. Through that self-discovery, I learned a lot about who I really am and where I came from and why finding my "self" in a place where being at *home* really feels like home.

Based on my grey eyes and reddish hair, for years, I have been asked "what are you?" Most of the time, I have been thought to be Caribbean. The actual answer is that I am a Nigerian from the Yoruba tribe, with Gullah roots that include Irish, Scottish, Angolan, Seminole, and Cherokee.

Since I have such a random combination of DNA, I decided to do some family tree research to discover more about my family. With the help of several online sources and the Heritage Library, I've been able to uncover more about not only what makes me into me, but also some fascinating information about my relatives that came before me. It's often said that generational habits and traits are passed down and, based on some of the stories that I've learned, that old saying is definitely true for me. Here are some highlights I have uncovered.

So far, I've been able to go back in my family as far as 1847, the year that Caesar Ravenel, my grandmother's great-great grandfather, was born a slave on Johns Island. Caesar was 20 years old when he escaped, making his way to Charleston where he enlisted to fight in the Civil War. I believe that he must have lied about his age so he could fight alongside of his father rather than be assigned as a bugler. His orders includ-



**Luana M. Graves Sellars**  
Board Member

ed being posted on Hilton Head Island and registered in the 34th Infantry, US Colored Troops. The 34th was organized in Beaufort and in Hilton Head from May 22, 1863 to December 31, 1864 before mustering out in Jacksonville on February 28, 1866.

During those times, soldiers were responsible for purchasing their own equipment. Even though the Union enabled Blacks to fight in the war, the

government issued substandard equipment to the Colored Troops, from used uniforms to sometimes broken and defective artillery. To add insult to injury, according to his military service records, at the end of his service Caesar *owed* the US government \$32.82, more than a month's wages, for his equipment and gear. At that time, soldiers were supposed to be paid \$13 a month and a lot of the Colored Troops were actually paid \$7 a month which led Caesar's commander, Colonel Montgomery, to argue on behalf of the Colored Troops that they should receive equal pay. Looking deeper into Caesar's war records and that of his regiment, I was able to uncover even more fascinating information about the experiences that he had.

Learning about Caesar Ravenel's Civil War experiences, the battles he encountered, as well as his fortitude and obvious strong survival instincts, prove to me that he was an incredible fighter. He had the perseverance to live through a series of military campaigns that were daring, as well as dangerous. Historical information about the risks faced by the escaped slaves fighting for the South included the possibility of torture, being returned to their previous owners and even death.

It's stories like these that have really brought Caesar's experiences to life. He is no longer just a name that was passed down through my family. In addition to his life as a soldier, I have learned a lot of other fascinating information about my background, including confirmation that **I am Gullah**. My ongoing Gullah "education" has given me new perspectives while living on Hilton Head Island, as well as experiences that I would have never expected; things like the language and culture.

Recently, I recorded a video for The Heritage Library sharing Caesar's story and my connection to the Island's historic places. Not that I hadn't already known about the historic treasures that Hilton Head possesses, but I never expected that living here would be more than just a great place to live.

In our day-to-day living, it's easy to ignore what's around you. However, this island is packed with incredible historic Civil War reminders like Fort Mitchel and Fort Howell; giving every step that I take an extra special meaning.

I don't know where Caesar might have been on the Island, but I do know that this is exactly where Caesar sought and fought for his freedom. Places like Fort Mitchel may even be where he walked. What I am sure about, is that it's where my family's struggles and dreams of freedom came to fruition.

Through my research on the Island's history and my genealogy, I have been on a very fascinating journey of discovery that I never expected to

experience. Today, I have a clearer vision of my family's struggles to make a life for themselves, but also their triumphs while facing amazing odds against them. Now, I also know what having a great sense of self, place and belonging really means.



Caesar Ravenel

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# From the Executive Director



**By Barbara Catenaci**  
*Executive Director*

The Heritage Library is happy to welcome 2021. I think most of us are pleased to see 2020 in our rearview mirrors, and with COVID-19 vaccines becoming available, we hope to return to normal quickly. Two significant things have happened at the Library that we will help make this new year a great one.

In December 2020, it was announced that The Heritage Library was named as a finalist in the PGA TOUR's Annual "Best Of" Awards. We were nominated in the Charity of the Year category by The Heritage Classic Foundation for our efforts in promoting the study of local history and ancestry throughout the community. The award comes with a \$5,000 grant that we will use to continue to do projects with our local schools.

We have a long standing relationship with The Heritage Classic Foundation and that partnership is one that we are particularly proud of. Being a recognized charity by the Heritage Classic Foundation provides us the opportunity to participate in their Birdies for Charity and Champions for Charity programs. These programs have continuously helped us to expand educational programming in our community. In addition, they support many of our partners so we benefit from their efforts that way as well. Since it was founded in 1987, the Heritage Classic Foundation has donated more than \$44.6 million to people in need.

The 53rd annual RBC Heritage Presented by Boeing will take place April 12-18, 2021 with limited spectators on-site, and strict health and safety protocols in place. Working with officials from the Town of Hilton Head, the State of South Carolina and the PGA TOUR, the Heritage

Classic Foundation has developed a tournament plan that includes a limited number of sponsors and fans in open air and socially-distanced settings. Health and safety remain the number one priority, and the tournament has implemented a number of new protocols to keep everyone safe during the re-imagined event. We hope that our members and donors will once again get involved with the tournament and support the charities that benefit from this event. For more information visit: [www.heritage-classicfoundation.com](http://www.heritage-classicfoundation.com) or [www.rbcheritage.com](http://www.rbcheritage.com).

In good times and in tough times, like this past year, we are lucky to have even more friends that stepped up and helped us. Contributions from the following helped make 2020 a successful year: Women in Philanthropy, The Church Mouse, The Bargain Box, WAHHi, Captain William Hilton Chapter NSDAR, Emily Geiger Chapter NSDAR, Dr. George Mosse Chapter NSSAR, SOR, SC Society of Children of the American Revolution, Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, The Cypress of HH, National Society Sons & Daughters of the Pilgrims, The Herb Society, MAJ Enterprises, Hilton Head Glidden, Boy Scout Troop 45, Espy Lumber, Italian American Club, Town of Hilton Head Island, and American Building Restoration Company.

The Library is also a recipient of SC Cares funds this year. These funds were made possible through federal and state COVID-19 relief efforts. This funding helps us to keep the lights on and continue to provide services in our community. Raising funds is never easy but in these tough times, it is a monumental task and we are grateful for every grant and every donation that we have received. We also hope that we can count on your continued support. Our overriding goal is to continue to keep the organization strong and stay true to the Library's mission.

## WAHHi Celebrates 60 Years of Community Commitment

60 years ago a group of women having tea on a porch made a decision that the Coligny Circle could use some beautification assistance. Within a year, there were 23 volunteers cutting, trimming and planting and the Hilton Head Island Garden Club came to be. As membership grew and a mission statement was developed a partnership with what would become The Heritage Library grew. One of the group's original projects was to assist with clean up at Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery and that was the beginning of their relationship with the Library. That relationship grew over the years to include:

- Hundreds of hours of volunteer service;
- A genealogy interest group that grew into a genealogical society and grew even more to become The Heritage Library when the genealogical society merged with the historical society in 1997;
- Donations and grants for Library projects that aligned with WAHHi's mission and more.

WAHHi provided the first island-wide newsletter

so that residents and visitors were kept up-to-date on all the news. That newsletter was the main form of communication for islanders until the Island Packet began publication. WAHHi provided a regular column in the Packet for years after that – always being a contributor to local news.

Over the years, the WAHHi mission has not changed:

- Promote the natural and cultural beauty of the island;
- Encourage projects which benefit the community; and
- Facilitate communication among the women of the island.

Ever true to their mission, always taking a lead in improving the community, and always supporting local organizations like The Heritage Library, this group more than deserves our heartfelt congratulations on this special anniversary.

Congratulations and Happy 60th Anniversary WAHHi!

# Heritage Volunteers

## Carol Clemens

Carol Clemens is Heritage Library's Family Tree Maker software expert.

She is currently teaching a four-class series on FTM via Zoom and frequently writes detailed articles for the *Observer*.

Carol is a native of Schenectady, New York. She met her husband, Bob, on a blind date in her senior year of college. Carol received a BA in Spanish/Education from the University of Albany (NY). Her first job was teaching Social Studies in the Dept. of Defense schools in the Canal Zone where her husband was stationed. When Bob was assigned to teach ROTC at Notre Dame, Carol earned a MA and PhD in Latin American Studies from the University of Notre Dame.

Carol taught high school Spanish in several schools until they settled in Fishers, IN where she taught high school Spanish and was the Foreign Language Department Chair at nearby Carmel High School. She retired in 2005 and, seeking a warmer climate, they moved to Hilton Head Island.

Carol's family history led to her interest in genealogy. She joined the HHI Genealogy Club which met at The Heritage Library and this led to her joining the Library as a volunteer in 2006. Her first projects were transcribing census documents and information



on soldiers who were buried in the old Union Cemetery. Around 2010 Carol started to present genealogy programs and classes becoming Heritage's go-to person for Family Tree Maker information.

Carol's love of nature led her to become a Master Naturalist earned through a course of study given by the Lowcountry Institute on Spring Island. Her hobby is nature photography. When she takes a picture, she identifies the object, learns about it, and places it

on her website. She uses her website as a teaching tool for folks to learn about nature on Hilton Head Island.

Carol uses her photos to make cards and family calendars, all kinds of personalized gifts. She has exhibited through the Camera Club, has sold some, and the Coastal Discovery Museum has used some for publicity and their interpretive panels. Here is one of her favorites. We urge you to visit Carol's web-

site to view more of her photos at: <https://hiltonheadnature.shutterfly.com/>.

Carol volunteers as an interpreter at Volunteers in Medicine, Docent at the Coastal Discovery Museum, Homework Helper at the Boys and Girls Club prior to Covid-19, and several other organizations.

Carol and Bob have a daughter, Rebecca Clemens Watkins, son-in-law Brent, and grandson Jacob, a junior at Wake Forest University.

Carol says, "I have seen the Library blossom from a small library into one of the best around – lots of wonderful changes in my 14 years as a volunteer."



We are sad to report the deaths of two Heritage Library friends.

**Isobel Bitner** died on February 3, 2021. Born of Scottish parents and raised in Rugby, England, Isobel received a MA in History from Edinburgh University. She did post graduate training in Library Science while working in the public library at Manchester.

She came to the United States on a one-year internship at the public library in Toledo, Ohio, a job which led to positions in corporate and university libraries. She spent twenty years in New York, where she married and raised her twin children, a girl and a boy.

Isobel retired to Hilton Head in 1989. After attending an Open House at the Heritage

Library, she decided to organize and expand the genealogy material she fell heir to from a cousin and her husband's grandfather. She became hooked and became a volunteer at the Library in 2000 as Head Librarian. She also served on the Board.

Isobel said, "It is a great way to combine a hobby and career experience."

**Scott Parker Liggett**, 56, died unexpectedly on Tuesday, February 2, 2021. Born February 4, 1964, in Pittsburgh, PA, he was the oldest son of the late Joseph G. and Nancy (Sutter) Liggett. He was married to LouAnn (Oakley) Liggett and father of Parker and Mallory.

Scott was a graduate of NC State University and held a BS in Civil Engineering and a MS

is Construction Management. He worked for the Town of Hilton Head Island for over 30 years, most recently as Director of Public Projects & Facilities. He was instrumental in planning and executing substantial public projects in the Lowcountry including the beach renourishment and Cross Island Parkway projects.

Scott was a volunteer at Heritage Library where he worked on several projects related to Zion Cemetery and Fort Mitchel. He was a Boy Scout Troop Leader taking great pride in teaching and instilling lifelong values of trustworthiness, leading by example.

His enthusiasm for the adventure at hand was contagious.

# Hilton Head Island Now on The Liberty Trail

by Richard Thomas Board Member  
and History Dept. Co-Chair

The Liberty Trail is part of a heritage tourism and preservation initiative promoting the Palmetto State's leading role in the founding of the United States. The initiative is sponsored by a partnership between The American Battlefield Trust, The National Park Service, the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust and the South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial (250th Anniversary) Commission.



AMERICAN  
BATTLEFIELD  
TRUST ★ ★ ★

The Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery was named to The Liberty Trail this year. The Zion Cemetery location is only the second Beaufort County Revolutionary War site

named to The Liberty Trail, the other being the location of the Battle of Port Royal (Island) between Beaufort and Gardens Corner. The battle, skirmish and ambush sites included in the Trail will be featured in a number of media applications that will guide drivers along the Trail and detail the action at the sites to create a complete narrative of the American Revolution experience from both sides and in the eyes of all affected groups. The Trail will also include the creation of a first; a digital Gateway Experience on Charleston's Marion Square, enticing Holy City visitors to continue on the Tour, a heritage tourism journey.

More than 200 battles and skirmishes occurred in South Carolina during the American Revolutionary War. The goal of The Liberty Trail is to select the most significant sites and create an innovative driving route that connects these sites which tell the captivating and inspiring stories of this transformative chapter of American history.



We will keep you posted as the Library works with the state of SC and the partners involved in The Liberty Trail project. The 250th anniversary of the American Revolution is truly something to celebrate and Heritage Library plans to celebrate on Hilton Head Island.

## Hilton Head Churches

### First Presbyterian Church

First Presbyterian Church Hilton Head had its beginnings when Fred and Billie Hack moved their young family to Honey Horn Plantation in the 1950's and began to hold church services in a small wooden chapel building on the Plantation. This was before a bridge was built to the Island and ministers were ferried across to conduct services.

The formal organization as a Presbyterian church occurred on 11 November 1957. The small congregation continued to meet at Honey Horn until 1965 when a new facility



By Richard Chalk  
Volunteer

was built on land donated by Fred Hack and Owen McIntosh on William Hilton Parkway – the site of the current church. The membership had grown to 95 by this time.

In 1968 a classroom expansion was built and by 1970 the congregation had grown to 400. With the membership continuing to grow, a new building was added in 1978

that would seat 700. A columbarium was added in 1983 with 1200 units.

The relocation of the Honey Horn chapel building, where the church began, to the church campus on William Hilton Parkway occurred in 1994.

Responding to the continued growth of the congregation, an expansion of the sanctuary was done in 1989 bringing the present capacity to 1,000. The congregation has been generous in sharing its sanctuary with the community, being one of the few large indoor gathering places on the Island.

In 2007 the addition of a two-story wing was completed with the 1st floor used as a day school. The most recent update to the facilities was in 2012 which included the creation of a gathering space.

With a current membership of about 1,245 First Presbyterian continues to be an active and vibrant part of the Hilton Head community.

# Explore Your Heritage

“Way back when...” what a delight it was to find that I would be able, as a part-time resident on the Island, to continue my genealogical research. I visited Heritage Library in an entirely different setting from today’s location. From my first visit in the early 1990s, I knew I would forever patronize this valuable resource center.



**By Sunni Bond**  
Volunteer

When I became a permanent resident on the Island, I found my way once again to the Library in its second locale on William Hilton Parkway, but this time as a volunteer. What a difference a few years had made in the space and resources.

And now in its third location, Heritage Library is still a research site for beginning, as well as more proficient,

researchers as they travel the internet and also peruse printed material not available on the internet. Both sources are important when one is tracking down those elusive ancestors.

In addition to providing internet access to such genealogical sites as Ancestry.com, Fold3, American Ancestors, Newspapers.com, and several other valuable sources, the books in the Library are many and varied. There are books which offer information on lineages back to Pilgrims to Quaker genealogy to 1890 census substitutes for the Lowcountry, right on up to inventories for local cemeteries...the Library has it all.

We recognize that people are very concerned about the current pandemic. The

Library is taking extraordinary precautions to prevent the spread of the virus that is plaguing this country. There is a limit on the number of volunteers in the Library at any given time as well as the number of patrons utilizing the Library. The areas used each day are sanitized at the close of the day and often at the beginning of the next day. Periodically ultra-violet sanitizing tools are used. Masks are required as is the law on Hilton Head Island and social distancing is practiced. Appointments are required in order to be sure we maintain proper protocols.

Once you are in the Library, you can work on your own or, if you have made the proper appointment, you can work with one of the volunteer research genealogists. Even if you are working on your own, someone is always available to help you or answer questions.

## History Department

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

January and February of 2021 provided some quiet time but also some interesting topics for Zoom programs. We hope that you were able to get online and take part in one or more of the genealogy, history, or author series. If not, the spring series will begin in April.

Our audiences have become familiar with Zoom as have our instructors. This platform provides us greater reach and we are happy to report that we have had participants from across the country and even some international participation. Linda Piekut led a team of researchers on the Reconstruction Era on Hilton Head Island and is now presenting that research as a class. It is a great way to learn about the people, land sales and education on the Island at that time. If you missed that class, keep an eye out for it in the future – it will certainly become a favorite.

The History Department is working with

the Women’s Association of Hilton Head Island as they celebrate their 60th anniversary. We will be doing two historical presentations for the group; one featuring a history of the women involved with WAHHI and the other on the history of Mitchelville. Ahmad Ward, Executive Director of Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park will partner with Dee for the Mitchelville presentation. We look forward to sharing these special presentations with the WAHHI membership.

Spring will bring back the outdoor programs at Zion and Fort Mitchel beginning in April. Our tours at these sites are always well attended and each year the living history characters refine their presentations and add new stories and new characters. If you haven’t been to the Zion Cemetery and Baynard Mausoleum or Fort Mitchel for a while, you might want to check out the outdoor experience. A new, outdoor

sitting area at Fort Mitchel that was built by Boy Scout Troop 45, makes it possible to sit and listen to most of the presentation. Tours at Zion Cemetery are scheduled for Tuesdays at 10:30 AM and Fort Mitchel on Thursdays at 10:30 AM. Tours run from April into October each year. We could all use an outing right about now, so we hope to see you on a tour.

Visit our website for information on all programs and tours. Here’s a helpful hint – visit the website often because we are always presenting new and interesting opportunities for learning about local history. You can find all the information you need at [www.heritagelib.org](http://www.heritagelib.org).

As always, we are working hard to keep history alive on Hilton Head Island. Also, we are working to keep everyone safe when coming to Heritage Library. Looking forward to reconnecting with you, so stay safe and well until we can.

# ZION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

*The Heritage Library has created this capital campaign to preserve the Baynard Mausoleum and create the Zion Chapel of Ease History Park. The following donors are helping to achieve these goals. If you wish to make a contribution, send your check marked "Zion Fund" to Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, Post Office Box 23019, Hilton Head Island, SC 29925.*

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Continued on page 7



*Historic*  
**Zion Chapel of Ease  
History Park**

*Home of the Patriots and Planters*



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# Heritage Library Membership



By Laurette  
Doscher-Benfante  
Membership Chair

Welcome to 29 New and 67 Renewal Members who have joined our Heritage Library Family.

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