



# Glimpses

Items of recent and historical interest  
from members of The Heritage Library

Vol. 3 No. 1

Spring 2011

## WOMEN IN HISTORY

### Elizabeth Timothy

by Rosemary Staples

Ask the average person to name America's first woman newspaper publisher, and they might suggest Katharine Graham, Clare Boothe Luce, or Dorothy Dix. Not even close — one has to step back three centuries, into colonial Charlestown, South Carolina to find the answer. The honor belongs to a Dutch immigrant, Elizabeth Timothy, who published the *South Carolina Gazette* for eight years after the death of her husband.

Elizabeth Timothy, a thirty-something mother of six, faced two choices when her husband Lewis died “in an unhappy accident” over Christmas 1738—either marry and give up ownership of the paper, or simply press on by herself. Elizabeth chose the latter. She planned to make the paper profitable, buy out its partner, and give the *Gazette* to her teen-age son when he turned twenty-one.

Elizabeth knew well the operations of the *Gazette*, as her husband had been partner in the Charlestown paper for five years. The *Gazette* was the official printer of the province, responsible for printing the Assembly's documents, and Elizabeth helped with the bookkeeping when she was not managing the family's growing brood of children. But with Lewis gone, she would have to edit in English while thinking in Dutch and learn how to operate the cumbersome printing press.

With the help of her thirteen-year-old son Peter, an apprentice trained by his father, Elizabeth pressed on with the labor-intensive business of printing. She and Peter set the type by hand, one letter at a time, locked them into a form, then inked the type with ink balls. Finally, they fed each sheet of paper individually by hand through the century-old press, which converted the mirrored letters into readable prose.

In her inaugural issue on January 4, 1739, Elizabeth

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## GLIMPSES INTO THE CIVIL WAR

### The CSS Hunley, a tragic submarine

It was bright moonlight the night of February 17, 1864. On that night, near Charleston, South Carolina, the USS Housatonic was suddenly hit by a torpedo and sank almost immediately.

History was made that night. The CSS Hunley, who struck the Housatonic, was the first submarine ever to sink an enemy ship. Immediately after the sinking of the USS Housatonic, the Hunley disappeared, never to be heard of again.

It was the third sinking of the ill-fated boat.

Three years earlier, on April 19, 1861, President Lincoln had ordered the Union forces to begin a blockade of all major Southern ports. It was this order that led to the invasion and occupation of Hilton Head in November of that year and, according to most historians, was part of the basic strategy that helped the North defeat the South.

And it was from Hilton Head that Union ships were carrying out the blockade of Charleston, drawing the noose ever tighter.



*Painting of the CSS Hunley held by the Confederate Memorial Literary Society Museum, Richmond, Virginia.*

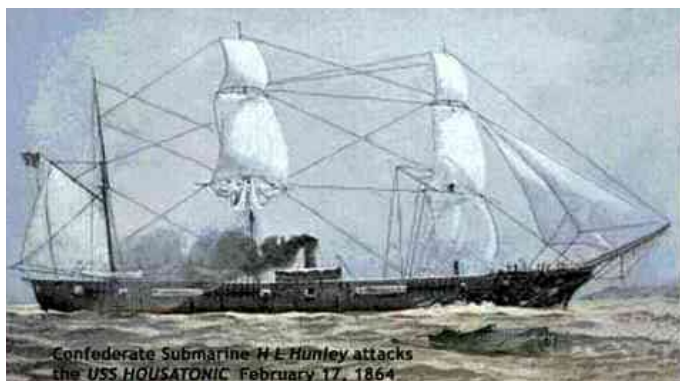
*Cont'd on Page 2*

*CSS Hunley Cont'd from Page 1*

General P. G. T. Beauregard, the Confederate military commander at Charleston, heard of successful tests of the H. L. Hunley. He ordered the little man-powered submarine (almost 40 feet long) shipped to him. The blockade of Charleston was tightening, and perhaps the submarine could be used to lessen it.

The Hunley was operated by a crew of eight men, seven of whom sat side by side on a bench and turned a hand-cranked propeller, achieving a maximum speed of four knots. The eighth man was the commander, responsible for steering and for spotting the target. It was armed with 90 pounds of black powder in a copper cylinder, mounted on a 22-foot iron pole with a spiked ramming tip. Air was supplied by two four-foot pipes. Reportedly it could stay underwater as long as two hours.

Before it got to Charleston, the Hunley had already sunk twice. The first occurred when the hatches were left open and the submarine was swamped, killing five. It was raised but later sank again during a practice dive, killing all eight of her crew, including her namesake, Horace L. Hunley, a Mobil lawyer who was part of the development team.



*The USS Housatonic*

A court of inquiry into the sinking of the Housatonic was held in March 1864. Its findings:

**First.** That the U. S. S. Housatonic was blown up and sunk by a rebel torpedo craft on the

night of February 17 last, about 9 o'clock p.m., while lying at an anchor in 27 feet of water off Charleston, S. C., bearing E. S. E., and distant from Fort Sumter about 5½ miles. The weather at the time of the occurrence was clear, the night bright and moonlight, wind moderate from the northward and westward, sea smooth and tide half ebb, the ship's head about W. N. W.

**Second.** That between 8:45 and 9 o'clock p.m. on said night an object in the water was discovered almost simultaneously by the officer of the deck and the lookout stationed at the starboard cathead... [I]t presented a suspicious appearance, moved apparently with a speed of 3 or 4 knots... exhibiting two protuberances above and making a slight ripple in the water.

**Third.** That the strange object approached the ship with a rapidity precluding a gun of the battery being brought to bear upon it, and finally came in contact with the ship [...]

**Fourth.** That about one and a half minutes after the first discovery of the strange object the crew were called to quarters, the cable slipped, and the engine backed.

**Fifth.** That an explosion occurred about three minutes after the first discovery of the object, which blew up the after part of the ship, causing her to sink immediately after to the bottom, with her spar deck submerged.

**Sixth.** That several shots from small arms were fired at the object while it was alongside or near the ship before the explosion occurred.

**Seventh.** That the watch on deck, ship, and ship's battery were in all respects prepared for a sudden offensive or defensive movement; that lookouts were properly stationed and vigilance observed, and that officers and crew promptly assembled at their quarters.

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President: Robert P. Smith 843-686-6560 • [smith9697@roadrunner.com](mailto:smith9697@roadrunner.com)  
Editor: Barbara Muller • 843-715-0153 • [barbaraguild@earthlink.net](mailto:barbaraguild@earthlink.net)

*CSS Hunley Cont'd from Page 2*

**Eighth.** That order was preserved on board, and orders promptly obeyed by officers and crew up to the time of the sinking of the ship.

In view of the above facts the court has to express the opinion that no further military proceedings are necessary.

Two officers and a crew member perished, but the remainder of the crew were rescued. The court of inquiry found that the crew had performed properly.



*The CSS Hunley being raised from its watery grave near Charleston in 2000. Studies of it are still going on.*

But the story does not end there. In 1995 it was located, and successfully raised in 2000.

### Lt. Dixon's Gold Coin

In the Dixon family the story had been passed down through the generations: that Lt. George Dixon, the commander of the Hunley's final mission, had carried a gold coin given to him by his sweetheart, Queenie Bennett. According to Friends of the Hunley, George was shot "point blank" during the Battle of Shiloh. The "bullet ripped into the pocket of his trousers and struck the center of the gold coin. The impact was said to have left the gold piece bent, with the bullet embedded in it. Queenie's good luck gift had saved his life."



*The coin*

During the excavation of the Hunley, the legend of the gold coin was confirmed when it was discovered next to the remains of Lt. Dixon.

You can read a great deal more about the CSS Hunley at the Web site of Friends of the Hunley, [www.hunley.org](http://www.hunley.org)

*Elizabeth Timothy Cont'd from Page 1*

explained it was customary for European families to work together in business, implying she was already an experienced printer. Although she expecting her seventh child any day, she pledged, "to make it as entertaining and correct as may reasonably be expected." She aimed to soothe southern senses about women-manned businesses, so she named Peter as editor and boldly requested her readers to "continue their subscriptions for the poor afflicted widow and six children, with another hourly expected."

The early issues of the *Gazette* read more like community bulletin boards than modern newspapers. Birth, death and marriage notices filled the columns, as did estate auctions, advertisements, word from the Mother Country, local gossip, and complaints about the Lowcountry's capricious weather. News was often reported in "letters to the editor", written by local landowners and businessmen, and they clue us in on colonial life. One letter explained in detail the process of indigo farming; another described an exceptionally cold winter that left "the ponds...frozen near three inches thick". It was not uncommon for editors to lift material from other tabloids in order to fill empty space. In addition to publishing the *Gazette*, Elizabeth added books, pamphlets and legal tracts to her repertoire, and still maintained the paper's status as the colony's official printer.

Elizabeth's tenure spanned a fiery, contentious time in Carolina history. The two decades prior to her rule were marked by nearly constant warfare with the Spanish and slave rebellions. Descriptions of runaway slaves with the Spanish were regularly featured in the *Gazette's* advertisement section, and they were likely a substantial source of revenue, given the number of escapes in those years. The numerous revolts and runaways finally culminated in the "Stono Rebellion", in September 1739, only nine months after Elizabeth took over the *Gazette*. It was the first open revolt in Carolina history, and at least one hundred slaves escaped their plantations for safety in Spanish Florida. The slaves robbed guns from a general store, killed twenty whites, but were captured or killed on their march to freedom. The attempt fired up the Lowcountry's white population, and South Carolina's assembly passed the harsh and punitive Negro Act the following year.

*Cont'd on Page 4*



*Elizabeth Timothy Cont'd from Page 3*

Religious fervor set fire to the streets during Elizabeth's tenure too, as the *Gazette* traced Reverend George Whitefield's visit to the Lowcountry in early 1740. This charismatic, controversial and cross-eyed evangelist with the big booming voice helped ignite the "Great Awakening" in South Carolina, and the *Gazette* printed a series of his essays. One of Whitefield's prominent converts, Hugh Bryan of Beaufort, was so taken with the Whitefield movement, he wrote a letter to the *Gazette* blaming Carolinians for the Stono Rebellion, and declared "that God was exacting retribution for the sins of the colony".

As if to confirm Bryan's fire and brimstone prophecy, a real blaze ravaged the streets of Charlestown on November 18, 1740. "The fire broke out somewhere on Broad Street as far as Tradd, and destroyed 2/3 of Charlestown and 300 dwellings." The *Gazette's* story, perhaps written by Elizabeth, reported the militia and three of Her Majesty's warships stopped the blaze during the day, while the "Charlestown Horse Guards patrolled the streets and stopped the looting at night".

While Charlestown smoldered down in Carolina, Elizabeth's partner up in Philadelphia coolly counted his increase in revenues from his rookie editor. His name was Benjamin Franklin. One year after Lewis's death, Elizabeth bought out Franklin's interest in the *Gazette* and became the first woman newspaper publisher in America.

When her son turned twenty-one in 1746, Elizabeth gave the paper to Peter, then turned around and opened a bookstore right next door. *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and Armstrong's *Poem on Health* are samples of her selections. At some point, she left Charlestown, although where and why remains deep in the heart of history's mysteries. Elizabeth returned around 1756, wrote her will on April 2, 1757, and died two days later. She bequeathed all her personal property, household furnishings, and eight slaves to her children. She gave Peter a silver watch that had belonged to Lewis, with the expectation that it would be passed along to future Timothy heirs.

Although history largely omits Elizabeth's contributions, Franklin mentioned her in his autobiography, noting that, "she accounts with the greatest regularity and exactitude". He described her husband as an

honest and learned man, but "ignorant in matters of account." The fact she raised seven children while running the *Gazette* did not escape Franklin's attention either; he acknowledged that "she was able to purchase the printing house and establish her son in it," an extraordinary feat for a woman in colonial America.

Readers may be wondering how Franklin, up in Pennsylvania, wound up owning the *Gazette* down in South Carolina. Details are scant, but it seems he formed a partnership in 1731 with the original editor of the *Gazette*, Thomas Whitmarsh. That same year, the Timothy family emigrated from Holland to Philadelphia, and Lewis met Franklin when he advertised as a French tutor in the Philadelphia *Gazette*. Lewis already had a printing background and spoke several languages, so Franklin hired him to edit a German newspaper, the *Philadelphische Zeitung*. Due to the Franklin connection, Lewis also became the first librarian at the Library Company of Philadelphia.



*This 18th-century press, now at the Smithsonian, is believed to be the one Franklin used in London.*

Lewis set up the small shop on Union Street (now State). The family became prominent in colonial Charlestown; they joined St. Philip's Church and Lewis purchased 600 acres of land along with a lot in Charlestown.

For seventy consecutive years, between 1733 and 1803, a member of the Timothy family either owned or published the *South Carolina Gazette*. Peter Timothy's name decorated the masthead for thirty years, although he suspended publication during the Revolutionary War. Peter was an ardent patriot and chairman of various war councils and committees, but he is mostly remembered as one of America's first war correspondents.

When Peter died in 1782, enough time had lapsed that family history started repeating itself. His wife, Ann Donovan Timothy, inherited the *Gazette*, and like

*Cont'd on Page 5*

*Elizabeth Timothy Cont'd from Page 4*

her mother-in-law five decades earlier, Ann operated the paper until her son reached majority. Benjamin Franklin Timothy, Elizabeth's grandson, would be the last Timothy to publish the *Gazette*, and the publisher closed its doors in 1803.

The building is no longer standing, but a plaque at Charleston's Verdue Range marks the spot where Elizabeth last published the *South Carolina Gazette*.

To honor her contributions in journalism and business, Elizabeth Timothy was inducted into the South Carolina Press Association Hall of Fame in 1973, and into the South Carolina Business Hall of Fame in 2000. It took over two hundred years for her to be recognized, but today, the name Elizabeth Timothy tops the chronological list of America's celebrated women publishers.



For further reading:

Rowland, Larry, *The History of Beaufort County, SC*, Volume 1, 1514-1561, USC Press, 1966

Edgar, Walter, ed: *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, USC Press, 2006

Huger Smith, Alice R & D. E., *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina*, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1917



### Rosemary Staples

Rosemary has lived in Hilton Head for 20 years, and has long been associated with and writing for the Heritage Library.

A few years ago, she started a women's feature column in *Pink Magazine*,

"You've Come a Long Way Baby," where she highlighted America's famous and infamous women, including Clara Barton, Margaret Mitchell, and Rosie the Riveter. Weary of simply writing about history's fascinating females, Rosemary came upon the idea of acting out these women, living their lives, and telling their stories through her own research and interpretation.

Rosemary has performed as Rosie the Riveter, Clara Barton, Belle Boyd, and soon plans to tell the tales of author, Margaret Mitchell, and Annie Londonderry, a Polish immigrant from Boston who became the first woman to circle the globe on a bicycle.

## ANCIENT LIBRARIES

### The Celsus Library

The construction of the Celsus library at Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey) was begun by Julius Aquila 110 CE in honor of his father Celsus Polemeanus, a Roman senator and General Governor of the Province of Asia, said to be a great lover of books. He was said to have left a legacy of 25,000 denarii to pay for the library's reading material.

Squeezed in a narrow space between two buildings, the library was designed by a Roman architect, Vitruvius, who used several optical tricks to make the building look larger than it actually was. Jackie Craven, writing in About.com, says the center columns had larger capitals and rafters than those on either end, creating the illusion that the columns were farther apart than they actually were.



*The facade of the Celsus library. Destroyed by an earthquake, the facade has been re-assembled by a team of archaeologists.*

The building was also designed for the efficient storage of twelve thousand manuscripts. The main gallery had double walls, with square niches along the inner walls for scrolls. The space between the two walls helped protect the parchments and papyri from mildew and pests. The building faced east, so that early risers could read by morning light.

An indication of how important cultural aspects were to the designers of the library is visible on the facade, where recesses on the outer walls contained four statues representing wisdom, knowledge, intelligence and virtue. It is interesting that all four of these are female. Perhaps this indicates that in this classical pe-



riod, the people of the ancient city of Ephesus still valued women. The city already had a long history when the library was built, having been founded in the 10th century BCE. Over the centuries the city had developed a distinctive culture. According to Wikipedia'

The Ephesians were surprisingly modern in their social relations. They allowed strangers to integrate. Education was much valued. Through the cult of Artemis, the city also became a bastion of women's rights. Ephesus even had female artists. In later times, Pliny the Elder (23-79 ce) mentioned having seen at Ephesus a representation of the goddess Diana by Timarata, the daughter of a painter.

The interior of the Celsus library was burned by a Goth invasion in 252 CE, and the entire building fell in an earthquake in the tenth century. This reconstruction was done by the Austrian Archaeological Institute.

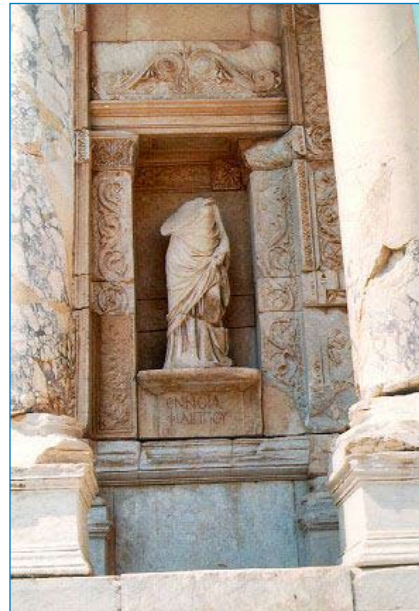
The site is a international tourist attractions. Most cruise ships that go to the eastern Mediterranean include stops at Kusadasi (Ephesus) for visits to the immensely popular archeological site. Besides the library site, there is an amphitheatre with remarkable acoustics and other equally interesting ancient ruins.

The female figures presently in the niches are copies; the originals went to Vienna when the library was excavated.

## The Celsus Entrance Statues

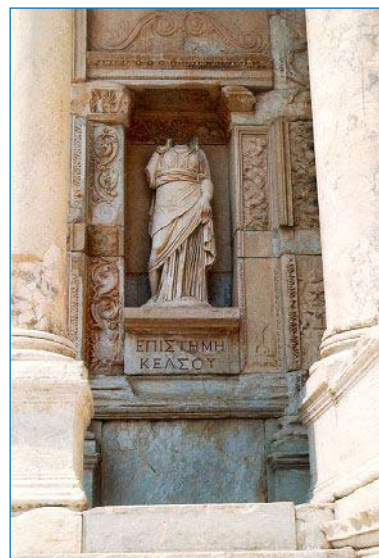


*Sophia is probably the best-known of the female figures or goddesses at the Celsus Library in Ephesus. Celebrated in many cultures, Sophia means wisdom, and appears in classical writings and survives in the names of saints and churches.*



*Ennoia. While most of us are familiar with Sophia, we rarely encounter Ennoia. At one time the word was widely used in Stoic and Gnostic writings. While it seems roughly to mean "intention," or the creative will, writers about the Celsus Library have typically translated it as "intelligence." Ennoia is always female!*

*Arete represents excellence or virtue. She is sometimes personified as a goddess, the sister of Harmonia. It is noted that in earlier times, Homer attributed the quality of arete to both men and women (Penelope notably among the latter). But the designers or architects of the Celsus library apparently preferred to show Arete as female.*



*Episteme. Unlike Sophia and Arete, Episteme has not worked her way into the modern lexicon. Her name is derived from a Greek word meaning "science" or "knowledge." She survives in the term epistemology, the study of knowledge.*

## Musing About History



*Clio, Muse of History*

*Note: From time to time in this publication we include an essay of personal thoughts about history. It is particularly important, now that the Civil War is on everyone's mind, that we consider its consequences.*

In the coming months we expect to have many articles about the Civil War arising from the fact that this conflict arose 150 years ago. The Civil War Sesquicentennial is about a commemoration, not a celebration.

Ken Burns, the renowned filmmaker whose historical documentaries have earned

widespread praise, worried in an April 11 essay in the *New York Times* that possibly we have not yet truly recognized the lessons of that conflict. He writes

. . . we ask again whether in our supposedly post-racial, globalized, 21st-century world those now seemingly distant battles of the mid-19th century still have any relevance. But it is clear that the further we get from those four horrible years in our national existence — when, paradoxically, in order to become one we tore ourselves in two — the more central and defining that war becomes.

In our less civil society of this moment we are reminded of the full consequences of our failure to compromise in that moment.

Because the reality of that war was so harsh, perhaps it was inevitable that as a people we have glossed over it. Like an oyster dealing with an irritation by turning it into a pearl, we have encrusted the history of the Civil War with myths of gallantry and bravery and the poignancy of the “Lost Cause.”

Yet there are two essential lessons about that war we must never forget: it cost 620,000 lives, or 2% of the population, many of them among the best and brightest, men whose potential contributions to society would never occur.

And it freed 4 million human beings and their descendants from the shackles of slavery.

Here on Hilton Head Island, we have a unique perspective on that war. Only seven months after the firing on Fort Sumter, armies of the North invaded the

island in the largest such amphibious operation ever seen until that time. As the Union army took over, the planters who lived on the Island fled, leaving their slaves behind.

For the rest of the war, Hilton Head Island was the center of the North's southern operations, called the Department of the South, and the island swarmed with tens of thousands of soldiers. The numbers of slaves on the Island grew as others from neighboring plantations who heard in the mysterious grapevine echoes of freedom and made their way to the Island. Some were “freed” in raids by Union soldiers, such as the famous raid on the Combahee participated in by Harriet Tubman.

The question arose as to what to do with those increasing numbers of people; it did not seem proper to call them slaves any more, yet they were not legally free. For want of another term, for months these unfortunate people were called “contrabands” as if they were merchandise exported or possessed illegally. An early attempt to declare them “free” had to be abandoned for legal reasons. It was only after the Emancipation Proclamation that the term “freedmen” could be used.

Yet even before the Emancipation Proclamation came down, these “contrabands” had organized themselves into a town, elected leadership, opened schools and declared education for their children a must.

That town was Mitchelville, whose historical importance we will celebrate through the efforts of the Mitchelville Preservation Project. This is a project in which every American with roots in Africa can take pride. Depending on who you ask, you will hear estimates that up to one-third or one-half of present African-Americans have ancestors who passed through or lived on Hilton Head.

There is no other place in this nation with such a wealth of Civil War and Freedmen history. We can take neither credit nor blame for what our ancestors did, but we certainly can recognize the valiant efforts of the people of Mitchelville, and we can be fascinated by the military actions that took place in our neighborhood.

It behooves us to preserve and cherish our unique history.

BARBARA MULLER

## Find My Ancestors

Starting May 1st and running through the summer, a new program will encourage visitors to the Library for a free “trial.” Visits will be by appointment only, and the visitor should bring information on his or her parents and grandparents. (A Family History form is available on our Web site, [heritagelib.org](http://heritagelib.org).)

At this free appointment one of our volunteers will sit down with the visitor and, starting from the family history which the visitor has provided, show the visitor what information on preceding generations can be gleaned from censuses, newspapers, vital statistics, and other records. The visitor can then take the information home without obligation or, if the information is sufficiently intriguing, may decide to become a member and delve further into family history.

It is our hope that this promotion will not only bring new members to the Library, but also result in interesting stories about ancestral searches.

## Call for Articles

Do you have a favorite period of history that has so intrigued you that it has become one of your passions? Have you, like Nancy Burke, Barbara Vernasco, and Rosemary Staples who have written for *Glimpses*, unearthed some interesting characters or fascinating tidbits in your own family tree? Does your field, such as medicine or law, give you a special insight into some historical development? Might you write about the evolution of free speech, the fight for woman suffrage or civil rights, the role of disease in early settlements, the social mores of colonial plantation life, or the rigors of serving in the Revolutionary or Civil War armies?

If so, we hope you'll share your knowledge and insights with the members. You may send your articles to me, [barbaraguild@earthlink.com](mailto:barbaraguild@earthlink.com), via email in a Word document. If you don't like to use email, you can send a double-spaced typed copy to me at the Library.

I look forward to hearing from you.

BARBARA MULLER

**The Heritage Library**  
**852 Wm. Hilton Parkway, Suite 2A**  
**Hilton Head Island SC 29928**