

Hilton Head Island's 'Mr. History' dies

BY DAVID LAUDERDALE
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The Rev. Robert E.H. Peeples, who researched and shared Hilton Head Island history since moving to the island in 1953, died Wednesday at age 99 at NHC HealthCare Center in Bluffton.

Peeples was a founder of the Hilton Head Island Historical Society in 1961, making it one of the first



Peeples

community organizations of newcomers in the island's modern-development era. He was president of the organization for 35 years.

He wrote numerous papers, articles and pamphlets on Lowcountry history, from the explorers and earliest settlers through the antebellum period. He lectured frequently on local history and was often quoted by local publications.

In 1985, he was honored by the Hilton Head Island Community Association for "enhancing community awareness of our history through research, writings and activities."

A collection of his writings on history called "The Peeples Chronicles" was published in 2014 by the Heritage Library Foundation, and it has been amplified for its second printing.

Peeples was instrumental in the founding of the Heritage Library Foundation, a private reference library and re-

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Bill Altstaetter

search center. The historical society's papers and assets were turned over to the library in 2005.

"The Heritage Library is a significant part of his legacy," said Bill Altstaetter, a co-founder of the library. "Without his support, advice, counsel and significant contributions in time, intellect and money, we would never have made it to 20 years."

The Heritage Library also took over the historical society's responsibility for the preservation of two significant historical sites: Fort Mitchel in Hilton Head Plantation, and the Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery on U.S. 278. It is now staging a capital improvement drive for the cemetery and opening it to new research and public access.

The library also was given the papers of Peeples and his late wife, Cora McKenzie Peeples, who died in 2014 at age 95. They were married 66 years. For many years, she led the local observance of Constitution Week for the Daughters of the American Revolution.

From those files, library volunteer Sunni Bond edited the "Peeples Chronicles" with titles like

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"The Role of Beaufort District in the Revolutionary War" and "Island leaders Rest in Zion."

He was an officer in an island museum that was a forerunner to the Coastal Discovery Museum. And he was a charter member of the Hilton Head Art League and the Hilton Head Choral Society.

Peeples was born in Estill and had been an Episcopal rector in Georgia before moving to the island. He and his wife were among the earliest newcomers, building a home on Moonshell Road in Folly Field before Hilton Head had a bridge to the mainland.

He was organist and choir director in the early days of First Presbyterian Church, and he played the

organ at his wife's funeral service.

He was vicar emeritus at the Anglican Church of the Redeemer on Hilton Head, a congregation that uses the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and the 1940 Hymnal. He was rector from 1980 until June 2016 but continued to play the organ until he moved to a nursing home.

Peeples was a veteran of World War II and a member of Sons of the American Revolution and many other historical organizations.

A graveside service will be held at 2 p.m. Monday at the Lawtonville Cemetery in Estill.

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OBITUARY

Rev. Dr. Robert Epting Howard Peeples

The Reverend Doctor Robert Epting Howard Peeples, 99, formerly of Estill, died August 2, 2017 at NHC HealthCare, Okatie, SC.

Dr. Peeples was born January 13, 1918 in Estill, SC, son of the late Robert Rhodes Peeples and Margaret Folk Peeples. He graduated from Estill High School and received a B.S. Degree in Economics from the College of Charleston. He was employed by The Citizens and Southern National Bank prior to joining the Army during WWII where he served in the states and in India. Following the war, he attended the Virginia Theological Seminary and upon graduation was ordained as an Episcopal Priest and served the Georgia Diocese. He received his Doctorate of Divinity from American Ministerial Association. He was a member of the Georgia National Guard where he served as Chaplain for the 24th Division Artillery and later served as Chaplain for the Chatham Artillery. He was a resident of Hilton Head Island for over 60 years and was a member and former Vicar of The Anglican Church of the Redeemer.

Dr. Peeples participated faithfully in local organizations and was instrumental in preserving many of the historical sites on Hilton Head Island. He was president of the Hilton Head Historical Society for 35 years and was a charter member of the Heritage Library and member of their Board of Advisors. He helped oversee the later merger of the Historical Society with the Heritage Library. He published many articles on island history, including Tales of Ante Bellum Hilton Head Island Families. These and other articles are preserved at the Heritage Library. He was a founding member and secretary of the

Hilton Head Island Museum and a charter member of both the Hilton Head Art League and the Hilton Head Choral Society.

Dr. Peeples did extensive research to preserve and share his family history and wrote A Miles Genealogy, A Family of South Carolina Planters which was published in the SC Historical Magazine. He was a member of the following organizations: The First Families of SC, where he served as president and Chaplain; The S.C. Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, where he served as State Chaplain and Chaplain of the Dr. George Mosse Chapter; The Huguenot Society of South Carolina; the Society of St. Thomas and St. Denis; The Hereditary Order of Descendants of Colonial Governors; The National Society of the Sons of the American Colonist; The Order of the Founders and Patriots of America; The Society of Descendants of the Colonial Clergy; and the Baronial Order of Magna Charta.

He is predeceased by his wife of 66 years, Cora McKenzie Peeples, his brother, John Randolph Peeples, his sister, Ruth Peeples McNair, and his nephew, John Randolph Peeples, Jr.

He is survived by nieces and nephews: David D. Peeples, Derbiana P. Bowers (Grover), Margaret "Marce" P. Warner (Robert), and Robert F. Peeples (Shannon). He is also survived by grand-nephews: Grover F. Bowers, IV, Hunter T. Bowers, Jacob P. Warner, Lawton P. Warner and Hamilton C. Warner and a grand-niece, Margaret E. Bowers.

A graveside service will be held at Lawtonville Cemetery, Estill, SC, on Monday, August 7, 2017, at 2 PM directed by Peeples-Rhoden Funeral Home of Hampton. Friends may visit with the family immediately following the service.