



# The Heritage Observer

## News from The Heritage Library

*Bringing the Past to Life*

Vol. 4, No. 4

DECEMBER 2012

## Fifteenth Anniversary Issue



### End-of-Year Volunteer Party at Fort Mitchel and Dolphin Head



*Part of the group that toured Fort Mitchel headed by Lou Benfante, Bill Altstaetter, and Harry Eschenbach. Photos by Carol Clemens*

The library volunteers and their spouses enjoyed a wonderful day on Saturday, December 1, with a tour of Ft. Mitchel and a holiday get-together at Dolphin Head Recreation Center. Bill Altstaetter, Harry Eschenbach, and Lou Benfante led the Ft. Mitchel tour, acquainting the volunteers with this historic property we own. Afterwards we gathered at Dolphin Head for food and conversation. It was a great way for people who work on certain days to meet those who work on other days, and their spouses. We appreciate the work that our volunteers perform, and are so grateful that they have chosen the Heritage Library as their "charity of choice."

LINDA PIEKUT



### Heritage Library at the Farmers' Market



*At the Farmers' Market in Honey Horn, Iva Welton and Barbara Fleischmann unfurl a banner directing visitors to our website. Not pictured, Priscilla Russo. Photo by Peter Ovens*

We are grateful to Pamela and Peter Ovens, of the Hilton Head Island Farmers' Market at Honey Horn, for inviting the Heritage Library to participate every week in this growing activity. This is the market's second year, and our second year in participating in it.

During the past year we've had many visitors drop by our tent and sign up to receive our emails and newsletters. Volunteers, including Barbara Fleischmann and Priscilla Russo, have helped set up, distribute materials and answer questions by curious visitors. We have enjoyed meeting and greeting so many visitors to the market and letting them know about the exciting things happening at the Heritage Library.

We look forward to next season.

IVA WELTON

## EXCITING PROJECTS AHEAD

**Letter from the President**

A number of important things have happened in the last few months. One was the appointment of Linda Piekut as **Executive Director** and to the Board of the Heritage Library Foundation. It is a “recess appointment” which can be confirmed by the Board at the next annual meeting. Linda is tech-savvy, experienced in project management, and a valuable, much-needed addition to the HLF staff.

**Legendary Locals**

I have been working on a book for Arcadia Publishing, scheduled to be published next spring, on *Legendary Locals of Hilton Head*. Many of those legendary locals came to Hilton Head Island during the Fraser years and participated in a unique development philosophy that has become recognized world-wide, and in gathering materials for the book I realized we were about to lose a very important part of our history. Furthermore, since the book is mainly images and captions, it does not allow for any in-depth treatment of the individuals or the philosophy. Finally, I was not able to secure photographs acceptable to the publisher for some of the key players.

**Encyclopedia Hilton Head**

Out of all this was born the concept of Encyclopedia Hilton Head (EHH). Back in Virginia, I had done a little work for Encyclopedia Virginia, and believed that such a project could capture for the future a fascinating history that would also be an authoritative resource for researchers and scholars. We have received a grant from the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry for a portion of the work.

Piggy-backing on that is a concept Linda Piekut is overseeing, the development of a phone app for visitors to the city which will contain information for history

*Continued on Page 7*

**From the Executive Director**

Hello,

I am Linda Piekut, the new Executive Director of the Heritage Library Foundation. I assumed the duties of this new position in July. It is my responsibility to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Foundation, search for fundraising opportunities, and recruit volunteers with the skills needed for the library and for research projects that the Board defines.

The past five months have been challenging and rewarding. We have 10 new library volunteers including one for technical support and an additional four in the History Division. We began developing the Original Mitchelville project and a new website, the Encyclopedia Hilton Head, with the help of a grant from the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.

This has also been a sad time. Gwen Alstaetter, our Membership Chairman, is retiring after holding the position for 12 years. She has handed membership responsibilities to a very competent volunteer and long-time Island resident, Laurette Doscher, so we know that the care that Gwen has given to this position will be continued by Laurette.

The Foundation has been through some trying financial times and I thank all of you who reached a little deeper into your pockets to help us out this year. I hope that you will continue to support the Heritage Library Foundation in whatever way you can and I encourage you to talk about us to your friends and neighbors.

Have a wonderful holiday season and come see us in the New Year.

LINDA PIEKUT



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FROM THE

## Membership Desk

Fifteen years ago, when we were founded, we had 23 members; today we have 341. Fifteen years of successes and disappointments, laughter and tears, creativity and hard work.

This year we have added 71 new members and a number of volunteers. You will find a new feature in this *Observer*, a listing of donations made “in Honor” and “in Memory.” Also listed are recent renewals. Renewals are the lifeblood of any organization and we thank these members for their support. Perhaps you will find a genealogy buddy among these names, someone with whom you can exchange information and share unique experiences.

I have been responsible for the Membership position since January 2002 and have seen many changes – most of them good. But, it is time for a change and Laurette Doscher Benfante will be taking my place as Membership Coordinator in January.

We appreciate your time, talents and donations and look forward to your continuing support in 2013.

Happy Researching,

GWEN ALTSTAETTER



*Gwen Altstaetter, center, membership secretary since 2002, confers with (left) Linda Piekut, executive director, and Laurette Doscher who will be taking over the membership duties January 1, 2013.*

## New Members

From out-of-state, Donna and Ronald Goady from California and Carolyn Shreve from Oklahoma.

From Beaufort: Frances and Graham Grande and Patricia Turk.

From Ridgeland: Leslie Cox and Gregory Mullins.

From Bluffton: Anita Bagley, William Ball, Saundra Brooks, Bill and Janet Garrity, Diana George, Stephen Larimer, Joanne Miller, Ken and Karen LeBon, Lainey Ouellette, and Frances Robertson.

From Hilton Head Island: Marianne and Maynard Barker, Ivan and Susan Bennett, Mary Lou and Wesley Bowles, Anita Calfee, Gil and Marriette Campbell, Jack and Sue Clark, Joan Crane, Gail and Anthony Drabnis, Carol and Mike Ells, Elizabeth Fenlon, Carol Gordon, C. Murphy Hall, Kenneth Hillary, Daniel Hofmann, Dorothy Hooker, Judy Kane, Darah Latourelle, Norman Levy, Sue and Jim McDowell, Pauline and Howard Miller, Kenlyn and Dennis Miller, Rosemarie Nelson, Margaret Patano, Nancy Penney, Bonnie and David Sudduth, Jack and Jean Ward, and Cynthia Wood.

## Gifts in Memory

**Dee Merian** by Jane Hill.

**Gordon Kiddoo** by Tom Senf.

**Tom Senf** by Tom and Linda Hennessey, Joan and Robert Diamond, Bill and Gwen Altstaetter, Karen West, James and Sue Ann West, Ginger and Allan Miller, and Iva Welton.

**Linda Ann Mitchell** by Iva Welton.

**Michael Taylor** by Iva Welton.

## Gifts in Honor

**Dr. Robert and Miss Cora Peebles** by Marion and Susie Lamb and Nancy Blakeney.

**Sunni Winkler** by Catherine Scott, Steven and Millie Saathoff, Mrs. Larry Alexander, Eleanor B. Niebell and Mary Hess.

**Nancy Burke** by Susan Ketchum.

**Bill Altstaetter** by Sue Parsons and Mary Jo Will.

*See recent renewals on Page 8.*

## From Our Founding in 1997

### Our Founders

When the Heritage Library Foundation came into being in 1997 there were three incorporators: Betsey Wolf, left, was president. She was known as Miss Genealogy throughout the island..

When the expected room



for the local genealogy society at the new public library failed to materialize, Randy Holcomb, vice president, right, urged members of the society, then a chapter of the national society, to form a library of their own, in a separate foundation. It was easier to do



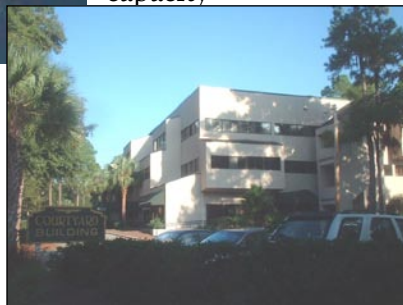
that than to go through the national group.

E. A. "Bill" Altstaetter (left) was the other vice president, and he continued to serve on the Board throughout all fifteen years. He is our institutional memory, having served in just about every official capacity



Our first home, right, was on the third floor of the Courtyard Building.

*Photos from Library archives.*



### Heritage Library – The First 15 Years

The Heritage Library Foundation's original books came from the Genealogy Society's library, approximately 100 books located in a Seabrook closet. The Society's librarian, Betsey Wolf, known on Hilton Head Island as "Ms Genealogy," had organized the books alphabetically. When a Genealogy Society member wanted a book, the Seabrook receptionist would give him the closet key. Then the struggle began. Seabrook sponsored Bingo on Monday evenings and their Bingo paraphernalia was stored on a cart placed at the front of the closet library. The bulky, heavy cart had to be moved before a member could access a book. Very few members used the library.

Two Society members owned a great many genealogy books. One member stored half of his books in his garage because his library had grown too large for his house. They wished to donate their books to the Society. So, the Society wanted to find a location where all of these books would comprise their library.

In 1997, at the urging of Randy Holcombe, a retiree from up north, the Heritage Library Foundation was created. Article I of the Bylaws states, "The Heritage Library Foundation...organized to promote the study of history and genealogy, to support, organize, and maintain a private historical and genealogical library..."



In July, 1997 the Library opened in a 9'x12' room in the Courtyard Building with one computer, about 1,500 books, and 23 founding members. Society meetings were held at the Seabrook until the fall of 1998. The Library grew: six months later, 1,000 square feet – three years later, 2,000

*Dr. Robert and Miss Cora Peebles have been staunch supporters of the Heritage Library. Dr. Peebles was for many years president of the Hilton Head Island Historical Society; Miss Cora was instrumental in establishing September 19 as Constitution Day in Hilton Head.*

## Fifteen Years of Growth

square feet – ten more years, 2,800 square feet., the current size of the Library which now has in excess of 4,000 books, numerous computers and 341 members. Foundation meetings are held at the Library and the Foundation makes its meeting space available to organizations as part of its Community Outreach Mission.



*Tom Hanahan (above), former Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives, was our second president. His wife Sandee (right) former Illinois Administrative Law Judge, served as Membership Director. Fredericka Altstaetter (below), sister of Bill Altstaetter, signs in at the front desk in the Courtyard Building. Betty Jane Smith in center, Gwen Altstaetter behind desk. Photos from Library archives.*

A library computer program was purchased from Library World and Randy Holcombe started cataloguing the collection. In 2000 Isobel Bitner, a professional librarian, joined the Library's volunteer staff. She tackled the huge job of cataloguing everything in the Library using the Dewey classification system, with some modifications to suit the Library's special



needs. The next year Nancy Burke, also a professional librarian, became a Library volunteer and now serves as Head Librarian and on the Education Committee.



*The front desk in the bright new quarters on the second floor of the Savannah Bank Building. Photo by Barbara Muller*

In 2005 the Hilton Head Historical Society became part of the Heritage Library Foundation. They brought with them books, a bank account, responsibility for Fort Mitchel and Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery, and 60 members who became life members of the Foundation.

Since 2005, the Library has grown thanks to contributions from generous patrons, among them Dr. Robert Peebles who has given the Library his genealogical/historical books, articles he has written, and his pertinent correspondence. Randy Holcombe has given the Library the Barbour Collection, a research series which is organized by towns and serves as an index and an abstract of pre-1850 Connecticut vital records (births, marriages and deaths). The Library purchased the Mayflower series which tracks Mayflower families through five generations: descendants of the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth, MA in December 1620. The library currently has 23 volumes of this series and a standing order for any future volumes.

In addition to books, the Library Catalog listing now includes maps, CDs, and microfilm collections. Isobel Bitner and Nancy Burke are responsible for all cataloguing. We also offer access to websites containing important genealogical material.

An impressive 15 years.

ELIZABETH HANSON

*(Isobel Bitner, Bill Altstaetter, and Nancy Burke contributed to this report)*

## More Photos from the Archives



*Then vice-president Bob Smith found himself plunged into the presidency when Blanche Sullivan resigned. He helped set the library on a course that would emphasize the preservation of history.*



*Librarians Nancy Burke, left, and Isobel Bitner together have spear-headed many important projects. Nancy has taught or arranged many classes while Isobel has overseen many research projects. This photo was taken at the Courtyard Building.*



*Gordon Kiddoo was president of the Sons of the American Revolution and a frequent lecturer.*

*John Griffin, third from left below, a long-time researcher, as a Volunteer of the Year in 2005. John Dixon on the left, Bill Altstaetter on the right. The man second from left is unidentified.*



## Our History Division Was Busy in 2012

An in-depth study of the extensive and rich history of Hilton Head and surrounding islands of the Low Country served as the focus of the educational programs presented throughout 2012 by the Library's History Division.

The winter term, mid-January to Heritage Classic Week, included a six-session study of the Island's history from Pre-Columbian American Indian cultures to the incorporation of the modern Town of Hilton Head Island in 1983. Lecturers included Bill Altstaetter, Norman Harberger, and Natalie Hefter.

Other programs covered a variety of subjects: "Was Doctor Hawley Crippen a Murderer?" given by descendant Patrick Crippen; two talks by the Foundation's past president, Bob Smith, during the February Black History celebration, "South Carolina, Cradle of Secession" and "Mitchelville—Then and Now"; a shift in focus let us meet some of the more notable "Crowned Heads of Europe," introduced by Dalton Parker. The winter term programs concluded with a highlight event, "Afternoon Tea with Eliza Pinckney." Eliza, portrayed by Peggy Pickett in period dress, charmed the packed house with her discussion of her plantation life with "Mister Pinckney" in 18th-century South Carolina, and her development of indigo.

In our Community Outreach, the History Division provided guest lecturers to a number of Island organizations including two talks at the Country Club of Hilton Head on the early plantations of the Island's north shore. A comparable talk to the Sea Pines Day Trippers encompassed plantations within modern Sea Pines.

Attendance at these programs was 229 for library sessions and 460 at the off site locations; a total of 689 Island residents and visitors.

During the months of June, July, August and September weekly tours of Fort Mitchel were offered in partnership with Coastal Discovery Museum, led by Bill Altstaetter, Lou Benfante, and Harry Eschenbach. Sixty-nine persons attended; 13 residents and 56 tourists (five from SC and 51 from out-of-state). Thanks to Natalie Hefter and the staff at Coastal Discovery for their invaluable participation in this successful venture into history tours. We are also pleased to continue to make Zion Cemetery available for their Patriots and Planters lectures which have been held for several years.

One program in October and two in November completed the History Division's lecture schedule for 2012. In

October Rosemary Staples appeared to a packed house, in period dress as Clara Barton, presenting an absorbing discussion of Clara's two visits to the Low Country; during the War Between the States and later to assist with the recovery from the 1893 Great Sea Hurricane. In November, Norm Harberger reprised his earlier discussion of modern day Hilton Head during the Charles Fraser years from the arrival of the "timber partners" following WWII to the present day.

Thanks to the volunteers who devoted time and energy sharing their experience and expertise to make 2012 an outstanding success, and to the volunteers taking care of our two historical sites, Fort Mitchel and the Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery. Very special thanks to Ron Boyd, Harry Eschenbach, and David Schofield for helping me look after the needs of Fort Mitchel and to Barry Riordan who has been active in the planning and funding for renovations of the Baynard Mausoleum.

Also, thanks to Rick McDevitt of Ocean Woods Landscaping for his expertise and assistance providing grounds-keeping services at both historic locations.

While the responsibility for managing the Foundation's history and genealogy research falls within the purview of the Head Librarian, I wish to recognize the historic significance of the contributions made this past year by Phyllis Boyd in updating the tombstone records at both Zion and Tailbird Cemeteries, John Griffin's work on the records of the US Colored Troops, and Paul and Marty Anthony's research of Island deaths during the years of the Civil War.

Thanks to History Division members who assisted Barbara Fleischmann, Priscilla Russo, and Iva Welton with their work on an application to place Zion Cemetery on the United States Register of Historic Places and to those who have promoted our history program at the Farmers' Market at Honey Horn.

Finally, thanks to all the members, officers and the outstanding volunteers of The Heritage Library for their friendship and support for my efforts; without you none of this would have been possible. It has been a genuine pleasure working with each of you over these last years as Chair of the History Division.

Watch the pages of *The Heritage Observer*, read our emails, and check our website for information about the 2013 History Program now being completed.

BILL ALTSTAETTER

(Cont'd from Page 2)

## Letter from the President

tours and can be used to develop other tours. Both projects can work from one database. The projects are eminently doable but will take a little time.

### Mitchelville

We also are working on a new project, the **Original Mitchelville Initiative**. There were some 1500 souls who lived in Mitchelville while the army was here. When the army left in 1868, so did the jobs and many of the residents. Therefore they were not here to be counted in the 1870 census. Because it is believed that a large portion of today's African-American community had an ancestor who passed through Hilton Head (some say as high as 30 percent), finding even a fraction of the 1500 and their descendants could be a very exciting project. It will be tedious work, spooling through microfilm that has never been studied for this purpose, and will probably take years, but as every genealogist knows, it is tremendously rewarding when you suddenly break through the proverbial brick wall.

### 350/30: A Birthday Party for Hilton Head

Last year Bill Altstaetter pointed out to us that 2013 had two significant dates: the 350th anniversary of Captain William Hilton's voyage, and the 30th anniversary of the incorporation of the Town of Hilton Head Island. Out of this was born the **350/30 celebration** now being planned for 2013. Leslie Richardson is the organizing genius, and multiple events are being planned for the last week in September, involving almost every organization on the island.

Although we have all been working hard, creating all these new concepts, we are still struggling financially. We continue to apply for grants and seek gifts for operating capital. We are thoroughly convinced that we have in this Foundation something that is unique and worthy of support.

BARBARA MULLER

**If you are interested in volunteering to participate in any of these projects —Mitchelville, Encyclopedia Hilton Head, or the 350/30, please contact me or Linda Piekut. You do not have to be a member to volunteer.**

## Recent Renewals

Frederic and Mary Ellen Ackerson, Robert Albrecht, Paul and Marty Anthony, Wesley Argo, Dorothy Arwe, Terry and Chris Baehr, Bill and Jill Bender, Isobel Bitner, Terry and Shelly Block, Laura and Ellen Borgmeier, Barbara Born, Lois and Bart Bubnell, Sheila and Bob Buck, Bobbie Burke, Charles Calvert, Alan Chaput, Sally Clarke, Carol Clemens, Mary Ann Compher, Beverly and Tom Conner, Guyla Daley, Carol Delgado, Priscilla Dement, Tom DeMilio, Debra Frieden, Libby Galloway, Janis Gatchet, William Gilbert, Molly Green, Harold Hadley, Elizabeth Hanson, Norman Harberger, Jane Hill, Robert and Linda Holmes, Joan Keating, Pam Keating, Claudia Kennedy, James Lee, Janis Legere, Gordon Lewis, Diana and David Luellen, Terry and Sansing McPherson, Jean Meaney Wheatley, Nancy Mestrovic, Ken and Jane Michel, Hedy and Jerry Moore, Terry and Harry Moore, Bob Nelson, William and Joan Nicol, Janice Niver, Richard Oriage, Dalton and Barbara Parker, Carol Pfeifle, Peggy Pickett, Jim and Carolyn Robinson, Carole and Ronald Rossi, Priscilla Russo, Mike and Cassie Sanders, George Schneider, Dave Schofield,

Ronni Silett, Sarah Takacs, Hugh and Barbara Terreri, Barbara Thode, David Thomas, Harvey and Theresa Varnet, Donna Waller, Douglas and Lamar Webb, and George Williams



### An Afternoon at Fort Mitchell

This photo of Bill and Gwen Altstaetter was one of our favorites of those taken by Carol Clemens on December 1 as we toured Fort Mitchell and later gathered at Dolphin Head in Hilton Head Plantation for refreshments. (See Page 1)

### The Heritage Library Foundation

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