

2 Affected People and Environment

Gullah and Geechee Peoples: History, Language, Society, Culture, and Change

Since scholars are not in agreement as to the origins of the terms “Gullah” and “Geechee,” the vernacular use of the terms will suffice for the purpose of this study. Gullah people are, therefore, those located in coastal South Carolina and Geechee people are those who live along the Georgia coast and into Florida. Geechee people in Georgia refer to themselves as Freshwater Geechee if they live on the mainland and Saltwater Geechee if they live on the Sea Islands. In some circumstances, the term “Geechee” has been used as a blanket term to describe people who live in the Low Country, regardless of ethnicity. “Geechee” has also been used in a derogatory manner to show disdain for African American people from the Low Country region, regardless of specific location.

Gullah/Geechee people of today are descendants of enslaved Africans from various ethnic groups of west and central Africa who were brought to the New World and forced to work on the plantations of coastal South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida. According to the records of the Port of Charleston, South Carolina, their African origins include Angola (39%), Senegambia (20%), the Windward Coast (17%), the Gold Coast (13%), Sierra Leone (6%), and Madagascar, Mozambique, and the two Bights (5% combined) (Pollitzer, 1999:43).

Once in the Low Country, men and women of various African ethnic groups mixed in ways that did not occur in their homeland. On the plantation, enslaved Africans met other enslaved Africans from more ethnic groups than they ever would have encountered in a lifetime of living in Africa. Diverse African cultural traditions, languages, and religions were mixed and fused in combinations that did not exist in Africa. This new culture, African in origin but unlike any particular African culture, developed and flourished along the southeast Atlantic coastline and barrier islands. The new culture came to be called Gullah or Geechee, depending on geographic location (Joyner 1994).

Gullah/Geechee people are survivors – unique groups of African Americans who lived near the coast and on barrier islands that were separated from the mainland by creeks, rivers, and marshes. Because of their geographic protection from outsiders and strong sense of family and community, Gullah/Geechee people maintained a separate creole language and developed a distinct culture, which included more of the African cultural tradition than in the cultural patterns of African American populations in other parts of the United States.

The isolation of sea island communities from outsiders was vital to the survival of Gullah/Geechee community cultures. Although Gullah/Geechee people traveled to and from the mainland and to nearby islands, outsiders seldom came into their communities, especially after the Civil War. The separation of Gullah/Geechee people, which began in colonial times in response to tropical fevers, later became an isolation of choice. People chose to come back to their homes, their families, their language, and their way of life – a slow-paced life among majestic trees, tidal marshes, and dirt roads traversed by ox and mule carts – places where small boats, horses, mules and feet were the primary forms of transportation. Thus, within these rural communities, people were able to maintain the language, arts, crafts, religious beliefs, folklore, rituals, and food preferences that are distinctly connected to their West African roots. The islands were accessible only by boat until the first bridges were built around 1950.



Before bridges, flat bottomed boats were used to travel in the creeks, cuts, and canals between islands and to the mainland. *Charleston Museum*

Coastal development, changing job markets, and population shifts have forced many Gullah/Geechee people to leave their ancestral family lands. The traditional economy of farming, fishing, hunting, and small-scale marketing of subsistence products has been replaced by a suburban and resort service economy. These changes threaten Gullah/Geechee cultural survival and their distinct identity as a people who have survived since colonial times.

Many traditional Gullah/Geechee communities have been lost to real estate development, encroachment by outsiders, and the resulting economic hardship. The remaining communities have become models for understanding negative as well as positive impacts of burgeoning tourism and large scale economic development in coastal regions of the American South. Despite the losses of

recent decades, the Gullah/Geechee people remain a testament to the power of human adaptability and survival amid major stresses and assaults from many fronts in the rapidly changing economic environment of the modern world.

Historical Overview

Gullah/Geechee people of today trace their ancestry primarily to the enslaved Africans who were forced to live and labor in the coastal counties of South Carolina, Georgia, southern North Carolina, and northern Florida. Africans from diverse societies and environments – men, women, and children – were taken forcibly from their homes and families and sold into slavery. Often, African kings and warlords took prisoners from rival groups and kept them as slaves or traded them for guns, ammunition, and clothing, or even to settle debts. Sometimes, Africans were kidnapped after being enticed by brightly colored merchandise; sometimes, villages were burned and raided (WPA 1985). At the beginning of European expansion into Africa, Arab slave traders continued to transport captive people from the interior of Africa, just as they had done for centuries. Following the European discovery of the Americas, these enslaved people became forced emigrants in the Triangular Slave Trade between England, Africa, and the New World.

According to African scholar Walter Rodney, the scope of the Atlantic slave trade conducted along the Upper Guinea Coast during the latter half of the 18th century has not yet been fully understood. He believes that the development of the Gullah culture along the coast of South Carolina supports his contention. During that timeframe the Africans who arrived “transferred a medium of culture, communalism, and spirituality that assimilated with the existing African traditions, both of which necessarily adapted to Euro-American ambiance.” Rodney, who believes that Africa’s loss was America’s gain, revealed his thoughts on the tragedy of the Atlantic slave trade in the following statement.

The impression that African society was being overwhelmed by its involvement with the European economy was most strongly conveyed at points when Africans conceded that their slaving activities were the consequences of the fact that nothing but slaves would purchase European goods. Yet European consumer goods

contributed nothing to the development of African production. Only the rulers benefited narrowly, by receiving the best cloth, drinking the most alcohol, and preserving the widest collection of durable items for prestige purposes. It is this factor of realized self-interest which goes some way towards explaining the otherwise incomprehensible actions of Africans toward Africans (Rodney 1981:253).

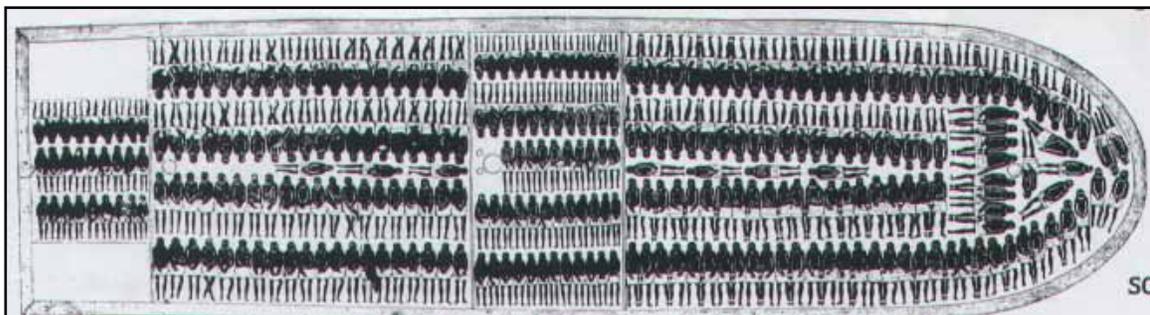
When considering the African roots of Gullah/Geechee people, it is important to remember that Africa is not a country, *i.e.*, there is no single African culture but a diverse mix of cultures and languages in widely varying environments from deserts to rain forests. Enslaved Africans did not bring a unique set of cultural, linguistic, and spiritual practices that could be considered a singular African heritage. Gullah and Geechee people did not, therefore, derive from a single society in one environment, or from a single geographic location in Africa but from many places with diverse environments, cultures, and languages (Levine 1978). Rather than sharing a common African culture, they created a new creole culture in the Low Country and Sea Islands (Hine and Thompson 1998). There is evidence that some planters made a concerted effort to purchase slaves who came from different areas of Africa so they would not be able to communicate with one another and would be less of a threat to the vastly outnumbered European population (Edgar 1998).

The British slave trade became known as the Triangular Slave Trade due to the three-stop passage taken by many slavers. Ships left England loaded with goods such as cloth, guns, and ammunition and sailed to the slave trading ports of West Africa where they traded their wares for captive Africans. The captives were warehoused in forts or large castles or held in open *barracoons* (outdoor prisons) at slave ports such as Goree in Senegal, James Island in the Gambia River, and Bunce Island in the Sierra Leone River. Each fort had a “door of no return” through which captive Africans left their homeland for the last time. As the survivors of imprisonment waited to be herded onto slave ships, they had no control over their destiny and no idea that they would never again set foot on their native African soil (Clarke 1995). Once the forced emigrants were loaded, slavers set sail for the New World to trade their human cargo for sugar, molasses, indigo, naval stores, and other products for the third leg of the triangular route, which led them back to England.

The second leg of the triangular trade route – the voyage from Africa to the New World – was called the Middle Passage. The Middle Passage was the most horrendous leg of the trip because there was human cargo in the



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Cut away diagram of 1790 slave ship hold showing cramped conditions of enslaved Africans.

holds. Slave merchants shopped for slaves as if they were merchandise. They hired doctors to examine and inspect the captive Africans, so that only those who would bring a good price in the Americas were selected for the voyage. Characteristics such as physical fitness, healthy eyes, good teeth, and absence of venereal disease were basic requirements. The physician accompanied the captives on the voyage and monitored infectious diseases such as small pox, yellow fever, and dysentery (flux) that were often rampant aboard ship. Upon advice from the doctor, captives with symptoms were thrown overboard to prevent the spread of sickness (Palmer 1992).

In 1745, a slaver belonging to the Asiento Company arrived at Charleston with a cargo of Africans. John Newton, who later became a priest of the Church of England, was mate on the vessel. Newton called upon his experiences in the slave trade when he wrote the well-known hymn "Amazing Grace." Newton's own description of the voyage from Africa follows:

I find by my journal of a voyage to South Carolina that we left the Windward Coast of Africa with 218 slaves, and buried 62 [at sea] on our passage over, while many more died on our arrival and were buried ashore.

When the weather will not admit the slaves being brought on deck, the heat and smell of the rooms would be insupportable to a person unaccustomed to them. If the rooms can be constantly aired, and they not detained too long on board, perhaps not many die; but the contrary is often their lot. They are kept down to breathe the hot and corrupted air for sometimes a week; this added to the galling of their irons, and the despondency which seizes their spirits, soon becomes fatal.

Every morning several instances are found of the dead and living, like the captives of Mezentius, fastened together.

Epidemical fevers break out and infect the seamen likewise. And thus the oppressed and the oppressor fall by the same stroke.

Usually two-thirds of a cargo of slaves are males and it is always taken for granted that they will gain their liberty if possible. They are always chained to rings fastened on the decks.

I have seen slaves that were guilty of insurrection subjected to the most unmerciful whippings, continued till the poor creatures have not had power to groan under their sufferings. I have seen them agonizing for days under the torture of a thumbscrew.

I have seen even worse – but I cannot mention it.

I have heard a captain boast of his conduct toward a number of slaves who attempted to rise up on him. After he had suppressed the insurrection, he sat in judgment upon the insurgents; and, not only in cold blood, adjudged several of them to die, but studied with no small attention, how to make death as excruciating as possible. For the reader's sake I repress the recital of the particulars.

From the women there is no danger of insurrection; and they are carefully kept from the men. A mate purchased a woman with a fine child and because the child cried he threw it into the sea. The child was silenced, but twas not so easy to pacify the mother and she was too valuable to throw into the sea.

Poor Africans! The only liberty of which they have any notion is an exemption from being sold. But they are never secure. It often happens that the black that sells one of his race on board a ship, is himself within the same week bought and sold by one of his superiors, to the same vessel.

When the slaves were landed in South Carolina, some families that were separated in different parts of the ship showed joy when brought together.

After a careful perusal of what I have written, weighing every paragraph distinctly, I can find nothing to retract. – Rev. John Newton. London (Newton 1998)

While there were ships built specifically for the transport of African slaves, many slaver vessels were converted livestock ships that carried upwards of 500 enslaved Africans in space designed to hold 200. Captive Africans were frequently chained together head to foot, and forced to lie back to belly in their own excrement and vomit. Women and children were held on separate levels from the men. Most slavers traveled in spring and summer so that the captives could be kept naked, as slavers did not want to spend extra money on clothing (Teague and Cowan 1969). While privations were agonizing due to the “close packing” of the legal slave trade, they became excruciatingly worse with the dense packing of the smuggling trade. By the 1840s, a three-foot head clearance was considered the norm for the stowage cargo and some ships had less than two feet vertical clearance (Davidson 1993:22).



“Of this mixture [gunpowder, lemon-juice, and palm oil], the unresisting captive received a coating, which by the hand of another sailor, was rubbed into the skin, and then polished with a ‘danby brush,’ until the sable epidermis glistened like a newly-blackened boot ... It was not the first time those unfeeling men had assisted in the spectacle of a slavers’ cargo being made ready for market.” [Caption from UVA image LCP-31] *University of Virginia Libraries*

Rice, yams, corn, salt fish, peas, palm oil and beans were used to feed the captives. Most slave vessels had a twice daily feeding schedule with the mixture served from large tubs. Captives were given wooden spoons and gathered around the food tub in groups of ten. Sharks that followed slave vessels were frequently caught to supplement the food supply (Rawley 1981). Depending on weather conditions, the Middle Passage voyage lasted between five and twelve weeks and frequently was a time of mutinies and revolts. The stench arising from the slaver ships was said to be so intense that it was noticeable on shore before the ships were visible on the horizon.

Although food and water were strictly rationed during the voyage, an effort was made to “fatten” the captives before they were sold. To make their skin look healthy and shiny, captives were rubbed with a combination of gunpowder, lemon juice and palm oil and then polished with a “danby brush.”

They came ashore in nakedness and hunger, but were lucky to be alive. The months before had been a living nightmare; for many now the deliverance from that nightmare would be a brief prelude to death itself. The slave trade had begun to kill them; disease would finish the job. And whatever the survivors would then remember could be only a series of jagged and traumatic sufferings. Seized in their villages along the West African coastline, these once able-bodied men and women had been dragged to slave prisons on the coast itself, infamous *barracoons* where, well-guarded by their captors, they had lingered for weeks, even months, until a slaving ship bound for the Americas at last came by, and anchored for just long enough to buy them from their captors (Davidson 1993:21).

While there is no way to determine how many lives were lost in the Middle Passage, only about one third of those who left Africa are said to have survived the journey. The bodies of the millions of



18th century advertisement announcing the sale of a cargo of slaves aboard the ship Bance-Island, then anchored off Charleston, SC, during a smallpox epidemic. Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Africans thought to have perished during the voyages were thrown overboard to the waiting sharks. According to oral tradition, if it were possible to view the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, there would be a trail of human bones that stretches from Africa to the Americas (Clarke 1995).

Over 90% of enslaved African people were sold in South America – primarily Brazil – or in the Caribbean islands. Because of the well-established plantation system in the islands, many enslaved people who were destined for the Low Country went first to the West Indies where they were “seasoned” – acclimated to the diseases and slavery conditions of the New World. Although there was a mortality rate of about 30% during the seasoning period, slaves were considered more valuable if they had undergone the process. Since many of the early Carolina colonists came from Barbados, Nevis, and other islands of the British West Indies; they were familiar with the slave labor system and brought slaves and the system with them to the colony. The Caribbean connection was the

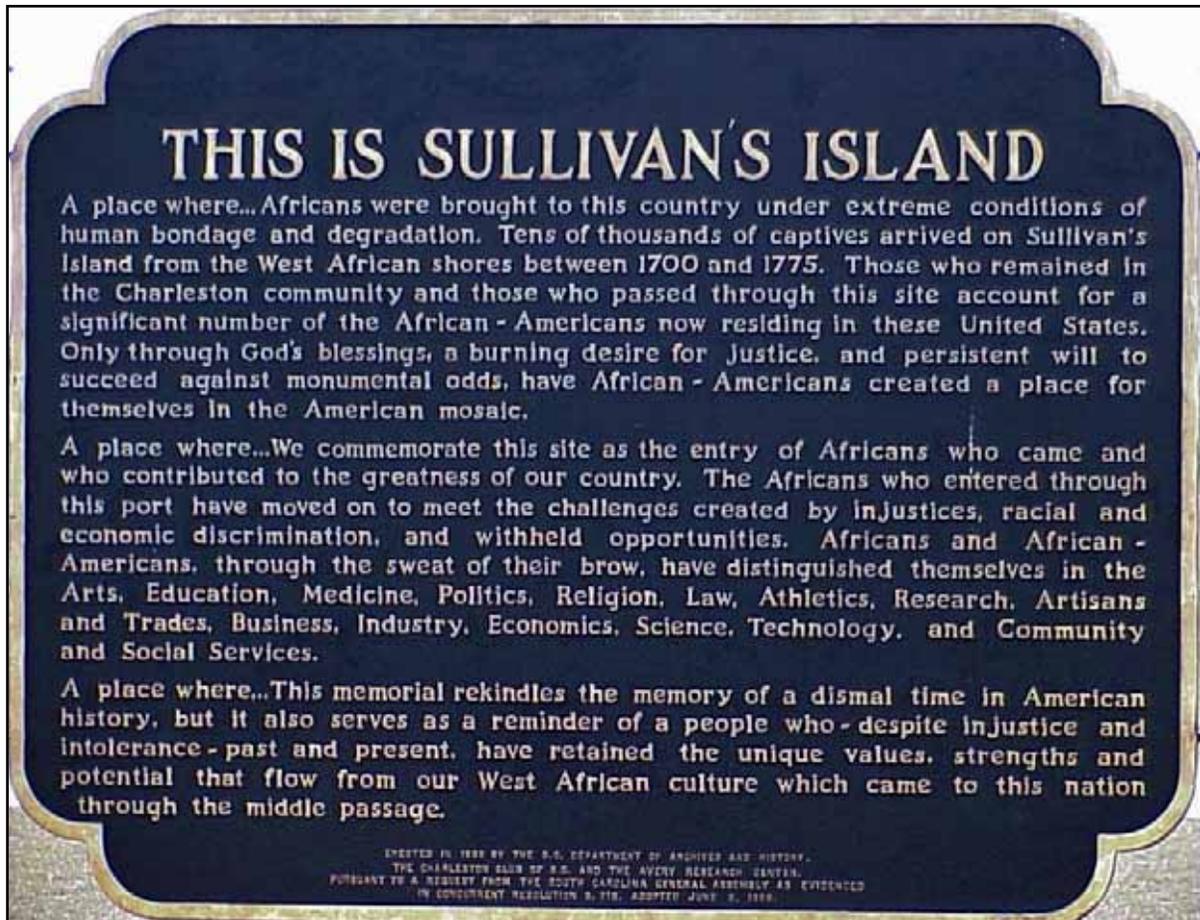
primary source for enslaved Africans who entered the Carolina Colony during the 17th century and remained important throughout the history of the Low Country slave trade.

The transatlantic slavers not only carried human cargo to the American colonies, but also brought diseases that were endemic in Africa. *Anopheles* and *Aedes* mosquitoes, vectors that carried deadly malaria and yellow fever, were inadvertent passengers (Tibbetts 2000). These very insects may have contributed to the survival of African traditions along the southern coastline, as Africans from the subtropical regions of Africa had a degree of genetic immunity to these diseases. Mosquitoes capable of carrying malaria already existed in the Low Country and undoubtedly became carriers of the milder forms of the disease by biting European settlers from areas where the fever was endemic (Pollitzer 1999). Mosquitoes began to carry the most deadly *Falciparium* form of malaria after coming in contact with Africans (See discussion of population genetics, which follows in the Demographic History section).

By the early 18th century, Charles Town in South Carolina had replaced the Chesapeake area as the largest trans-Atlantic slave market on the coast of British North America. Africans destined for the Charles Town market were first unloaded on Sullivan’s Island, near the present site of Fort Moultrie, where they were quarantined in pest houses, usually for a minimum of ten days (Littlefield 1986). There are records indicating the existence of a pest house on Sullivan’s Island as early as 1712 (Waring 1964).

When James Oglethorpe founded the Georgia colony in 1732, slavery was not permitted, and for the first few years, the colony failed to thrive economically. In 1750, Georgia became the last of the colonies to legalize human bondage, paving the way to develop a plantation economy like South Carolina to her north (DeLoach 1931).

In 1750, when slavery became legal in Georgia, Africans brought through the port at Savannah were held in pest houses on Tybee Island, near what is now Fort Pulaski National Monument. Both Fort



Historical marker, Sullivan's Island, SC, near Fort Moultrie. Although some people have referred to Sullivan's Island as the Ellis Island for Africans, the analogy seems questionable. Immigrants to Ellis Island came voluntarily, while Africans came to Sullivan's Island against their wills and in chains. *Carlin Timmons, NPS*

Moultrie and Fort Pulaski were built using the labor of enslaved Africans who were rented from nearby plantations. Although there are no remaining pest house structures in South Carolina or Georgia, there is a historic marker on Sullivan's Island near Fort Moultrie, a unit of Fort Sumter National Monument. The marker commemorates not only the enslaved Africans who landed there but also those who lost their lives in the treacherous Middle Passage. Historic maps indicate that the Sullivan's Island pest house was located west of what is now the Ft. Moultrie Visitor Center (Hofbauer 1997a, 1997b; Quick 1997).

If archeological remnants of Sullivan's Island pest house buildings existed today, they would probably be located under water on the land side of the island or beneath existing private homes. The Tybee Island pest house building, located near Lazaretto Creek, was badly damaged during an 1893 hurricane and was never rebuilt. When the U.S. Highway 80 Bridge over Lazaretto Creek was relocated in 1960, the construction project apparently destroyed any remnants of the original pest house structures. There are a few remaining graves in the area that may date to the time of the Lazaretto Creek pest house.

The total number of enslaved Africans who entered North America at Sullivan's Island may never be known, but it is estimated that 40% of all African Americans today can trace their roots to that small barrier island near Charleston, South Carolina. Peter Wood suggests that Sullivan's Island was to Africans as Ellis Island was to European immigrants (Wood 1974); however, this comparison is rather

specious given that immigrants to Ellis Island came by choice and those to Sullivan’s Island came by force.

Once the captive Africans had endured the required quarantine period in pest houses and were deemed free of infectious disease, a merchant or merchant company took responsibility for them and arranged for their sale (Littlefield 1986). Before being placed on the auction block and sold to the highest bidder, Africans were stripped naked, washed, shaved, and rubbed with palm oil. Wounds or scars on their bodies were filled with tar. Before making purchases, potential buyers inspected the teeth and bodies of enslaved men and women in minute detail. According to historian Sharla Fett, “With the commodification of black bodies came the objectification of African American health. The intersection of medicine with the southern political economy produced a narrow definition of slave health ...” (Fett 2000:32).

While historians are in disagreement over exactly how many enslaved Africans were shipped to the New World, between 1451 and 1870 an estimated 12 to 15 million slaves were exported from Africa. Close to 70% of slave sales occurred between 1700 and 1850. However, less than 10% of the total number of captive Africans was sold in North America. After disembarking their human cargo in the Americas, slaver ships were loaded with commodities such as cotton, sugar, tobacco, molasses, and rum for European markets. Thus, every leg of the triangular journey was profitable to the British Crown, thus creating wealth based on human misery.

The Rice Coast of Africa, encompassing the modern countries of Senegal, Gambia, Guinea- Bissau, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, is a region of diverse culture, language, and geography that extends about 700 miles from the Sahara Desert to the rain forest. According to Pollitzer (1999), nearly 61% of enslaved Africans brought into South Carolina and Georgia between 1749 and 1787 came from the rice- growing regions of West Africa, either directly or by way of the Caribbean. Many of these people had been slaves in their native land; thus they were somewhat prepared for commercial plantation rice cultivation along the Carolina coast.

Rice plantations were large operations with independent internal economies – not unlike the manor system of the Old World. Agriculture was not, therefore, the only skill required to keep the plantation operational. Many enslaved men and women had been skilled artisans in Africa – blacksmiths, potters, coopers, carpenters, fishermen, miners – and brought valuable skills to their new homeland. Many enslaved women had knowledge of herbal cures, nursing the sick, and midwifery. Some slaves were trained to perform specialized trades after they arrived in the colonies. All of these skills contributed to the financial success of the plantation and the wealth of the planter (Chase 1978; Goodson 1987; Haller 1972).



By 1790, Low Country population was 78% black. The black majority in South Carolina and Georgia continued well into the 20th Century.

Although the early rice planters along the Carolina coast were aware that Africans were as diverse as Europeans, they molded them into a cohesive workforce, ignored ethnic distinctions, and discouraged native customs. For survival, slaves had to submerge differences and create a common culture. Later, white historians homogenized them and constructed stereotypes of the ‘Negro’ that obliterated their varied ethnicity ... While many aspects of Gullah life have been reported, no one has synthesized this varied information to present a complete and integrated picture (Pollitzer 1999).

After European colonization, slavery in the Americas was always closely connected to the idea of race. In earlier times and elsewhere in the world, enslaved peoples were often from nearby places and, thus, of the same physical type and of similar culture as were the masters who owned them. As these slaves became free, they often could return home or could readily mix and assimilate within the larger society of their former masters. Their prior slave status would soon be forgotten. In contrast, the form of slavery that Europeans established in North America firmly linked that “peculiar institution” to the notion of categorically distinct races – a system that was the basis for racial prejudice (Degler 1959).

Development of the Plantation Economy

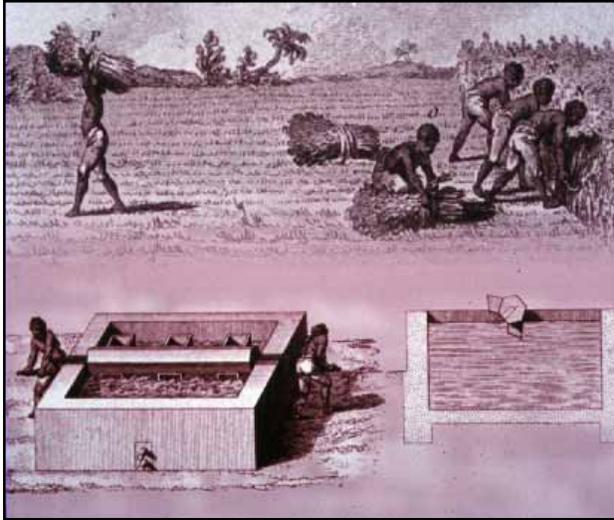
“The only commodity of consequence produced in South Carolina is Rice, and they reckon it as much as their staple Commodity, as Sugar is to Barbados and Jamaica, or Tobacco to Virginia and Maryland.” – James Glen, 1761 (Milling 1951: 95)

South Carolina was chartered in 1670 as a proprietary or for-profit colony. Most of the original settlers came to Carolina from Barbados, and some brought enslaved Africans along with them. As such, it was very important to identify lucrative staple crops and products for export. Sugarcane, though successful in the West Indies, failed in Carolina, as did olives, ginger, and grapes. Sugarcane was later to become a successful crop in the Georgia Colony and the Florida territory. At the beginning of the colony, there was no predominant labor force and no principal economic activity. In the late 17th century, every able-bodied person engaged in hard physical labor just to survive, and in most cases, colonists worked side by side with indentured Europeans, captive Indians, and enslaved Africans. They usually lived together under the same roof in barracks-like buildings. For a variety of reasons, there was a shift to importation of enslaved Africans, who could neither escape to their homelands nor easily blend into the predominantly European population. Thus, the effects of slavery lived on in the form of presumed white superiority which bred racism and intolerance. Nonetheless, in a few places in the Americas, peoples of African descent were able to reconstitute their own separate societies to some extent. In South America, some like the Saramanka of Surinam (Price 1996; Price and Price 1999) achieved almost complete autonomy in their jungle refuge. Others, like the Gullah/Geechee people, while not autonomous, did enjoy a degree of insulation from racial oppression in their largely isolated Low Country and Sea Island communities.

During the late 1670s, cattle were brought from the Virginia colony to provide meat and dairy

Year	Whites	Blacks	Indian Slaves	Total
1670	170	30	---	200
1680	1,000	200	---	1,200
1690	2,400	1,500	100	3,900
1700	3,300	2,400	200	5,900
1710	4,200	4,300	1,500	10,000
1720	6,500	9,900	2,000	18,400
1730	10,000	20,000	500	30,500
1740	15,000	39,200	---	54,200
1750	25,000	40,000	---	65,000
1760	37,100	57,000	---	94,100
1770	42,200	82,000	---	124,200
1775	---	102,000	---	---

Source: US Census Data



Indigo harvesting and processing in SC. NPS

products for early Carolinians. Plans were to confine the cattle in pastures, as was the European custom, and to butcher them each winter, saving only a few animals to replenish the herd. Barbadians were somewhat familiar with open range grazing, but the enslaved Africans had more experience. Herds soon began to free graze, not unlike the large herds along the upper Guinea coast in West Africa (Carney 2001; Ver Steeg 1984; Wood 1974). Since forage was plentiful, there was no need for herd-attenuating slaughters. Cattle herds multiplied and flourished on their own with few labor requirements. Ownership was determined by a system of branding. Thus, raising livestock for export was the key to economic survival during the first 30 years of

the colony, and planters in many regions of the Americas exhibited a preference for slaves with knowledge of cattle- raising and equestrian skills (Carney 2001).

The task of raising and tending the cattle quickly fell to the enslaved Africans, some of whom came from Senegambia, a region in West Africa where cattle raising was a common part of local agriculture. Some of the British colonists came from Barbados, where they had been familiar with open grazing methods. Consequently, the herding and husbandry skills from both places were creolized into a South Carolina colonial method (Otto 1986, 1987; Wood 1974). These men were called “cowboys” in much the same way as male house servants were referred to as “house boys” (Edgar 1998). Feral hogs that remained from early Spanish colonies were raised, also by the free-range method, in large numbers for both the table and the export trade.

At the beginning of the 18th century, naval stores (tar, pitch, rosin, and turpentine) and timber for the British ship building industry were the most successful exports. The naval stores industry, which utilized the vast forests of longleaf pine, was important to the economic development of the states along the southeastern Atlantic coast from the 18th through the early 20th centuries (Harmon and Snedeker 1997). Deer hides were obtained through trade with American Indians, but enslaved Africans generally processed, counted, and weighed the hides for shipment. Salt meats, wood, and barrel staves – made almost exclusively by enslaved Africans – were shipped to West Indies in return for sugar, molasses, currency, and more slaves. The money and slaves earned from the export of salt meats, hides, and naval stores enabled Carolina planters to purchase additional lands and to plant rice (Dethloff 1982).

Since every colony searched for a single staple crop that would create wealth, experimentation with exotic crops was encouraged. Rice became the favored crop in South Carolina, but commitment to rice came about slowly (Wood 1974). The English first began to experiment with rice in the 1680s, but the transition from naval stores, mixed agriculture, and cattle raising to a rice-based economy took several decades. Rice cultivation techniques and free-range cattle farming are but two examples of the African influence on coastal plantation life (Wood 1974).

During the early decades of rice cultivation, rice was grown on dry land and later in inland swamps. The colossal amount of labor required to shape plantations from wilderness and swamp created instability between slaves and planters. Survival and success during this frontier period required a state of mutual interdependence and negotiated relationships. The back-breaking labor required to clear land and swamps for rice culture was extremely taxing on the enslaved workers. Many lost their

lives in the process; others attempted escape even though the risks of capture and death were great, as death seemed preferable to their enslaved condition (Carney 2001; Edgar 1998).

Indigo was first grown in an attempt to diversify the rice economy and to utilize land that was unsuitable for rice production. Beginning near Charles Town, indigo production quickly spread rapidly throughout the low country and into the middle and back country. Between 1744 and 1774 indigo became a major cash crop as production increased from just a few pounds to over a million pounds per year. The dye was exported to England from the 1740s until the American Revolution. Cotton replaced indigo as a market crop after 1800 (Edgar 1998; Wallace 1909).

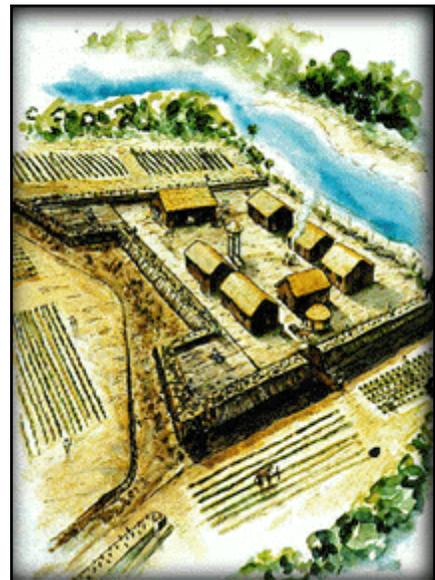
The Quest for Freedom

Even during the early years of the Carolina colony, enslaved Africans were unhappy with their condition of forced servitude and dreamed of freedom. The royal edict of 1733 created religious sanctuary for runaway slaves in the Spanish Florida colony, and word quickly spread northward through Georgia, where slavery was prohibited, to the rapidly expanding plantations of Carolina, where over 30,000 enslaved Africans labored in the rice fields. Many were emboldened to make escape attempts, despite the knowledge that captured runaways were tortured or executed as an example to others. Slavery became legal in Georgia in 1750, and soon after, Georgia slaves began to attempt the difficult escape route to the Florida sanctuary (Landers 1999). In many respects, the flight to Florida was a precursor to the Underground Railroad, and is one of the many types of resistance attempted by enslaved Africans before slavery was finally abolished.

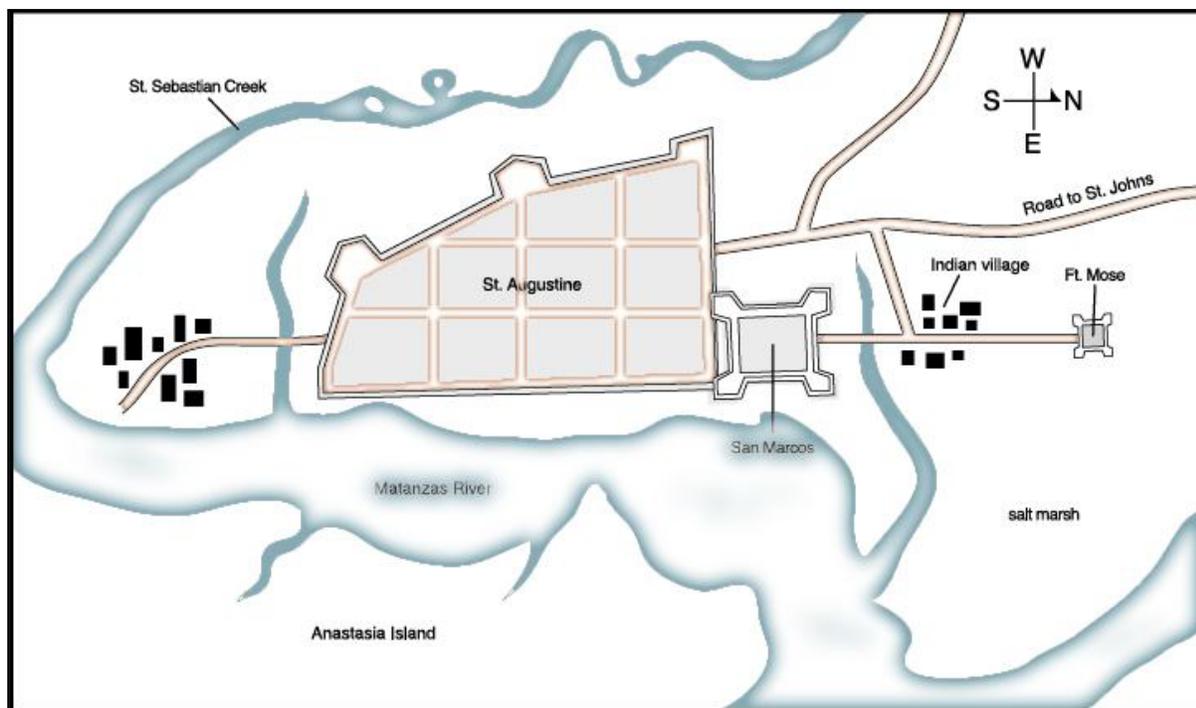
On March 15, 1739, Governor Montiano of Florida granted unconditional freedom to all fugitives from Carolina. He also freed runaways who had been given previously to important citizens to satisfy the debts of his financially strapped government. When the Crown reviewed Montiano's actions, it approved his decree and ordered that in addition to freedom for Carolina slaves who had arrived in Florida thus far, "all those who in the future come as fugitives from the English colonies" should be given immediate freedom in the name of the king. The royal edict was ordered to be posted in public places so that no one could claim ignorance of the ruling.

The new settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, located about two miles to the north of St. Augustine, was established between March and November 1738 by a group of about 100 runaway slaves from South Carolina. Mose, thus, became the first legally sanctioned free black settlement on the North American continent ("Holding the Fort" 1987). When they arrived in Florida, runaways had joined the Spanish militia and formed a free black company. Francisco Menendez, a Mandingo who was also an escaped slave, became Captain of the Fort Mose militia. With Menendez at the helm, the freedmen used their skills as carpenters, ironsmiths, and stonemasons to build a walled fort for the protection of St. Augustine and thatched shelters for themselves. Captain Sebastian Sanchez, a royal official, supervised the construction of the fort to ensure that it met military requirements.

The village was surrounded by fertile lands, hardwood forests, and grassy savannas filled with wild game of all descriptions. The salt water creek that ran through the settlement provided fish and



First North American free black town at Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, near St. Augustine, FL. NPS



Map of Ft. Mose showing its relationship to St. Augustine. *NPS*

shellfish of all types. The freedmen and women soon dug new fields and planted crops. Until those crops could be harvested, the governor provided corn, biscuits, and beef from government stores.

A priest was assigned to the new settlement to baptize children, train adults in the Catholic catechism so that they could be candidates for baptism, and to perform marriages and other sacraments. Mose thus became a village of converts. Most of the new Florida settlers were men, as women were frequently unwilling to leave children or aged family members, who were unable to make the dangerous journey through the swamps to Florida. Because there were only five women in the group, the men quickly made unions with local African and Indian women (Landers 1999).

On November 21, 1738, a group of 21 men, women, and children left Port Royal, located in what is now Beaufort County, South Carolina, on a stolen launch, and made it safely to St. Augustine, Florida. Governor Montiano granted their request for asylum, and they joined their countrymen at Mose, where they began new lives as freedmen. In early 1739, Carolina authorities traveled to St. Augustine to request return of their runaways. Governor Montiano, however, refused, citing the royal edict of 1733 that granted religious sanctuary. William Bull, then Governor of South Carolina later wrote that the planters were very dissatisfied “to find their property now become so precarious and uncertain.” He further added that Carolina planters “feared that Negroes, which were their chief support, may in little time become their Enemies, if not their Masters, and that this Government is unable to withstand or prevent it.” In April of 1739, a frustrated South Carolina legislature voted to offer bounties for escaped slaves, even for adult scalps “with the two ears,” as examples to deter other slaves from attempting escape (Landers 1999:33- 4).

A team of archaeologists, led by Kathleen A. Deagan of the Florida State Museum, began excavations at Fort Mose in 1985. Artifacts from the dig became part of a traveling exhibition designed to enhance understanding of the African American experience in the Americas. Fort Mose was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994 and is the premier site on the Florida Black Heritage Trail (MacMahon and Deagan 1996). According to Robert L. Hall of the University of Maryland in

Baltimore County, the dig reflects a “renewed interest in black resistance to slavery in the New World” (quoted in *Scientific American* 1987:19).

The Stono Rebellion, which occurred on Sunday, September 9, 1739, was the largest slave uprising in the Colonies before the American Revolution. Before daylight that morning, a group of about a dozen “Angolan” slaves, led by slave named Jemie, met in St. Paul’s Parish, about 20 miles south of Charleston, South Carolina. They burst into Hutchenson’s Store at the Stono Bridge, killed the shopkeepers, and stole all the guns and ammunition. Once armed, the men and women organized themselves into military formation led by two drummers and a standard bearer. As they marched south, presumably toward St. Augustine, Florida, they shouted, “Liberty!” Along the way, up to 100 others joined the ranks, as they raided plantations, burned houses, and executed Europeans. That afternoon, the slaves stopped to rest in a large field near the Edisto River. By that time, they had marched about ten miles and had killed 20 to 25 whites (Wax 1982; Wood 1999).



“Black Lucy” stands idle near the old jail, a relic of the days when she met ships at the wharfs and picked up free black mariners for imprisonment while their ships were in port.

Late in the afternoon, a retaliatory force sent by Governor Bull, set out to capture the runaways. They overtook the group in a field near Jacksonboro, South Carolina, where the rebels had stopped for what the white pursuers saw as “drunken dance.” John Thornton, however, later identified the “dance” as a traditional feature of war in Central Africa. Thornton contends that the slaves were probably not from Angola but from Kongo, commonly referred to as the Angola Coast by slave traders. Kongo was a Catholic kingdom where many people spoke Portuguese. Thornton, as well as many contemporary Carolinians, believed that the rebels might well have understood both the offer of religious protection to Catholics and have been able to understand the Spanish language because of its kinship to Portuguese (Thornton 1992). In the ensuing attack, about 40 Africans and 20 Europeans were killed. Nearly all of the Africans who were not killed on the first day of battle were soon captured and executed. If any of the runaways escaped death, they may have sought sanctuary at Mose. Although the rebellion had lasted only one day, it led to a “heightened degree of white repression and a reduced amount of black autonomy” in Carolina (Wood 1974). Both of these factors made the risks of escape to St. Augustine seem even more worthwhile to enslaved Africans.

In June of 1740, a group of 150 slaves rebelled along the Ashley River near Charles Town, South Carolina. Although they presumably sought freedom in Florida, these slaves chose a particularly difficult time for their escape, as Georgia and South Carolina were at that very moment attacking Spanish Florida. Fifty of the rebels were captured by Carolinians and were hanged at the rate of ten per day to frighten other slaves against attempting to escape. Nothing is known of the fate of the remaining 100 escapees (Landers 1999).

Fort Mose proved vital in defending St. Augustine during Oglethorpe’s attack in 1740, even though the small fort was destroyed by the British during the attack. British sources later described the fort as constructed of stone, “four square with a flanker at each corner, banked with earth, having a ditch without on all sides lined round with prickly royal and had a well and house within, and a look- out” (*St. Augustine Expedition of 1740* 1954: 25).

After the war, the people of Fort Mose joined the community of St. Augustine until 1752 after a second Fort Mose was constructed near the site of the first. The former enslaved Africans, who were



Enslaved Africans were often hired out for public works projects or for other tasks when they were not needed by their own masters. In Charleston, SC, such slaves were required to wear a metal badge, such as the ones above, on their persons at all times to prove they were not runaways. *Avery Research Center*

predominantly from the British colonies of South Carolina and Georgia, lived there as free people until 1763 when the First Treaty of Paris gave Florida to Great Britain. At that time the inhabitants of Fort Mose and most other subjects of the Spanish Crown relocated to Cuba. Today the site of Fort Mose is a National Historic Landmark.

Slaves continued to escape and revolts until freedom came. The white minority feared Negro uprisings, and passed many laws restricting the movement of slaves. Often runaways did not stray far from home, choosing to either “lose themselves” in the bustle of a city such as Charleston or Savannah or hide in the woods, where they could pilfer food from nearby plantations. Those who attempted to reach the northern free states usually escaped through the swamps or by boat to avoid the armed slave patrols, colloquially referred to as “pateroles,” that were constantly in search of runaways.

One of the best-known rebellions was attempted in 1821. Denmark Vesey, a literate and charismatic free Negro who lived in Charleston, planned the insurrection. He was familiar with the Haitian slave revolt and kept in touch with black leaders there. Vesey recruited a band of between 6,600 and 9,000 Negro men during the four years of planning. They met in secrecy at a farm which could be reached by water so that they could avoid the slave patrols. Just before the uprising was to take place, Vesey’s plans were betrayed by some of his followers. Vesey blamed the failure of the rebellion on human frailty.

The white men’s vengeance was swift and sweeping. One hundred thirty-one Negroes were arrested, but they refused to confess. Twenty-two slaves were hanged together on one gallows. With the hangman’s rope around their necks, many cried out to their fellow slaves to keep revolting until

freedom came. Only the protests of slave owners who did not want their property destroyed prevented widespread slaughter of all those involved (Buckmaster 1993).



A group of slaves escape by boat. *UNC, Southern History Collection*

As a result of Vesey’s attempted rebellion, new and stricter laws were passed to control the movement of slaves. Slave patrols were increased. Slave travel between plantations was curtailed. Negroes were not allowed to congregate in groups. Negro seamen who came into the Port of Charleston were picked up in a cage-like prison wagon at the docks and taken to jail,

where they were detained from the time of their ship's arrival until it again set sail. Ship's captains were required to pay room and board for their detained seamen. The prison wagon came to be called "Black Lucy" and still stands today on the grounds of the old Charleston Jail. In addition, slaves who were hired out to work in the city were required to wear metal tags on their bodies so that they could be readily identified.

Tidal Irrigation Methods Improve Efficiency of Rice Production

The tidal method of rice production and irrigation was introduced in South Carolina during the 1750s. The new system improved yields and revolutionized rice cultivation in the coastal Southeast between 1783 and the early 19th century. This highly productive method was practical only on the lower stretches of a few rivers from the Cape Fear River in North Carolina to the St. John's River in northern Florida. Creation of a tidal rice plantation or conversion of an existing rice plantation to the tidal method required a substantial capital investment and a tremendous amount of back-breaking labor. Slaves cleared riverside swamps of timber and undergrowth, surrounded them with earthen levees, and then constructed an intricate system of dams, dikes, floodgates, ditches, and drains. The planters relied on the rise and fall of the tide to irrigate their fields several times during the growing season to encourage rice growth and control weeds and pests. The entire hydraulic apparatus of a rice plantation required constant maintenance by skilled slaves.



Map depicting tidal rice cultivation in SC. SCDAH

The tidal irrigation method marked the beginning of major rice production in Georgia. Far fewer enslaved Africans, however, were imported into Georgia than South Carolina to her north. Until 1766, most slaves came to Georgia via the West Indies and/or Charles Town. At about that time, Georgians began to establish their own trans-Atlantic connections for direct slave trade with Africa; however, Charleston still remained the major *entrepot* (Wax 1984).

As rice became more and more prominent in the economy, slaves from the rice growing regions of Africa became highly prized for their technical knowledge and skills in rice cultivation and irrigation. Some West Africans had experience in clearing swamps, building dikes, and using the tides to irrigate fields. They all understood the necessity of coating the seeds with clay so that they would not float to the surface when the fields were flooded. When the grain was ripe, children were sent to the fields to chase away the rice birds (bobolinks) just as they had done in Africa (Littlefield 1991; Carney and Porcher 1993).

Rice was not only the favored staple food of these enslaved laborers, but also was a part of their cultural identity. Rice came with them in the slave vessels and was processed during the voyage by captive women aboard the ships. Because it had been loaded on ships in its unprocessed state, any rice

remaining after the voyage would have been suitable for planting. Although first used for export and to feed slaves and farm animals, rice later became the favored staple food in the homes of European colonists.

When New World slaves planted rice in the spring by pressing a hole with the heel and covering the seeds with the foot, the motion used was demonstrably similar to that employed in West Africa. In summer, when Carolina blacks moved through the rice fields in a row, hoeing in unison to work songs, the pattern of cultivation was not one imposed by European owners but rather one retained from West African forebears. And in October when the threshed grain was “fanned” in the wind, the wide, flat winnowing baskets were made by black hands after an African design (Wood 1974: 61).

Rice planting on the Windward Coast of Africa had been a time of celebration, a time of renewal and promise. In the New World, however, as enslaved Africans worked under the blazing sun and faced the lash of the whip; there was only misery, rampant disease, and fear of death. Yet they still sang – not the songs of celebration, but songs that bespoke escape and freedom. Work songs with their veiled references to freedom were part of their African heritage and helped to maintain the rhythm of their tasks and perhaps to make their arduous labor more bearable (Parrish 1992).

Rice exports from South Carolina began at about 12,000 pounds in 1698 but increased to 18 million pounds by 1730. In 1770, 83 million pounds of rice were exported, predominantly from South Carolina and Georgia (Kolchin 1994). During the summer months, there were thousands of acres of rice fields full of the ripened grain. The fields were said to present a level and unbroken surface such that one could look up and down the river for miles and see no obstruction. Although rice production drove the economy, rice was never grown to any large extent on the Sea Islands, since salt water would be poisonous to the crop. Some sea islands, however, had fresh water ponds that allowed rice to be grown for local consumption (Emerson 1911; Johnson 1930).

In 1750, when slavery became legal in Georgia, South Carolina planters were lured southward by new investment opportunities along the Georgia coastline and into the northeast corner of Florida. Georgia planters soon became concerned about slaves escaping to freedom in Florida (Landers 1999). In 1765, naturalist John Bartram noted the presence of flourishing rice plantations along the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers. These plantations extended into the Altamaha Delta and southward along the Satilla River, where Bartram observed African slaves clearing the swamps (Slaughter 1996).



John Seabrook's Wharf, Edisto Island, Charleston County, SC, ca. 1862-1863 from US Navy Photographs of the War of the Rebellion. Note Sea Island cotton drying on the ground. *Library of Congress American Memory Collection*

As the Revolutionary War loomed on the horizon, both South Carolina and Georgia made extensive use of hired slaves (actually leased from their owners) in war preparations. Hired Negroes from the Gullah/Geechee coast performed many public works functions in the cities and assisted in the construction of defensive fortifications, particularly in Charleston and Savannah areas. Enslaved Africans were not allowed to bear arms, as the vastly out-numbered colonists always feared revolt. When a British invasion of South Carolina was threatened in the spring of 1776, a law was passed ordering execution for any Negro who joined British forces, supplied provisions, or provided intelligence to them. To

thwart that pending attack, a fort was built on Sullivan's Island, key to the defense of Charleston Harbor. Hired slaves did much of the work in the construction of the palmetto log fort – later called Fort Moultrie – that staved off the British attack. The supply of Negro labor never met the demands of the military, thus, if owners balked at leasing their laborers, their slaves were impressed into service. Thus, enslaved men played an important but involuntary role in the defeat of the British (Quarles 1973).

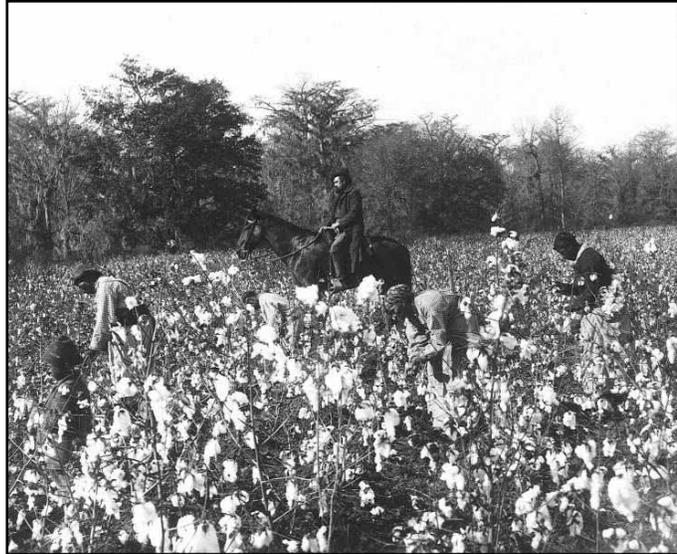
Early in the war, Congress considered enlistment of Negroes, but the plan was voted down by southern delegates. As the war progressed, it became apparent that the Continental Army needed reinforcement from any possible source.

Thus, driven into action by the British occupation of Savannah and the opening of a second British campaign to subjugate the South, on March 29, 1779, Congress recommended to South Carolina and Georgia that they “take measures immediately for raising three thousand able-bodied negroes.” Slave owners were to receive a sum of not more than \$1,000 for “each active able-bodied negro man of standard size, not exceeding thirty-five years of age.” Enslaved Africans who served “well and faithfully” to the end of the war were to receive \$50 and their freedom (Farley 1978; Quarles 1973:60, quoting from *Journal of Continental Congress* XXIII: 387- 388).

As a result of the Revolutionary War, many southern planters suffered major financial losses due to the interruption of trade, the loss of the indigo market with England, and the loss of many enslaved laborers. In the years following the war, large numbers of new slaves were imported from Africa to fill the void. Sea Island planters sought economic salvation in luxurious long staple, black seed cotton that was later to be known as Sea Island cotton. Sea Island cotton was developed in 1786 by William Elliott of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. First grown successfully as a commercial crop around 1790, this fine cotton could only be grown in a small section of the coastal zone south of Charleston to northern Florida. Unlike the low-growing plants of short staple upland cotton, the bushy plants of Sea Island cotton grew six to eight feet tall (Richard D. Porcher, personal communication 2003).

Continued crop development by seed selection increased the quality of this long staple cotton, which is said to be the finest cotton ever grown. After a time it became apparent that sea island cotton of the highest quality was grown on James, Johns, Edisto, Wadmalaw, and St. Helena Islands in South Carolina, and cultivation was later curtailed on the Georgia and Florida islands.

On the barrier islands ... The soil, temperature, and rainfall patterns had proven ideal for growing the long-staple cotton prized by manufacturers of luxury textiles – cotton so fine that it was ginned by hand and packed in bags rather than bales, so valuable that it commanded several times the price of the short-staple cotton grown in the upcountry, so particular in its quality that some planters sold their crops year after year directly to English buyers in private bargains, rather than go through normal market channels. The land that made it all possible kept its fertility only through annual applications of mud dug from the swamps and hauled to the fields by the slaves (Harris 2001: 11, 15).



Negro workers pick cotton while overseer watches from his horse.
Penn Center Archives



Negro field workers carrying bundles of Sea Island cotton from the fields. Sea Island cotton was bagged rather than baled. The cotton was weighed, bagged, and taken to the cotton dock for shipment to England. Note that bundles were carried on the workers heads in the African tradition. *Charleston Museum*

invention of the cotton gin, at roughly the same time as the advent of mechanized textile production in England, were key components of what became known as the Industrial Revolution. The new machines made short staple cotton profitable and ensured the growth and spread of cotton agriculture. Since the supply of long staple cotton could never meet the demand, many varieties of poorer quality short staple, green seed cotton were planted outside the coastal zone to meet the growing demands of the world market.

Although the importation of slaves had been voluntarily banned in South Carolina in 1787, planters called for change, as they needed a new influx of African slaves to harvest their highly profitable cotton crops. Between 1804 and 1808, over 40,000 enslaved Africans, most of whom came from Angola, were transported into South Carolina.

The importation of new slaves from Africa was abolished in 1808, but the law did not prohibit internal slave trade. Planters became more reliant on the natural reproduction of existing slaves, and encouraged the formation of slave families for that purpose. Since enslaved Africans were not so easily replaced, their healthcare became more important.

During this time, there was a dramatic rise in the internal slave trade, which was not regulated by federal government mandates. Speculators purchased gangs of slaves at estate or bankruptcy sales and sold them to planters who needed to increase their labor force. In addition to slaves entering the market from estate and bankruptcy sales, surplus enslaved Africans from the upper south, where tobacco had exhausted the soil, were sent “down the river” to the plantations in Georgia and South Carolina, which were in need of additional labor for cotton and rice. Slavery extended westward through this process (Littlefield 1983; Russell 1999; Smith 1985).

Being sold from rural to urban settings or from one region of the south to another frequently caused great emotional pain and suffering for enslaved Africans and resulted in the loss of contact with family members. Perhaps the most difficult adjustment was for a slave accustomed to living in the city who was sent to live on a remote plantation. According to John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger in their book *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*:

Virtually the entire crop of Sea Island cotton was shipped to the textile mills of England where the long silky fibers were woven into the finest muslins and laces. Despite recent research in both England and the United States, no examples of these fine fabrics have been found to exist today (Richard D. Porcher, personal communication 2003). Later, during the American Civil War, because of strong British demand for Sea Island cotton, many believed that the British would come to the aid of the Confederacy and that the war would be over quickly. However, that was not to be the case, and cultivation of the cotton was disrupted by the war. Sea Island cotton was eventually totally lost to the boll weevil.

Profits from the triangular slave trade helped to fund the rapid mechanization of industry in England. The 1793



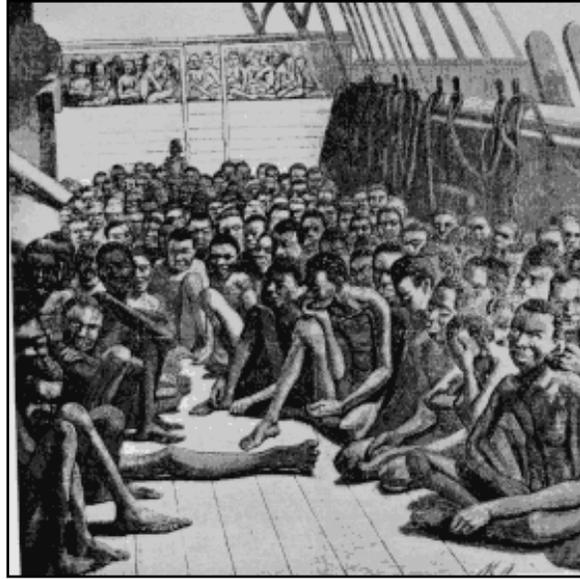
Ruins of slave hospital at Retreat Plantation, St. Simons Island, GA. The building once stood two and one half stories high and contained ten rooms. Two women lived there to provide traditional medicines and nursing care. A doctor was summoned from Darien when necessary. Doctors were frequently paid on a "per head" basis to care for both black and white plantation residents. This practice may represent an early form of managed healthcare.

Lymus, a twenty-eight-year-old Charleston bricklayer, was sold to Thomas Butler King, a planter on St. Simons, a barrier island fronting on the Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by salt marshes and tidal streams. A few years later, the famous Englishwoman Frances Anne (Fanny) Kemble gave her impression of the condition of slaves on St. Simons: the 'filthy and wretched' quarters, the meals of corn grits and 'small rice' (unfit for market), and the 'inhumanity of allowing a man to strop and lash a woman, the mother of ten children; to extract from her, toil.' Lymus discovered as well that the slaves on St. Simons were different from himself in dress, manner, beliefs, and speech, speaking Gullah with its African rhythm and inflections. A short time after his arrival, he managed to escape from the island and was seen on the road going from Darien to Savannah. He 'will probably endeavor to make his way back to Charleston,' King's agent wrote, hiring himself out at plantations along the way (2000:54).

Although banned in the United States, importation of African slaves was legal in the Florida territory until 1821. There were undoubtedly many thousands of captives from Africa who were legally imported into the Florida territory prior to 1821 and smuggled into Georgia and South Carolina. Ports known to have served as receiving centers for slave smuggling were Beaufort and surrounding islands in South Carolina, Cumberland Island, Darien, and Harris Neck in Georgia, as well as St. Mary's and Fernandina in Florida. The newly enslaved African people came directly from Africa and brought a re-infusion of African customs, traditions, and culture to the creolized Africans on Low Country plantations. The rapid influx of new Africans led to a caste-like social system in many slave



Ruins of tabby slave cabin, Kingsley Plantation, Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, near Jacksonville, FL.



18th century drawing depicting crowded conditions aboard slaver vessels. SCDAH



Tending the rice trunk. Charleston Museum

communities. American-born slaves believed they had better skills and therefore deserved higher status. New arrivals were assigned less desirable tasks and remained on the bottom rung of the social structure until they learned the ways of the slave communities. Creolization was, therefore, a continuous process during the slave era.

Zephaniah Kingsley, son of a loyalist who was forced to leave Charleston during the Revolutionary War, was a major player in the illegal slave trade. Although Kingsley bought, married, and later freed an enslaved Negro woman, he was, nonetheless, a staunch advocate of the slavery system. The Spanish Crown

granted Kingsley 3,300 acres of land in Florida on condition that he introduce Negro slaves in sufficient numbers to improve and cultivate the land. Thus, Kingsley, his wife, and 74 slaves arrived in Florida in 1803. He later purchased a large plantation on Fort George Island, just north of what is now Jacksonville in Duval County, Florida. He and his wife, Anna Madgigene Jai, who was an African princess, lived and raised their children there. The plantation, now called Kingsley, is part of Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. The Kingsley slave cabins were arranged in a circular pattern similar to African villages. It is believed that Kingsley's wife, herself an African and former slave, influenced the arrangement of the buildings to follow African tradition (Fairbanks 1974; Williams 1950).

By 1813, Kingsley had developed a slave trading business at the mouth of the St. John's River on King George Island, which proved to be a strategic location for smuggling slaves into isolated areas on the Georgia and South Carolina coasts. For a time, Kingsley engaged in his own triangular slave trade route by sailing to Liverpool, England, with his crop of Sea Island cotton, purchasing textiles and other products, and then sailing on to the west coast of Africa to purchase Negroes.



Carrying bundles of rice on a South Carolina plantation.
GWU Exhibit: "The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation."



Planting a rice field, probably in NC, late 1800s. *NC Dept. of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History*

When foreign slave trade became illegal in Florida in 1821, there were profiteers who bred and trained captive human beings for the Georgia and South Carolina slave market. Zephaniah Kingsley is, perhaps, one of the best documented examples. Kingsley had extensive enough holdings, acreage, and slaves to continue with his slave business after the ban on foreign slave trade. Kingsley raised, trained enslaved Africans to be exceptional field hands or skilled laborers. He then illegally transported and sold these “seasoned” slaves to rice plantations in Georgia and South Carolina and to the cotton plantations of the Sea Islands. Records show that “Kingsley’s Negroes” were held in high regard on the illegal market and brought an excellent price, as cotton and rice plantations were in constant need of new labor (Gray 1973; May 1945; Rehder 1999; Smith 1973, 1985; Williams 1950).

Conditions aboard smuggler vessels were horrendous. Lieutenant Patrick Forbes, captain of HMS *Bonetta*, was carrying out orders from the British government orders to suppress the smuggling of slaves along the African coast. In 1848, Forbes wrote the following eyewitness account of conditions aboard a smuggler ship:

The form of stowage is that the poor wretch shall be seated on his hams, and the head thrust between the knees, and so close that when one moves the mass must. Because of this stowage, the body of the victim becomes contracted into the deformity of the position, and some that die during the night stiffen in a sitting posture; others, who outlive the voyage, are crippled for life ...” (Davidson 1993:22).

The Role of Gullah/Geechee People in the Plantation Economy

When enslaved Africans arrived in the Low Country, they may have recognized some similarities between their new home and the native land they had been forced to leave. They surely realized that the Low Country area was suitable for growing rice, and some were able to acquire enough seed to grow rice for their families. These enslaved Africans eventually shared their knowledge of rice cultivation with plantation owners and talked of the many growing methods in their native West Africa.

Peter Wood (1974) and Daniel Littlefield (1991) first emphasized the diffusion of rice cultivation skills from West Africa to South Carolina. Judith Carney, referring to the research of Wood and Littlefield, noted that rather than studying the impact of one culture upon another, they pointed out the way in which:

55 PRIME NEGROES,

Accustomed to the culture of Rice.

By **LOUIS D. DeSAUSSURE.**

On Wednesday, 21st January, 1857, at *Ryan & Sons Lot*
Chalmers Street
will be sold in families, at 11 o'clock, A. M., in the city of Charleston,

An uncommonly prime gang of Rice-Field Negroes.

CONDITIONS:—One-third Cash. Balance by Bond, payable in two equal annual instalments, with interest, payable annually from day of sale, to be secured by a mortgage of the property, and approved personal security. Purchasers to pay for papers.

No.	Names	Ages	Skills	No.	Names	Ages	Skills
1	John	50	trusty driver, full hand.	30	Taggy	40	3-4 hand <i>boathand</i>
2	Mary	40	prime	31	Juba	50	1-2 hand, plantation cook
3	June	20	"	32	Tenah	22	prime
4	Paddy	16	3-4 hand, cart boy <i>knock knee</i>	33	Infant	6 months	
5	Lydia	9	<i>cripple in one leg</i>	34	Jenny	20	prime
6	Love	6		35	Manwell	1	
7	Charity	2		36	Moses	23	prime <i>4 1/2 feet</i>
—7				—7			
8	Ben	60	1-2 hand	37	Paul	35	prime, trunk minder <i>260</i>
9	Patty	60	"	—1			
10	George	30	prime	38	Jacob	45	full hand, ploughman and wagoner. <i>450</i>
11	July	28	"	—1			
12	Jacob	26	"	39	Manwell	55	1-2 jobbing carpenter
13	Bacchus	25	"	40	Doreas	40	3-4 child's nurse
14	Flanders	23	"	41	Penda	4	
—7				42	Rinah	20	prime
15	Patience	30	full hand & house serv't	43	May	2	<i>3 1/2 feet</i>
16	Clarinda	14	house girl	—5			
17	Infant	5 months		44	London	50	full hand, complains. <i>400</i>
—3				45	Martha	23	prime
18	Guy	35	prime hand, deaf	46	Jack	19	full hand, ploughman
19	Hannah	35	" trusty	47	Solomon	16	3-4 "
20	Harriet	15	3-4 prime girl	48	Andrew	13	1-4 hand
21	Cretia	7		—4			
22	Joshua	2		49	Pompey	30	full hand, one eye
23	Binah	20	prime	50	Dianah	28	3-4 hand <i>300</i>
24	Abram	1		51	Maggy	5	
25	Cyrus	22	prime	—3			
26	Plymouth	19	"	52	Adam	55	3-4 hand
—9				53	Maria	50	1-2 hand, sick nurse, sickly
27	Nanny	35	full hand	54	Mary	20	prime
28	Essa	7					
29	Scilla	30	full hand, recently had dys.				

Sale handbill showing names, ages, and skills of enslaved Africans to be sold. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University

... Africans from diverse ethnicities, thrown together in slavery, created a new way of life in coastal Carolina, where a crop known only to some of them became the plantation staple. The association of agricultural skills with certain African ethnicities ... called for a research perspective emphasizing ... culture in relationship to technology and the environment (2001:14).

South Carolina rice culture, which began during the late 17th century on the mainland, used the upland or dry land method of cultivation, which was dependent upon rainfall for irrigation. By the early 18th century, most planters were growing rice in freshwater inland swamps, where a portion of the swamp was dammed to provide a reliable water supply for irrigation. This method provided higher yields and profits, as the crop was not dependent on rainfall. In the 17th and early 18th centuries, before the inland swamp and tidal methods of rice cultivation became prevalent, the average yield was 1,000 pounds clean rice per acre. By the 1770s the figure had risen to 1,500 pounds per acre (Edgar 1998).

In the 1730s a few planters began to experiment with the tidal rice cultivation in which the power of the tidewater rivers was harnessed to irrigate the crop. Because of the tremendous expense involved in creating the fields for tidal cultivation, few planters utilized this method until after the American Revolution (Edgar 1998; Chaplin 1992).

The transition from inland swamp cultivation to tidal rice cultivation required extraordinary physical labor. Enslaved Africans cleared mammoth virgin cypress-gum forests with trees as large as five feet in diameter. Using only hand tools, oxen, and sweat to do a back-breaking job that would be difficult even with today's mechanical implements, enslaved Africans built earthen dikes, ten to twelve feet in height. Many lost their lives to alligators, venomous snakes, and disease. The region around what is now Georgetown County, South Carolina, contained the largest number of rice plantations and yielded the largest exports of processed rice.



Gullah workers on rice barge near Georgetown, SC, ca. 1890. SCDAH

As George Rogers wrote in his *History of Georgetown County, South Carolina*:

[The low country portion of the] Georgetown District was the principal rice-growing area in the United States. In 1840 the district produced 36,360,000 of a total national crop of 80,841,422 pounds of rice ... In 1840 Georgetown District came very close to producing one-half of the total rice crop of the United States (1970: 324).

Captain Basil Hall, 19th century world traveler and author, recorded his observations of rice cultivation as follows:

[Rice] is the most unhealthy work in which the slaves were employed, and they sank under it in great numbers. The causes of this dreadful mortality are the constant moisture and heat of the atmosphere, together with the alternate floodings and dryings of the fields, on which the negroes are perpetually at work, often ankle deep in mud, with their bare heads exposed to the fierce rays of the sun (1829).



Two women hulling rice, using a mortar and pestle in the African tradition. Sapelo Island, GA, ca 1900. After the rice was pounded with pestles to remove the tough outer hull, it was carried up into the winnowing house to finish the cleaning process. *GADAH*

Swampy mosquito-filled rice fields favored diseases such as malaria, amoebiasis, cholera, and yellow fever – diseases which were deadly to Europeans, American Indians, and enslaved Africans. Many Africans, from the Rice Coast of West Africa, however, possessed a degree of immunity to malaria. Rice planters were often absentee owners who spent the sickly months from early May to late October in the pinelands and the winter social season in their elegant city homes. As a consequence, the year-long process of rice production was frequently managed by the slaves themselves under the direction of a white overseer and a black driver (Pollitzer 1999; Young 1993).

Rice harvesting began with the threshing of the rice. Stalks were then tied into bundles and left on the ground with the heads outward. Enslaved Africans walked down the rows with a flailing stick to beat the grain from the stalks with flailing sticks. The “rough rice” was husked with a mortar and pestle made of very soft pine. This process required a skilled tapping and rolling motion to keep whole grains intact. According to historical accounts, a skilled worker could produce 95% whole grains, while a careless, fatigued, or less skilled worker might break more than half of the grains. Hulls and chaff were then separated from the grains by the winnowing process, which involved tossing the grain into the air from a fanner basket.

Enslaved Africans, however, did a great deal more than clear swamps, dig ditches, prepare rice fields for cultivation, and labor through the year-long process of rice production. The aforementioned tools and techniques came directly from West Africa (Edgar, 1998; Littlefield 1981, 1995; Carney and R. D. Porcher 1993; Clowse 1971). Carney refers to the transfer of rice and rice growing techniques to the Americas as the “diffusion of an indigenous knowledge system” (2001:6).

According to Carney, early records and recent archaeology show that over 100 years before the colonization of South Carolina, an irrigated rice system that harnessed the tides to flood the fields was in place along the estuaries of the Gambia River in West Africa. Africans also used the upland rice method, where rain water was collected in holding ponds to irrigate the fields. These knowledge systems, well established on the floodplains of West Africa, were brought across the Atlantic Middle Passage by slaves who shared their agricultural knowledge with their European owners (Carney 2001; Carney 1993).

The floodgates used in tidewater rice production were referred to as rice trunks in South Carolina. David Doar, descendant of a rice planter, was curious about the use of that term and solved the mystery before writing a book on rice culture, which was published under the sponsorship of the Charleston Museum. In this volume, Doar stated:

For years the origin of this name [rice trunk] bothered me. I asked every old planter I knew, but no one could enlighten me. One day a friend of mine who planted on one of the lowest places ... said to me with a smiling face: ‘I have solved that little trunk question. In putting down another one, I unearthed the granddaddy of plug trunks made long before I was born.’ It was simply a hollow cypress log with a large hole from top to bottom. When it was to be stopped up, a large plug was put in tightly and it acted on the same principle as a wooden spigot to a beer keg (1936:12).

Although the plug trunk was later replaced by a mechanical hanging gate that regulated the flow of water into the rice fields, the terminology remained the same throughout the colonial period. The term rice trunk was, thus, a carry over from the earliest method of water control in the Low Country – a method used in West Africa during that time period and still used today for mangrove rice production in Africa (Carney 2001). The emergence of rice as the chief export crop along the southeast coast was largely due to this transfer of knowledge from West Africa – agronomic knowledge of cultivation methods, systems of water control, and milling techniques. There is documentary evidence to show that in the period between 1695 and 1715, as rice took hold in the colony, the population of African slaves grew equal to and then surpassed the European population. Enslaved Africans from the rice growing regions demonstrated their engineering expertise in tidal rice production, which is a function of coastal geomorphology, hydrology, and rainfall. Historically, enslaved African ancestors of Gullah/ Geechee people were unique among Africans for their major roles in the development of the rice plantation and the agricultural economy of the region (Carney 1993, 2001).

The Task System: How It Fostered Gullah/Geechee Culture

“Don't done your task, driver wave that whip, put you over a barrel, beat you so blood run down.” Hagar Brown, former slave, The Oaks Plantation near Georgetown, South Carolina. – UNC, Southern Historical Collection

The task system was predominant along the South Carolina, Georgia, and north Florida coasts, and differed significantly from the dawn-to-dark gang system practiced in the other colonies. Despite differences in work patterns, enslaved Africans from both the gang and task systems created work rhythms by singing as they labored in the fields. Many of these work songs had secret meanings that referred to freedom, escape, flight to Africa, and sometimes even death (Hargis and Horan 1997).

Rather than working sun-up to sunset, task system slaves were assigned a specific amount of work that was to be completed in one day. This measure of work was called a task, and for an able-bodied field hand, this task could vary from one-fourth acre to one-half acre to be worked depending on the difficulty of the required work. Children and older people were assigned a half task or a quarter task according to their abilities. Once the day's task was complete, their work was done for the day. Slaves were accountable for the results of their labors, but were not necessarily under constant supervision. Slaves were sometimes rented to other plantations or public works projects. In some cases, the funds generated went to the master, but slaves were generally allowed to keep a part or all of the money they earned.

Thus, workers had time for themselves or to help family members who worked more slowly. Elderly slaves were given partial tasks that varied according to their abilities. Those who were unable to work took over child care and other domestic duties in the slave village (Close 1997). In the evenings or on Sundays, enslaved Africans often went to work for themselves, cultivating small gardens adjoining their homes on nearby vacant land. They were able to raise poultry and livestock, fish, gather oysters and crabs, produce handicrafts, and to play music, sing and dance with others in their slave community. At times they were forced to perform for the master, his family, and guests.

Not only did the task system inspire individual initiative and foster development of a strong work ethic, it also encouraged family, religious, and community activities by which the slaves were able to carry on their African-derived customs and practices without fear of interference. There were, of course, some slave owners who foiled these practices by ensuring that assigned tasks were impossible to complete, but most planters saw the perquisites of the task system as morale boosters for their labor force (Hargis and Horan 1997).



Former slave playing banjo, ca. 1902. African in origin, the banjo was often played by slaves in their quarters. Often, under the guise of humor, slave musicians both mocked and criticized their masters. *GWU Exhibit: Cultural Landscape of the Plantation*; V.C. Schreck, *GWU Folklife Exhibit*

Under the task system, enslaved Africans could accumulate money and property. Some were even able to buy freedom for themselves or family members (Hargis and Horan 1997; Morgan 1983). Enslaved men and boys hunted and fished extensively to supplement table rations drawn from their owners and sold excess meat, fish, and skins or traded them for clothing and other goods. Some enslaved Africans established elaborate trading systems for their crops and crafts. Since most plantations had river access, many of the goods were bartered and sold along the rivers, which were the major transportation routes of the day (Crook 2001).

Enslaved Africans had many talents that helped keep the village-like plantation running smoothly and required little or no added expense to the owners. Planters relied on slaves to provide their services as blacksmiths, carpenters, shoemakers, spinners, tanners, coopers, weavers, and other artisan skills. In addition to these skills, enslaved Africans were talented at medicine, midwifery, cooking, quilting, music, song, and dance. As a result of these many skills, enslaved people saw themselves as competent, gifted people who were being held unjustly in bondage against their

wills. They often used their talents to portray their work in humorous terms or to secretly deride their masters as in the song below:

My old Mistis promise me
Dat when she died, she gwine set me free.
But she lived so long and got so po'
Dat she lef me diggin' wid er garden ho'.
– Song remembered by former slave Abram Harris of South Carolina

Charles Fairbanks's excavation of a deteriorating slave cabin on Kingsley Plantation, Ft. George Island, Florida, was one of the earliest attempts to view slave life from an archaeological perspective. Since the masses of southerners, both black and white, were illiterate, they did not record their daily experiences for posterity as did the upper class. Consequently, historians are dependent upon the work of historical archaeologists to discover the lost legacy of enslaved Africans and ordinary white people who lived in the planter-dominated society of coastal Georgia and South Carolina (Otto and Burns 1983). Fairbanks documented stories of both fishing and hunting by slaves to supplement their rations. He not only found a lead slip-sinker weight but also found lead shot, a gunflint, and a percussion cap in slave refuse (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971; Fairbanks 1974; Ehrenhard and Bullard 1981).

Probably no historian ... will ever know how much our portrayal of Southern society would have been altered if small planters and poor whites [and slaves] had left as many records as the large planters have. In a sense, all studies based on literary sources are selective, the people they describe are selective, the generalizations apply



Last standing slave cabin, Oryzantia Plantation, Hobcaw Barony, Georgetown County, SC.



Kitchen building at Refuge Plantation, Camden Co., GA. Ca. 1880. Note heavy iron cooking pots hanging in fireplace. L.D. Andrew, from GWU Exhibit: "The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation."

only to that small percentage of the population which has left written records (Blassingame 1979).

The American Revolution brought about even more slave autonomy in the Low Country and Sea Islands. The general disruption of war and the military obligations of white men increased the existing tendency toward owner absenteeism and served to increase the isolation between enslaved Africans and the white population. Immediately after the war there was a major surge in the importation of new African slaves to compensate for wartime losses and to secure slave laborers before the federal government curtailed the practice. The late 18th century was, therefore, a time of owner absenteeism, slave isolation, the task system, and an internal slave trade economy. During this period, Gullah/Geechee language and culture took firm root and became the embodiment of the coastal region's cultural distinctiveness (Kolchin 1994).

The fact that enslaved Africans had a measure of independence, free time, and responsibility on the rice plantations is not only testimony to their diligence, ingenuity, skill, and adaptability but is also a source of connection and loyalty to the land itself – a connection that continues to the present in Gullah/Geechee communities and often continues among Gullah/ Geechee people who have left the coastal area. This love of and spiritual connection to the land is yet another reason why loss of family lands has dealt such a devastating blow to the social structure and cultural values of these communities (Armstrong 1980).

Although the task system may have made life a little easier for slaves on coastal plantations, in no way did it compensate for the yoke of slavery under which they were forced to live and work. Like the gang slaves, those under the task system sang work songs that often had secret meanings referring to freedom, escape, or flight to Africa. In some cases the songs called for freedom through death (Hargis and Horan 1997; Parrish 1992).

Although some privileges were granted to laborers under the task system, the fact remains that they were still slaves and were under the direct control of their masters. These human beings were chattel, personal property of their masters, and were subject to arbitrary beatings and other harsh punishments.



Gullah/Geechee farm workers hoeing ricefields, ca. 1900.
Charleston Museum

Enslaved Africans were continuously under the threat of being taken to the auction house and sold to satisfy the debts of their master or his heirs, or, even worse, that their families would be split up and sold. Slaves never accepted their condition, and engaged in work stoppages and work slow downs as a means of protest. They knew their own worth and knew that they produced the crops that made the planters wealthy. Some even kept mental notes of what they believed they were owed. When freedom came, many slaves felt that the plantation where they had been enslaved was rightfully theirs.

While working under the task system provided limited independence and small amounts of personal time to field workers, the task system did not apply to household slaves. Often domestic slaves are imagined as having easier lives than those who worked in the fields – once again conjuring Hollywood images of smiling black mammies in the big house, cooking and tending to the children. According to Catherine Clinton in *The Plantation Mistress*, this antebellum Mammy never existed (1982: 201- 02):

This familiar denizen of the Big House [Mammy] is not merely a stereotype, but in fact a figment of the combined romantic imaginations of the contemporary southern ideologue and the modern southern historians ... Not until after Emancipation did black women run white households or occupy any significant number of the special positions ascribed to them in folklore and fiction.

Clinton believes that “Mammy” was created by antebellum white southerners to depict a familial relationship between black women and white men in response to antislavery attacks from the North. After the war the “Mammy” image may have been embellished for the sake of nostalgia (1982). Cheryl Thurber echoes these sentiments in her “Development of the Mammy Image and Mythology” (1992).

While their work may have been physically easier than field work and their living conditions and clothing slightly better, the work assigned to domestic slaves was never- ending. They were generally on 24- hour call – some were even required to sleep on a pallet near their mistress’s bed. Domestic servants were allowed little time for their own meals and practically no time with their own families. When they were permitted to eat, they ate the leftovers or scraps from the family meal. Field hands, however, had more leisure time and freedom of movement with Sundays and later afternoons off to tend their own fields (Harper 1985).

Cooks and their helpers spent most of their time in the kitchen building, where the cooking fire was kept blazing all day and banked at night. The kitchen was an inferno- like sweatshop, particularly during the hot summer months. The cook’s work was dangerous, as she was constantly lifting heavy pots, sometimes causing her long skirts and sleeves to come very close to the fire. Although they may have cooked meals for the planter, they were not allowed even to taste what they had prepared until after the master and his family finished their meal. Covered walkways led between the kitchen building and the dining room of the main house. These walkways came to be called whistle walks, as slave women were forced to whistle while carrying food so that they could not eat along the way. Frequently, they were required to eat while squatting before the kitchen fireplace as they cooked for the next meal.

House slaves were more often sexually abused and exploited than field hands. Enslaved women may have survived the Middle Passage only to see themselves and their daughters confronted with yet another terror. Mulatto children fathered by the master or his sons were rarely acknowledged. In her *Diary from Dixie*, Mary Boykin Chesnut, who was mistress of Mulberry Plantation, a major rice producer on the Cooper River in Berkeley County, South Carolina, wrote:

God forgive us, but ours is a monstrous system, a wrong and iniquity ... [A slaveholder's] wife and daughters in the might of their purity and innocence are supposed never to dream of what is plain before their eyes as sunlight, and they play their parts of unsuspecting angels to the letter (Chestnut 1997).

Some masters flaunted their slave relationships, while others kept their illicit liaisons secret. Some of these men sold their mulatto offspring to protect their wives, while others insisted that these children become house slaves. In either case, such children were often separated from their black families. Since it was almost impossible for wives involved in these triangular situations to get out of their marriages, they sometimes took out their frustration in unfair, cruel behavior toward their household slaves.

Planters endeavored to promote and regulate slave marriages for a number of reasons, the most common of which was their hope that slave marriages would yield offspring and thereby increase their wealth. Slave women were ordered to report pregnancies to the overseer, who supposedly granted them lighter workloads. The productive role of women working in the fields and their reproductive roles created an interesting interplay between the annual cycles of crop production and the birth of children.

Procreative activities were subtly coordinated by the nature of the work the women performed. Cheryll Ann Cody studied the reproductive histories of 1,000 slave women on the Ravenel cotton plantations in South Carolina, and found that many enslaved women bore their children in strong seasonal patterns that reflected plantation work and planting schedules. Over one third of the slave children were born during the months of August, September, and October, which indicates that a large number of these women became pregnant during the months of November, December, and January, when labor requirements were reduced due to completion of the harvest and harsh weather (Cody 1996).

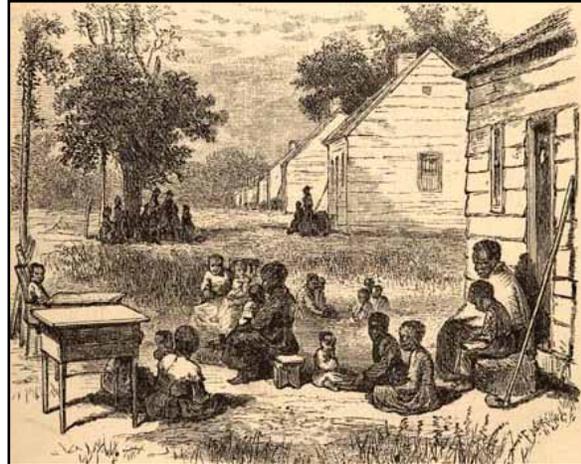
The seasonality of conceptions and births had a severe impact on the survival rate of slave infants. Late summer and early fall, times when many women were in their last months of pregnancy, was also the time of the most demanding labor on cotton and rice plantations, and led to a high rate of infant mortality. Women who had given birth were frequently allowed three weeks respite from field work and increased allotments of food and clothing. However, the fact that they were forced to labor in the fields right up until the time of delivery and return to the fields so soon after, indicates that the planters' primary interest was in plantation production rather than reproduction issues (Schwalm 1997).

The Impact of Gullah/Geechee Ancestors On the Coastal Landscape

The labors of Gullah/Geechee ancestors left an indelible mark on the Low Country environment. The Low Country is a place where natural, historic, and cultural resources are inexorably intertwined to form this distinctive setting. Early settlers who came to the Carolina Colony found tall virgin forests of longleaf pine. These forests were the source of the first export products, naval stores, timber, and deerskins. For the deerskin trade, European settlers depended upon indigenous peoples beyond the frontier to supply the trading houses of Charleston, Savannah, and elsewhere. As fields were cleared



Enslaved Africans shooting rice birds (bobolinks). The birds often appeared on plantation tables. *Charleston Museum*



Enslaved African children sitting near slave quarters on a South Carolina rice plantation. *Charleston Museum*

for agriculture, lumber from felled trees could be exported. Thick cypress- gum forests grew along the river banks.

Then came the process that would change the terrain forever. Rice became king, but its status was attained through the forced labor of enslaved Africans. They cleared the cypress- gum forests, where trees were so thick that it was impossible to see the sky. On this land they built an extensive dike system with rice trunks or sluice gates to control the periodic flooding of rice fields. Even today it is nearly impossible to look out over a coastal waterway and not see lingering images of rice fields – imprints of unique patterns of forced human labor. The patchwork outlines of these former rice fields remain as silent tributes to the enslaved Africans who built them.

The blood, sweat, and back-breaking physical labor of these Africans, direct ancestors of the Gullah/Geechee people, made a lasting mark on the tidal river ecosystems of the Low Country. These slave- built structures have remained highly visible and valuable contributory elements of the coastal environment for nearly 200 years. In addition to clearing forests and constructing the rice fields, slaves built boats and canals to carry rice through the salt marshes to the rivers. The rice culture in South Carolina and Georgia caused the most extensive environmental changes of that era along the eastern seaboard.

University of South Carolina archaeologist Leland Ferguson described a rice plantation in terms that may make clear the magnitude of physical labor demanded of the enslaved Africans (1992):

These fields are surrounded by more than a mile of earthen dikes or ‘banks’ as they were called. Built by slaves, these banks ... were taller than a person and up to 15 feet wide. By [1800], rice banks on the 12½ mile stretch of the East Branch of the Cooper River measured more than 55 miles long and contained more than 6.4 million feet of earth ... This means that ... working in the water and muck with no more than shovels, hoes, and baskets ... by 1850 Carolina slaves ... on [tidal] plantations like Middleburg throughout the rice growing district had built a system of banks and canals ... nearly three times the volume of Cheops, the world’s largest pyramid.

Many abandoned rice fields are now covered over with wild grasses that provide feasts for many thousands of birds and provide havens near the shoreline for river alligators. The pulpwood industry developed around second growth forests. Without the intrusion of rice fields into the cultural landscape of South Carolina and Georgia, there might not be as many lush marshes to serve as

breeding grounds for shrimp and other marine organisms. The wetlands and estuaries along the tidewater river systems that serve as wildlife refuges would be considerably smaller. There would be far fewer migratory and aquatic/marine birds.

Plantation owners of today have become an important force in land conservation efforts and have provided a model for rural land use and conservation nationwide. Tens of thousands of acres of plantation lands have been placed in conservation easements during the past 25 years, thus preventing development and logging. These protected private lands have become the heart of larger conservation efforts such as the ACE Basin (Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto River Basin); where over 40,000 acres are currently under protection. The Historic Ricefields Association strongly promoted establishment of The Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge in the forested floodplains of the Pee Dee and Waccamaw Rivers (Tibbetts 1999).

Ironically, wildlife refuges and conservation easements, while staving off development and protecting the land and its floral and faunal habitats, do not address the plight of landless Gullah/Geechee people. While the land may be protected, its resources are still denied to the people who historically lived there. By law, the lands, waters, seashores, and marshes become unavailable to those who would hunt, fish, shrimp, crab, gather oysters, and collect wild plants for medicinal and craft uses. Under the terms of some forms of natural resource protection, access to baptismal sites and other places of cultural significance may become off-limits to traditional users. Gullah/Geechee culture is traditionally tied to the land, the water, and their natural resources, therefore making access to land and waterways a truly vital part of any efforts to preserve traditional life ways of Gullah and Geechee peoples.

Researchers with the Sea Grant Consortium are currently studying the areas along the Cooper River where breached impoundments are allowing the land to grow thick with vegetation. Unless these dikes are replaced or repaired, the fields could become cypress-gum forests once again. Some landowners want to rebuild the dikes and manage for waterfowl. Boaters and fisherman want the breached dikes to remain as they are because unrepaired impoundments (rice fields) provide excellent fishing sites. (Tibbetts 1999)

At present, environmental scientists are studying the ecology and plant progression of abandoned rice fields within the context of historical land use patterns. They are collecting data and trying to understand the ecological interaction between the river and various stages of plant growth within the fields. As their database grows, scientists hope to be able to predict the impacts of various management options and know more about the ecological consequences of each.

The rice culture and other agricultural endeavors, along with related traditions that have evolved over the centuries, combine to make the Gullah/Geechee people and their surroundings significant in both the regional and national experience. Continued use of this region by Gullah/Geechee people, whose culture and traditions helped to shape the landscape and were in turn shaped by the coastal environment, serves to further enhance the significance of the land and the people.

From Slavery to Freedom to Gated Resorts: Gullah/Geechee Communities From the Civil War to the Present

I felt like a bird out of a cage. Amen. Amen. Amen. I could hardly ask to feel any better than I did on that day. – Houston Holloway, former slave from Georgia recalling the time when slavery ended

We has a right to the land where we are located. For why? I tell you. Our wives, our children, our husbands has been sold over and over again to purchase the lands we now locates upon; that the reason we have a divine right to the land ... And then didn't we

clear the land, and raise the crops of corn, of cotton, of tobacco, of rice, of sugar, of everything? – Former slave Bayley Wyat, 1866

The famous Cornerstone Speech was delivered extemporaneously on March 21, 1861, by Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, to the largest crowd ever to assemble at the Athaeneum in Savannah, Georgia. His remarks were interrupted by frequent bursts of applause from the audience. Although no official printed version of the speech exists, the text was later printed in the *Savannah Republican* (Cleveland 1886: 717- 729):

... the new [Confederate] Constitution has put at rest forever all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institutions – African slavery as it exists among us – the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization ... The prevailing ideas entertained by him [Jefferson] and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old Constitution were, that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally and politically ... Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the idea of a Government built upon it – when the ‘storm came and the wind blew, it fell’ (Cleveland 1886: 717- 729; Stephens 1862: 44- 46).

At the beginning of the Civil War in April 1861, the slave population of America was estimated to be about 4,000,000. Many thousands were hired out by their masters to build Confederate fortifications and to work as contract laborers for the Confederate Army.

Early in the war, there was no plan to use Africans as soldiers in either army. U.S. Army General David Hunter, however, recruited slaves from Hilton Head and Port Royal Islands in South Carolina, to form the 1st South Carolina Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Both the federal government and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton opposed the radical idea and forced Hunter to disband the regiment. Viewpoints changed later that year, and the War Department authorized General Rufus Saxon, Hunter’s successor, to raise 5,000 troops of African descent. Many of the original soldiers recruited by Hunter were mustered into the 51st Massachusetts Regiment under Captain Thomas Wentworth Higginson. In January 1863 the troops came together at the John Joyner Smith plantation, now the site of the U.S. Naval Hospital in Beaufort, South Carolina, to hear the Emancipation Proclamation read for the first time.

In 1864, the regiment was redesignated as the 33rd Regiment of the United States Colored Infantry. They saw considerable action along the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida and participated in the occupations of Charleston and Savannah. In addition, they saw action at the Battle of Honey Hill in Jasper County, South Carolina and at the capture of Confederate fortifications on James Island in Charleston County, South Carolina. A historical marker located in the Beaufort National Cemetery now commemorates their contribution to the war effort. The text of the marker follows:

The 1st South Carolina Volunteer Infantry Regiment was raised from the sea island slaves living near Port Royal. Elements of the regiment were formed on Hilton Head in May 1862. In August 1862, the regiment was reorganized near Beaufort at the Smith plantation. It was commanded by the noted abolitionist Thomas Higginson who led the regiment on raids along the Georgia coast. On January 1, 1863, the regiment was formally mustered into the United States Army. The regiment saw extensive service on the South Carolina, Georgia and Florida coasts. On February 8, 1864, the regiment was redesignated as the 33rd Infantry Regiment of the United States Colored Troops. The regiment assisted in the occupation of Charleston, Savannah, Augusta, and other points until it was mustered out on January 31, 1866.

President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in October of 1862, but it did not become effective until the first day of January 1863. During that period, rebel states who re-joined the Union would be allowed to keep their slaves. The proclamation applied only to “rebellious states” and stated “that all persons held as slaves are, and henceforward shall be free.” The proclamation not only opened the door for newly freed slaves to enlist in the Union Army but also specifically called upon them to enlist. Black soldiers had not been recruited prior to that time because they were prohibited from enlisting by an obscure federal law from the 1790s. Under the Proclamation, freedmen would be welcomed “into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.” Lincoln further stated, “The colored population is the great available and yet unavailed of force for restoring the Union.”



Robert Scott Smalls (1839-1916) was born into slavery in Beaufort County, SC. He served in both the SC Senate and the US Congress, and a delegate to the SC Constitutional Convention.

After the Emancipation, some newly freed slaves left the plantations and joined the Union Army, but many adopted a “wait and see” stance. Some evacuated with their masters’ families; some stayed behind and farmed the land where they once had been enslaved.

Freedmen who opted for service in the Union Army faced additional difficulties created by racial prejudice, which was rampant even in the North. Segregated units were formed, usually consisting of black enlisted men commanded by white officers. Although many blacks served in the artillery and infantry, discriminatory practices within the military resulted in the assignment of large numbers of freedmen to the performance of non-combat, support duties as cooks, laborers, and teamsters. African American soldiers were paid \$10 per month, from which \$3 was deducted for clothing. White soldiers were paid \$13 per month, from which no clothing allowance was deducted. Black soldiers faced much greater peril and suffering than did their white counterparts if they were captured by the Confederate Army.

In spite of their many hardships, African American soldiers comprised about 10 per cent of the Union Army. They served the Army well and distinguished themselves in many battles even though it is estimated that one third of all African American enlistees lost their lives, most to disease. By the time the war was over, around 180,000 African American soldiers had joined the fight.

Circumstances were different in the Union Navy. African American sailors were generally experienced harbor pilots or cargo workers. Although no former slaves served as officers, there was no segregation aboard ship. Quarters were much too small, and the workload much too heavy for racial segregation to occur.

Robert Scott Smalls, who was born a slave in Beaufort County, South Carolina, is one of the best-known Gullah participants in the Union war effort. He was taken to Charleston as a youth, where he worked at a variety of jobs along the waterfront and learned many seafaring skills. Smalls was never satisfied with his enslaved status and was determined to free himself. He taught himself to read and write, mastered the difficult currents and channels of Charleston Harbor, and waited for his chance to escape.



Funding is being sought to create a park at the Mitchellville Site, Hilton Head Island, SC.

During the Civil War, Smalls became the *de facto* pilot of a transport steamer, the *Planter*, which was under contract to the Confederates. On the evening of May 12, while the *Planter* was docked in Charleston Harbor, the white Confederate officers went ashore to attend a party and left the black crew alone. Before dawn on May 13, 1862, while the ship's white officers slept, Smalls smuggled his wife and three children aboard the *Planter* and took command of the vessel. As Smalls had been the wheelman, he was familiar with Charleston Harbor as well as Confederate gun and troop positions. He and his crew of 12 slaves sailed the *Planter* past the other Confederate ships in the harbor, gave the correct whistle signal as he passed the Confederate forts in the harbor, and sailed out to sea.

When he had sailed beyond the range of Confederate guns, Smalls hoisted a white flag and delivered the *Planter* to the commanding officer of the Union blockade. Smalls and his black crew were welcomed as heroes, and the ship was received as contraband. Later, Smalls stated that he intended the *Planter* to be a contribution by black Americans to the cause of freedom.

President Lincoln later received Smalls and his crew in Washington where he thanked them for their bravery and valor. Congress passed a bill, which was signed by Lincoln, which awarded prize money to Smalls and his associates for their gallantry. Smalls was given official command of the *Planter*, a position he held until the end of the war (Miller 1995; Sterling 1958; Uya 1971).

Following the war, Smalls returned to his home state of South Carolina and entered politics. He served in the South Carolina Senate from 1868 to 1870. In 1875 he was elected to the U.S. Congress as a Republican for the first of five terms. While serving in the Congress, Smalls fought for equal travel accommodations for black Americans and for the civil and legal protection of children of mixed racial parentage. He was one of the six black members of the South Carolina constitutional convention of 1895. After leaving Congress, Smalls was duty collector for the port of Beaufort. He retained his interest in the military and served as a major general in the South Carolina militia.

On November 1, 1895, Smalls made the following statement, "My people need no special defense, for the past history of them in this country proves them to be the equal of any people anywhere. All they need is an equal chance in the battle of life." This statement has been carved in stone at the site of his memorial at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Beaufort, South Carolina.

Although there are documented reports of enslaved Africans fighting as soldiers in both the Confederate Army and Navy, there is controversy surrounding the issue of numbers. The Confederate Army, like the Union Army, was segregated, but also like the Union Navy, the Confederate Navy was not segregated by race (Werlich 1990).

As a major port, Charleston had a pool of local seamen, who formed the nucleus of [Admiral John Randolph] Tucker's crews. Beaugard readily permitted his navy colleague to seek recruits from the ranks of the general's army. Long before Richmond, in desperation, seriously considered placing blacks in the army, Tucker's squadron had at least three black sailors, freemen serving on the *Chicora* (Werlich 1990: 62).

After the fall of Charleston, Tucker and his men evacuated to Virginia, where he organized a naval battalion which participated in several land engagements including the defense of Richmond. They later marched with the Army of Northern Virginia to Appomattox and are listed on the surrender rolls. Charles Cleaper, Joseph Johnson, and J. Heck – Tucker’s three black sailors from the *Chicora* – were the only African American soldiers to participate in General Robert E. Lee’s campaign (Werlich 1990).



The sewer comes to Sunrise Drive in the Harrington section of St. Simons Island, GA. For sale signs soon followed.

Slaves often went to war with their masters and were servants or stewards. In South Carolina and perhaps in other areas, the legislature voted pensions for “faithful negroes (*sic*) who stood by their masters” (*The Chattanooga Times* March 7, 1923 quoted in Segars and Barrow 2001:74). Other black southerners served in non-combatant roles as teamsters, musicians, hospital attendants, blacksmiths, hostlers, foragers, cooks, wheelwrights, and laborers on fortifications and were paid the same wage as Confederate privates. Although in today’s military these support functions are performed by soldiers, such was not the case at the time of the Civil War (Segars and Barrow 2001).

Toward the end of the war, however, the Confederate Army was desperately in need of more soldiers, and some people began to speculate that it might be better to use slaves to fight than to lose the war. Up until the very last weeks of the war, members of the Confederate Congress, as well as General Robert E. Lee and President Jefferson Davis, were hotly debating the question of whether to use slaves in the Southern armies. In March of 1865, the Confederate government began actively recruiting and enlisting black soldiers. In early 1865, Robert E. Lee publicly advocated the enlistment of black troops, and in March, the Confederate Congress authorized raising 300,000 new troops “irrespective of color.” General Ordinance No. 14 stated:

“No slave will be accepted unless with his own consent and with the approbation of his master by a written instrument conferring the rights of freedmen ...” (U.S. Army Official Records: 1161; Rollins 1994: 26).

On January 12, 1865, Major-General William Tecumseh Sherman, who was in the midst of his infamous “march to the sea,” met with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and 20 black clergy and community leaders from Savannah, Georgia, to discuss the future of former slaves after their emancipation. In his memoirs, Sherman states that he asked the black leaders if they preferred to live among the white people or in separate communities. Garrison Frasier, spokesman for the group, replied, “I would prefer to live by ourselves, for there is a prejudice against us in the South that will take years to get over.” Nineteen of the twenty black men agreed. Sherman and Stanton considered this information, and four days later on January 16, 1865, Sherman issued Special Field Orders Number 15, in which he set aside:

1. The islands from Charleston south, the abandoned rice- fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea, and the country bordering the St. John's River, Florida, are reserved and set apart for the settlement of the negroes now made free by the acts of war and the proclamation of the President of the United States.
2. At Beaufort, Hilton Head, Savannah, Fernandina, St. Augustine, and Jacksonville, the blacks may remain in their chosen or accustomed vocations; but on the islands,

and in the settlements hereafter to be established, no white person whatever, unless military officers and soldiers detailed for duty, will be permitted to reside; and the sole and exclusive management of affairs will be left to the freed people themselves, subject only to the United States military authority, and the acts of Congress. By the laws of war, and orders of the President of the United States, the negro is free, and must be dealt with as such ...

3. Whenever three respectable negroes, heads of families, shall desire to settle on land, and shall have selected for that purpose an island or a locality clearly defined within the limits above designated, the Inspector of Settlements and Plantations will himself, or by such subordinate officer as he may appoint, give them a license to settle such island or district, and afford them such assistance as he can to enable them to establish a peaceable agricultural settlement. The three parties named will subdivide the land, under the supervision of the inspector, among themselves, and such others as may choose to settle near them, so that each family shall have a plot of not more than forty acres of tillable ground, and, when it borders on some water channel, with not more than eight hundred feet water- front, in the possession of which land the military authorities will afford them protection until such time as they can protect themselves or until Congress shall regulate their title ... (Sherman 1875).

Thus, each family was to receive 40 acres of land and, when available, an army surplus mule to work the land. Sherman assigned General Rufus Saxton to implement the Order. According to Sherman, he wanted to "... give the freedmen protection, land and schools as far and as fast as he can" (1990). The Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands was formed to assist with land acquisition and to provide schools for the newly freed people throughout the South. Eventually over 40,000 blacks were settled on 40- acre tracts. However, many were driven from their newly acquired land during the summer and fall of 1865, when President Andrew Johnson reversed Sherman's order, issued special pardons to Confederate rebels, and returned much of the property to its former owners. Thus, among African Americans, the phrase "40 acres and a mule" has become synonymous with an empty promise.

Slavery in the United States was finally outlawed on January 31, 1865, by the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Strategies to disfranchise and further undo the empowerment gained by African Americans drove both the South's economic and social policies immediately following the Civil War. The implications of these policies for African Americans were the significant push factor that drove the out- migration of Gullah/Geechee people. In 1900, migration patterns of most African Americans were limited geographically. Almost 90 % of all African Americans lived in the South and many continued to stay until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s created another large out- migration (See Demographic History section).

Scholarly opinion is mixed as to when racial segregation became standard practice. According to George Tindall:

At the end of the Reconstruction period the pattern of racial segregation had not been rigidly defined. [During the next 20 years] segregation became an established and unquestioned fact in all the institutions and relationships between the two races" (1966:291).

Joel Williamson, on the other hand, believes that “well before the end of Reconstruction, separation had crystallized into a comprehensive pattern which, in essence, remained unaltered until the middle of the twentieth century” (1965:275).

After freedom came, Gullah/Geechee people acquired land in many ways. Some received lands via the Special Field Orders, some joined in groups to purchase lands, others claimed land that had been abandoned by its former owners. Land ownership became and continues to be a very high priority for these previously enslaved peoples. Small settlements, often beginning as intergenerational family compounds, sprang up – sometimes on lands where new landowners had previously been enslaved. These small communities, bound together by family ties, helped one another through the time of extreme poverty in the immediate aftermath of the war.

Subsistence farming and fishing were the greatest sources of table food and income. Open lands were also available for hunting and provided yet another means to supplement the table. Utilizing the resources available to them, Gullah/Geechee people developed an economic base that ensured community solidarity and self-sufficiency. Because of this independence, Gullah/Geechee people were not subjected to the share cropping system to the same extent as were freedmen farther inland. Elders of these socially well integrated Gullah/Geechee communities passed on distinct language, stories, customs, and social practices to each new generation. In this respect, women were especially important in the transmission of distinctive Gullah/Geechee family rituals and esoteric cultural lore.

Able-bodied family members provided table food and other resources to the elders, the disabled, and those unable to fend for themselves. This system of providing food and resources continued to function during the Great Depression, as close family ties and sharing of sustenance kept communities together. Development and crystallization of distinct free-holder Gullah/Geechee communities and family compounds continued through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Toward the end of the 19th century, the timber industry, seafood processing, subsistence farming, and commercial fishing contributed to a “Golden Age” of Gullah/Geechee economic self-sufficiency, relative freedom from outsider intrusion, and blossoming of performing and graphic arts.

The late 19th century also saw the construction of the United States Naval Station, Port Royal, which lies along Port Royal Sound [Beaufort County, SC]. The base was re-named as a Marine Corps Recruit Depot in 1915 and continues to play a significant role in the local economy.

The early 20th Century brought about the “discovery” of Gullah/Geechee language and culture by artists and scholars. During the same timeframe, there was a parallel “discovery” by those desiring Gullah/Geechee natural resources and lands. Northern commercial fishermen with capital and large motorized vessels slowly began to replace small independent black fishermen and shrimpers from Charleston to Florida. Some African American men went to work on the larger vessels; others shifted to the pulpwood industry. Gilded Age magnates, automobile touring, and bridges brought the first major wave of modern outside land pressure, stress, and influence to coastal communities of the Gullah and Geechee people.

World War II brought significant changes to the area. In addition to the Marine base at Parris Island, the government acquired lands in the Harris Neck Community in McIntosh County, Georgia, to build coastal defense air strips. The post-war boom and the invention of air conditioning further stimulated an influx of middle class Americans in significant numbers as year-round residents of the coast.



This 1950s era barbershop (above) stands abandoned in the Harrington community, St. Simons Island, GA.



These St. Simons Island row houses (left) were built in the 1940s to house employees of Sea Island resorts. The houses now stand empty, but could possibly be adapted for re-use as bed and breakfast cottages.



This 100 year-old structure was once Boney Brown's Store and family residence on Squire Pope Road, Hilton Head Island, SC. Although the Brown-Grant family had hoped to save the building, it was recently demolished.



During the 1940s and '50s, Hazel's Café was a thriving restaurant in the Southend Community on St. Simons Island, GA. Today the building is used for private parties.



Charlie Simmons once owned the gasoline powered boat that made daily runs from Broad Creek on Hilton Head Island to Daufuskie, Beaufort, and Savannah. The building above once served those waiting to catch the boat. It was later made into a "juke joint" and then a fish camp. A restaurant is now planned for the site.

Thus, Hilton Head Island, ironically the location of administrative headquarters for the Freedman's Bureau in the early days of Reconstruction, became, one hundred years later, the type- case reference point for massive social displacement and economic "swamping" of Gullah/Geechee people and their culture. "We don't want another Hilton Head" is commonly used nowadays as a precautionary warning against unbridled development of undisturbed locales yet to be "discovered" by outsiders. In some areas, land use conflicts have been occurring for decades, but in some parts of the region many landowners ignored planning issues until quite recently (Heflin 1993).

Many Gullah/Geechee people, who live in rural communities, have traditionally relied on septic systems and well water. Improperly located systems, more maintenance and increased population density, however, may lead to septic system failure and contamination of groundwater.

In such cases, even these rural residents may request access to public sewer and water. Ironically, developers often join residents in lobbying for new water and sewer lines. New water and sewer lines frequently attract rapid growth of large residential subdivisions and subsequent commercial strip development. As commuter traffic clogs the roadways, residents demand new or expanded roads, which attract even more people. The increased services lead to higher taxes, rural sprawl, and ultimately to the suburban sprawl that is rampant along the coasts of both South Carolina and Georgia (Tibbetts 2001).

Although Gullah/Geechee people have made gains in civil rights, the intrusions of development and the subsequent population explosion along the coast have brought a growing awareness of the imminent loss of their language, their culture, their traditional way of life. Gullah/Geechee people do not seek to live in the past or to arrest the flow of history. Rather, they are a living, changing people – a culture of survivors who seek to adapt and thrive in the 21st century in new ways, but without exploitation, without gentrification or commodification, and without the intrusion of a "New Plantation" economy (Pinsky 1983, 1992).

Demographic History

Until recently, the Gullah/Geechee people of the Low Country and Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia were for the most part a genetically isolated and insulated population. Due to the continued importation of slaves into the 19th Century, this population was among the last in the United States to receive a genetic contribution directly from Africa. Because of their isolation, the Gullah/Geechee people are more closely related anthropometrically to their West African ancestors than other African American populations. They also show less evidence of European ancestry (Pollitzer 1999).

When Europeans and Africans first arrived in coastal South Carolina and Georgia, the area was fairly thickly populated by American Indians, but as a result of the introduction of exotic diseases from Europe and Africa, there was a quick die-off of the Indian population along the coast. Through the early years of the colonies, small pox, pneumonia, tuberculosis, swamp fevers and agues plagued white colonists and their enslaved African and American Indian laborers. While small pox struck all races with equal force, tuberculosis and respiratory ailments took a higher toll on the black population. However, when faced with the swamp fevers such as malaria and yellow fever, there was from the beginning a noticeably lower rate of morbidity and mortality among the enslaved population. This immunity among slaves was only partial, but was also inheritable. Planters may not have known the reason for this immunity, but they quickly recognized the economic advantages of the condition. Thus, planters and their families moved away from the swampy rice fields during the mosquito season and left the plantations to be managed, for the most part, by the slaves themselves (Dobyns 1983; Pollitzer 1958; Waring 1964; Wood 1974).

Through the early 20th century, the African-derived population was the demographically dominant population. This was due in part to the frequency of the hemoglobin beta gene (HBB) found on chromosome 11p15.4. This gene occurred at a higher rate in Gullah/Geechee people than in other African American populations, but was about equal to the West African rate. Carrier frequency of HBB varies significantly around the world, but high rates are generally associated with regions such as coastal Africa and Mediterranean countries where there is a high incidence of malaria. Carriers of the gene in its heterozygous form (inherited from only one parent) exhibit a significant degree of protection from malaria, a disease that plagued the Low Country through the 18th and 19th centuries.

The cost of this genetic adaptation was, however, very high. The same gene in its homozygous state (inherited from both parents) causes sickle cell anemia, and early death. Those born entirely without the trait were subject to lethal malarial infections that led to high infant mortality. Sickle cell anemia has appeared in Gullah/Geechee people at a higher level than in other African American populations. As increasing marriage to non-Gullah/Geechee people continues to dilute the gene pool, the sickle cell trait is occurring with less frequency (Curtin 1968; McNeill 1977; Pollitzer 1999; Wood 1974).

The black majority dominated the Low Country until well into the 20th century (Wood 1974). As the population of the Low Country grew between 1900 and 1950, the coastal regions and Sea Islands grew 115% in comparison to an average of 104% for the states of South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The national growth rate during that period was only 99%. The population increase of whites drove the overall growth rate. The African American population exhibited a fairly stagnant rate of change.

The first half of the 20th century reflects the most dramatic rate of change for racial composition in the Low Country. The ratio of black to white population, which had been 3 to 1 in 1850, declined to 2 to 1 in 1900 and to 1/2 to 1 in 1950. The white population of Georgia began to exceed the black population during the 1930s; while in South Carolina this change did not come about until the 1950s. The large deviation of racial population ratios may be attributed to a combination of several factors, including white migration into the area, black emigration to the North or to Low Country cities, agricultural trends, health care, and military presence (See chart to follow).

Between 1900 and 1930, tens of thousands of Gullah/Geechee people left the South and headed north where they could escape the poor southern economy and the segregationist Jim Crow laws. During that period, the population of St. Helena Island, South Carolina, decreased from 8,285 to 4,458 (Kiser 1932). This out-migration resulted in a second diaspora of Gullah/Geechee people and extended the reach of their culture far from the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina and into the heart of urban America. As Al Calloway, one of the commentators on the public review draft of this report stated:

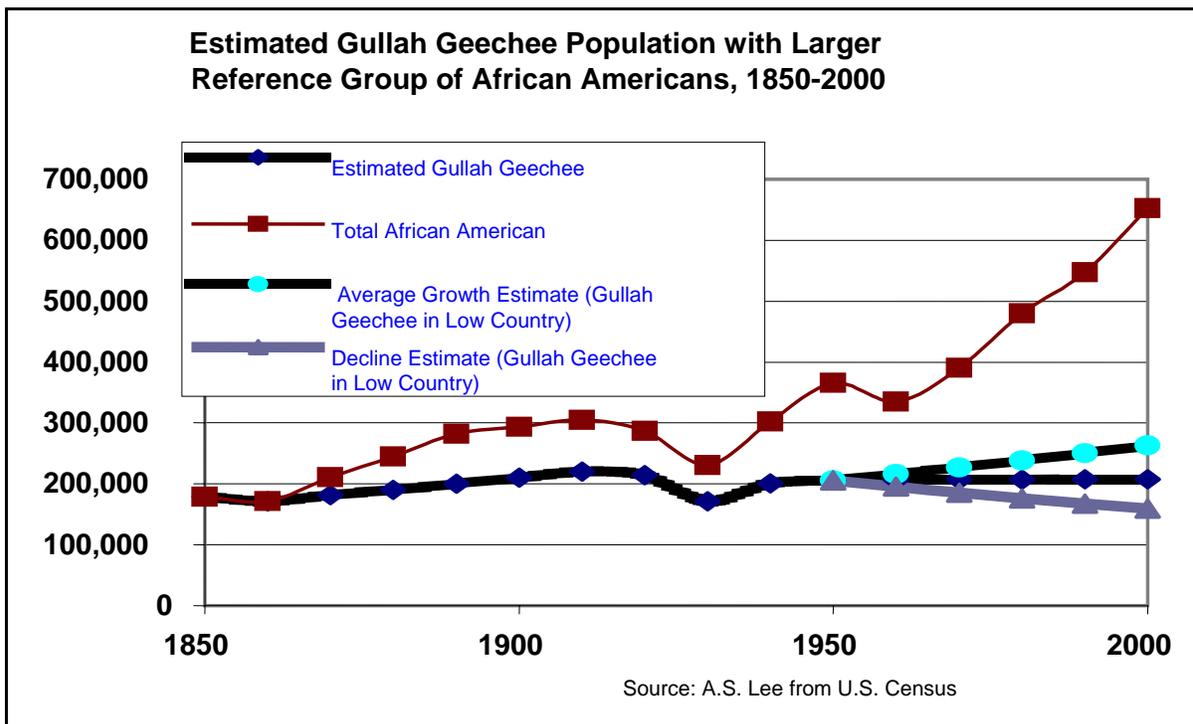
Most Americans have no idea how many African Americans are ‘touched’ by what some of us grew up calling ‘Geechee.’ The church I grew up in – The Metropolitan AME Methodist Church in Harlem, New York City – had an original membership of mostly first generation removed South Carolinians and Georgians. They came from the Charleston area and the islands around, as well as from coastal Georgia. The red rice, greens, candied yams, deep fried chicken and cornbread cooked every Sunday at church, and the accents and strange words used and understood, especially by the adults, gave a sense of belonging to a tradition far different from the fare encountered outside those walls. The music was haunting, spiritual, deep gospel. All the way from Mother Africa.

Shifts in Total African American Population 1995 - 2000			
State	In	Out	Net Gain
Florida	168,862	117,576	51,286
Georgia	253,237	122,488	130,749
North Carolina	142,875	89,504	53,371
South Carolina	77,555	61,302	16,253
Total Net Gain	642,529	390,870	251,659

Source: US Census Data

Coastal Population Growth 1850-2000			
Location	1850-1900	1900-1950	1950-2000
United States	229%	99%	86%
South Carolina, Georgia, Florida	146%	104%	238%
Study Area	75%	115%	151%

Source: US Census Data



Around the middle of the 20th century, there was significant immigration into the study area by African Americans and others from different regions of the United States. At the same time, there were increased incentives for Gullah emigration from the region, thus increasing Gullah/Geechee out-marriage. In general, genetic isolation of the traditional local African American population has been reduced, with a concomitant reduction in Gullah/Geechee population distinctiveness to whatever extent it previously existed.

The trend of African American population decline as a percentage of the total population began to change with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This legislation delineated the framework for



Charlie Mule cart view of Sapelo Island, Cultural Day 2002. *Diedre Laird, SC Desk, Charlotte Observer*

equal status under the law for all Americans. During the mid 1970s, as job opportunities dwindled and racial tensions intensified in northern urban areas, fewer blacks left the area. While the African American population has increased steadily since the 1960 census, the proportion of African Americans has remained steady at approximately 30% of the total population (Lee 2002). Blacks started returning to the South from other regions between 1975 and 1980. Since that time, the Northeast and Midwest have experienced net losses in African American population, while the West and the South have experienced gains.

Because of Gullah/Geechee out-migration and the immigration of African Americans from other regions, it is difficult to determine from available census data just how many Gullah/Geechee people specifically live in the South Carolina/Georgia coastal area at present. Similarly, attempting to estimate the total number of Gullah/Geechee people everywhere in the world today would be virtually impossible. Nonetheless, by projecting local historic African American demographic growth rates using pre-1950 census data, the project team estimates that there are between 159,222 and 262,623 Gullah/Geechee people within the total African American population of 652,701 reported in the 2000 census for the coastal counties of South Carolina and Georgia.

Cultural survival does not, however, require genetic isolation. Indeed, some degree of continuing out-marriage has always been adaptively advantageous to small human populations – culturally, socially, politically, and genetically. The same is true of the Gullah/Geechee population under the current conditions of stress and change. Nonetheless, perception of the loss of Gullah/Geechee social integrity resulting from persistent and expanding marriage to non-Gullah in combination with other social changes – may be perceived as a major stressor

Gullah/Geechee Language

If you get the full Gullah, it's a song language. That's the deep Gullah. It is a song language and not a deaf language like English. The speaker of a song language doesn't mean exactly just the words alone, but when he has once spoken them, he really couldn't have said it any better. If you catch the song, you can tell exactly what he means. – Sam Gadsden, born 1882 (Lindsay 2000)

A unique creole language is spoken along the Sea Islands and adjacent mainland of South Carolina and Georgia. The linguistically distinct Gullah language is found in both South Carolina and Georgia, but the language and its speakers are typically referred to as “Geechee” in Georgia. As a creole language, Gullah began as a pidgin, a simplified speech used for communication among people of different languages. The pidgin likely began in the castles and *barracoons*, outdoor prison-like enclosures where captives were held before being loaded onto the slave ships. The language, with its vocabulary and grammatical roots in European and African languages, developed for practical purposes as a way for Africans and their captors from different linguistic origins to communicate with one another.

Creolization is a linguistic process that emerges from pidgin speech codes. If a pidgin becomes the only form of communication for a succeeding generation of speakers, the processes of linguistic evolution takes over to produce a complete language. Thus creole languages have their own phonological, syntactical, and grammatical rules even though the vocabulary is derived from the ancestral languages which gave rise to the pidgin (*cf.* Hall 1965).

This ability to communicate was instrumental in the blending of diverse cultural experiences and retention of African roots. As the Atlantic slave trade continued to flourish, vocabulary from English, French, Portuguese, and other European languages were added to the mix to facilitate communication with European slave owners. The Gullah/Geechee language is the only distinctly African American creole language in the United States. It has indirectly influenced the vocabulary of the American South and has contributed to traditional Southern speech patterns.

Although many Gullah/Geechee words are derived from English, Gullah is decidedly not a dialect of English. Gullah is recognized by linguists as a separate language distinguished from English by mutual unintelligibility, *i.e.*, native speakers of only Gullah or only English would not be able to understand one another. Even during the Ebonics controversy of the 1990s, the integrity of Gullah as a language was not seriously questioned by linguistic scholars.

In addition to its phonological and syntactic distinctiveness, Gullah has retained certain lexical items and morphological features derived from various African languages. Gullah existed as a largely ignored linguistic phenomenon until the research of Lorenzo Dow Turner (1949) in the 1940s. Turner, a North Carolina native who was the first professionally trained African American linguist, demonstrated that Gullah/Geechee languages contained linguistic features drawn directly from the languages of West Africa. It was these Africanisms, first noted by Turner, that were for many years the focus of Gullah linguistic studies. More recently, however, linguists have produced highly technical studies of such aspects of Gullah language as stress patterns, tense- mood- aspect, and variations in auxiliary verb use (Hopkins 1994). Although challenging for the layman to understand, such technical studies of the Gullah language contribute to general scientific understanding of the nature of human language and linguistic change.

Although Turner died in 1972, his widow Lois Turner Williams believes that his research should live, not only as a chronicle of the past but also as a lesson for the present. “He understood the structure of their [Gullah] speech didn't come about because of any laziness or an inability to make the proper sounds,” as had been frequently put forth by some. His research clearly demonstrated that Gullah

Gullah	English
<i>ooman</i>	woman
<i>oonuh</i>	you
<i>tittuh</i>	sister
<i>enty?</i>	Is that so?
<i>buckruh</i>	white man
<i>E</i>	he, she, it, his, her
<i>day clean</i>	dawn
<i>coota</i>	turtle
<i>krak teet</i>	talk
<i>nyam</i>	eat
<i>gwine</i>	going
<i>wegitubble</i>	vegetable

speech patterns are not an indicator of intelligence but from the Gullah/Geechee language and culture that had been passed down through the generations by oral tradition (Richissin 1997).

Despite its legitimacy as a language, use of Gullah or Geechee was for many years considered to be a mark of low status and ignorance and, thus, was a source of pejorative remarks. Many people, including educators, viewed it as substandard or broken English, and encouraged children to give up their native language in favor of so-called “standard English.” There was, of course, no option for learning English as a second language, since Gullah was not widely viewed as a legitimate language at that time. Since Emancipation, distinctive Gullah language and

folk culture have been subjected to strong acculturative forces and concomitant pressure to assimilate rather than remain ethnically distinct. Assimilation came more rapidly for people in mainland communities that did not have the protection of isolation.

Delo Washington, St. Helena native and retired professor from California State University at Stanislaus, describes the negativity once associated with use of the Gullah language:

For a long time, it was considered negative to be Gullah, though we didn't grow up feeling negative about ourselves. But we were considered strange people with a strange language. You couldn't get a job speaking that way. In the '60s, scholars and others began to take a different view of the Gullah- Geechee culture. Africa was seen in a more positive light, particularly by African Americans (Glanton 2001).

Contempt for the language and derision toward those who use it were recently discussed with one of its most famous speakers, United States Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Thomas, who was born in Pin Point, Georgia, a small tidewater community southeast of Savannah, remembers his Geechee beginnings. In December 2000, Justice Thomas participated in a televised question and answer session with high school students. When asked why he did not pose questions in oral arguments before the Supreme Court. Thomas replied,

... But I'm going to give you a more personal reason, and I think this is probably the first time I ever even told anybody about it ... When I was 16, I was sitting as the only black kid in my class, and I had grown up speaking a kind of a dialect. It's called Geechee. Some people call it Gullah now, and people praise it now. But they used to make fun of us back then. It's not Standard English. When I transferred to an all-white school at your age, I was self-conscious ... I was trying to speak Standard English. I was thinking in Standard English but speaking another language ... I just started developing the habit of listening ... I didn't ask questions in college or law school. And I found that I could learn better just listening ... (“In His Own Words” 2000; Wermiel 2002).

Over the past several years, Justice Thomas has become more interested in learning about his ancestry and cultural heritage and in sharing the experiences of his youth. He has recently expressed an interest in researching and writing a book about his Gullah/Geechee heritage. “This is a passion of mine, starting to work on a book. For years I've been interested in figuring out all of this” (Davis 2001;

Milloy 2000). Some Gullah/Geechee people within the study area have expressed negative feelings toward Justice Thomas because they believe he has not claimed his heritage and does not contribute to Gullah preservation efforts.

The Gullah language passed through the generations as an oral tradition and has no widely accepted written form. The absence of a standard written form of the language makes preservation even more difficult. As with any living language, Gullah/Geechee continued to evolve through the centuries, but since the mid 1950s the language has changed substantially. The language has incorporated more and more “standard” English loan- words. Accents, cadences, and speech patterns are becoming more anglicized. Loss of the language is of grave concern to many people who attended the Special Resource Study public meetings.

The elders are dying, and young people in many communities often seem to have no interest in learning to speak “that funny way that old folks talk,” as was stated by a meeting participant. For that reason, many of those in attendance at SRS public meetings felt strongly that educational programs were necessary so that their young people could learn to have pride and respect for their ancestry, heritage, culture, and language. Some organizations are providing cultural education for the children in their communities, including instruction in the language. Extinction of the language would mean not only a loss to linguistic science but also the disappearance of a mode of practical communication and artistic expression that is at the core of Gullah/Geechee cultural identity.

The Gullah language is at a critical point for its survival. Gullah is now most frequently spoken in the home or by the elders of the community, although young people are beginning to take more interest in their cultural heritage. By the late 20th century, as the number of native speakers of Gullah dwindled, pride and concern for the preservation of the language began to surge in some communities. Formal artistic use of Gullah language is increasing among writers, storytellers, performance artists, and even tour guides. Some common Gullah words and phrases, which were heard frequently during this study, are illustrated in the table above (Frazier 1995; Geraty 1998).

Although their work is sometimes considered controversial by some Gullah people, non-Gullah people have contributed to the preservation of Gullah language and plantation spirituals. Virginia Mixson Geraty, a public school librarian, spent much of her life documenting the Gullah language that she first heard as a five year- old child on Yorges Island, South Carolina. As she once recalled, “I just fell in love with the language. It sounded like the women were singing” (*Post and Courier* Editorial: Aro). She recognized the problems incurred by Gullah- speaking students at her school and sought ways to help them survive academically within a system that did not yet recognize Gullah as a true language.

Geraty, who died in 2004, made the study and preservation of the Gullah language her passion and her life’s work, beginning at a time when people who spoke Gullah were ridiculed. Former South Carolina state Representative Lucille Whipper, a member of the steering committee for the International African American Museum in Charleston, was quoted as saying that Mrs. Geraty was ahead of her time, explaining: “I give her credit for early on recognizing the significance of the Gullah language and its impact on our culture, and being very persistent in her attempts to preserve Gullah and give it the respectability that is now more accepted. We have come a long way from thinking it was degrading to recognize the positive influence of Gullah” (Hardin 2004).

The Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, a group of white planter descendants, was formed in 1922 to sing African American spirituals in the Gullah language. They feared that the congregational style of singing this powerful music would be lost as printed hymnals became more and more prevalent. Determined to preserve the traditional style of performing Gullah spirituals, members resolved to collect Low Country spirituals, to sing them as authentically as possible in Gullah, and to pass the tradition on to the next generation. In 1936, the society acquired a recording device that made recordings on aluminum discs. Members carried the machine in a Model T Ford, jacked up the car,

wrapped a belt around the axle to power a generator, dropped a microphone through the church window, and recorded services at African American churches in Charleston and surrounding Sea Islands. The 50 aluminum disks recordings are now deposited in the Archive of American Folk Song. In 2004, the society published a book and compact disc of the spirituals collected and sung by three generations of members. Since African Americans are now actively involved in the preservation and performance of their musical heritage, the society no longer performs in public, but members still gather to sing the songs they love and consider to be a part of their own heritage (*Spirituals of the Carolina Low Country* 2004).



African American monument, Savannah, GA.

Gullah/Geechee Traditions, Crafts, and Arts

The distinctiveness of Gullah/Geechee culture is clearly defined through a variety of artistic and craft traditions. Many writers and scholars have studied and/or described and analyzed metalworking, quilting, basketry, net making, woodcarving, music, and folklore.

Some of the earliest scholarly research on Gullah folklore was by Elsie Clews Parsons (1923), a major figure in early American anthropology. Following in Parsons' tradition have been dozens of folklorists, musicologists, ethnologists, literary scholars, and others who have attempted to describe, analyze and place into functional context the arts and crafts of Gullah/Geechee people.

Gullah/Geechee people have a rich tradition of oral literature and history including legends, folktales, stories, and accounts of supernatural events such as spiritual attacks by hags and other evil entities (Hufford 1976; Ross 1980). Gullah/Geechee also articulated their oral history through songs. Some elements of Gullah/Geechee culture have been popularized through the creative arts in such works as George Gershwin's folk opera *Porgy and Bess* (1934).

Gershwin's opera, the best known of all American operas, was based on *Porgy*, a novel by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward (2001), which was set in Charleston, South Carolina, but several of its key characters and themes are clearly Gullah in culture. Julia Peterkin received the Pulitzer prize for her novel *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1928), in which she candidly portrayed Gullah women and the richness of rural black culture in a manner than was unusual for her time. Peterkin's novels were also dramatized but did not achieve the success of *Porgy and Bess*.

Literature and Art

Generations of Americans have delighted in the *Uncle Remus* tales, which have left an indelible if somewhat distorted imprint on American mass culture. The *Uncle Remus* tales, despite being recorded by a white journalist, are now generally held by African American scholars as good representations of the animal folktales told by enslaved Africans on Turnwold Plantation near Eatonton, Georgia. Since the slave culture was primarily one of oral tradition, Joel Chandler Harris' 19th century documentation of the folklore and stories may have, in fact, helped to preserve them. Although the *Uncle Remus* tales were collected on an inland plantation, they derive from the traditions of enslaved Africans of the Gullah/Geechee coast. Further impressing the tales of Br'er Rabbit on American popular culture was Walt Disney's *Song of the South*, a motion picture adaptation of the *Uncle Remus* stories. Although controversial for its benign view of slavery and portrayal of contented slaves, the Disney movie left a lasting mark on American culture (Brausch 2000; Flusche 1975).

The *Uncle Remus* stories were animal trickster tales in which animals took on human emotions and behaviors – a blend of ancestral African elements with American experience – clear examples of cultural exchange. While ethnologists may debate the specific African, European, or American Indian sources for these tales, they are a coherent body of oral literature, which is a distinctly Gullah/Geechee creation. The tales usually portrayed weak characters outwitting the strong and fostered the idea of freedom within the confines of slavery. Br'er Rabbit, a classic animal trickster, was likely called “Buh Rabbit” in the Low Country and Sea Islands. Gullah/Geechee children learned



Philip Simmons, born in 1912 on Daniel Island, has spent most of his life in Charleston, SC. He is known worldwide for his ironworking skills.



Ron Daise, of St. Helena Island, SC, historian, author, and performer.

many lessons from these stories, not the least of which were derived from allegories of the manipulation of power by the weak as well as the strong.

Perhaps more directly authentic to the study area but less well-known are the tales in the volume *Bo Rabbit Smart for True: Folktales from the Gullah* (Jaquith, *et. al.*, 1981). Jaquith adapted her stories from the 1949 recordings of Albert Stoddard, who was born on Daufuskie Island, SC, in 1872. When he returned to Daufuskie after completing college, Stoddard began the task of writing the stories in Gullah. When he was 77 years old, Stoddard recorded the stories – just as he had heard them in his youth – for the Archive of Folksong of the Library of Congress (Stoddard, 1949).

Today, many Gullah/Geechee performers, artists, and community activists are telling their own stories. Ron and Natalie Daise, who wrote and starred in the nationally televised children’s program *Gullah- Gullah Island*, are among the best known of these performers. Ron Daise, a native of St. Helena Island, has written several books and produced recordings on Gullah themes. Storytellers such as Carolyn “Jabulile” White, Minerva King, Alada “Muima” Shinault- Small, and others travel around the country recounting the animal stories of their island childhoods.

Artist John W. Jones of Columbia, South Carolina, bases his paintings on the vignettes or images of enslaved Africans that appeared on Confederate currency. Jones’ work was featured in “Confederate Currency: The Color of Money,” an exhibition at the Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston. In reviewing the exhibit, Steve Lopez of *Time* magazine said, “... John W. Jones took the romanticized slave- labor scenes from Confederate money and reproduced them in oil paintings paired with the bills themselves. The effect is to punctuate the exploitation of blacks for profit.”

Jonathan Green, a native of Gardens Corner in Beaufort County, South Carolina, is world- renowned for his painting. Green, who draws inspiration from his Gullah/Geechee heritage, the people of his



Artist Jonathan Green expresses his Gullah heritage through colorful paintings.



Inlet Bounty depicts the use of traditional handmade castnet and the spiritual connection of Gullah/ Geechee people to the water. – Image provided by Jonathan Green

experience, and the memories of his youth in South Carolina; proclaims his Gullah ancestry through his brightly colored paintings. Green's paintings, reflecting Gullah lifestyles through colorful dress, foods, and scenery, are in the permanent collections of several major galleries (Buckman 2003).

Casting in the creeks with handmade nets is not only a cultural tradition but also reflects the spiritual connection of Gullah and Geechee people to the water. Jonathan Green depicted this connection in his painting entitled *Inlet Bounty*.

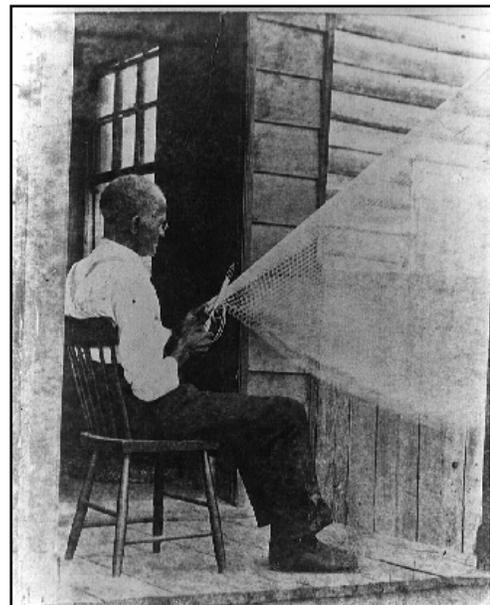
Crafts, Arts, and Foods

Gullah/Geechee arts and crafts – including traditional cuisine – show promise for becoming highly marketable and profitable commodities and important symbols of the continued viability of Gullah/Geechee culture. Traditional arts and crafts are second only to language as a rallying point for Gullah/Geechee cultural awareness and ethnic consolidation.

Practitioners of the traditional Gullah/Geechee art of making cast nets are becoming harder and harder to find. Charles C. Williams, better known as “Ce Ce” of McClellanville, South Carolina, is one of the few remaining net makers in the area. He learned the art from his father, and he is afraid that he will be the last net maker in his family. According to Williams, knitting handmade nets requires a great deal of time and patience – more time and patience than many of today's young people are willing to invest. Nylon nets are much cheaper, but says Williams, “This here cotton lasts forever, if you take care of it.” He is now making small nets for display purposes. Williams is adapting his art to the market. There are other net makers still working on sea islands such as Sapelo, Wadmalaw, St. Helena, and several other locations within the study area. Many of the current netmakers are, however, older men who fear that the net making tradition will die with them.



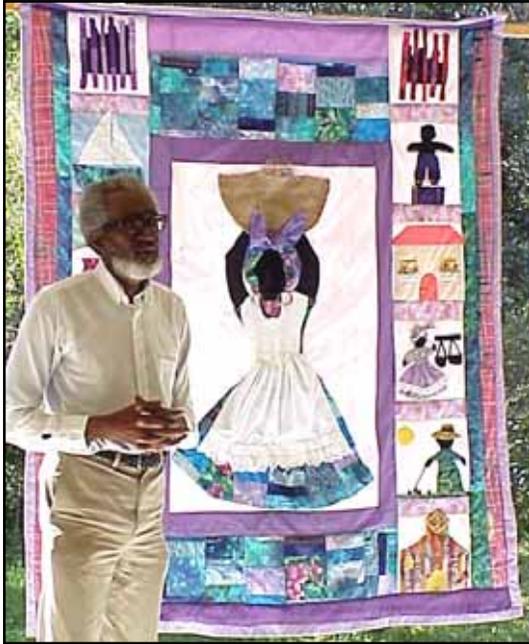
Ce Ce Williams of McClellanville, SC, demonstrates his net-making skills, Charles Pinckney NHS. Mt. Pleasant. SC.



Former slave from coastal Georgia knitting a net, early 20th century. *Georgia Historical Society*

Enslaved Africans, who were transported to the Low Country, brought with them a rich heritage of textile art, including a tradition of sewing strips of cloth into larger patterns (Twining and Baird 1991). Enslaved women were often called upon to assist European women with their quilt making and thus learned European styles and techniques. When quilting for their own families, however, enslaved women combined their African textile traditions with European quilting methods, thus creating a unique creolized art form. Many of their patterns, particularly the strip quilt, showed a clear continuity with West African textile tradition (David 1989; Joyner 1985).

Quilting began on the plantations to supplement the blankets that were distributed by masters about every three years. Slave women frequently gathered in the evenings, after completing their work in the fields, to make warm and colorful quilts. Thus, quilting was both a time of work and a time of social



Andrew Rodrigues tells the story of an enslaved African woman who was forcibly taken from her homeland to a new and different life in the Low Country. The “story quilt” was designed and constructed by his wife Vermelle “Bunny” Rodrigues, Pawley’s Island, SC.

have eaten the same vegetables, fruits, game, and seafood from the local area. Some items were imported from Europe and some, such as okra, rice, yams, peas, hot peppers, peanuts, sesame seeds (locally known as benne seeds), sorghum, and watermelon came from Africa via the slave trade – even though some of these domesticated plants may have originated in South America or Asia. American Indian foods such as corn, squash, tomatoes, and berries added to the blend.

Rice became the staple of choice for Europeans, who at first looked upon it as fodder for livestock, food for slaves, or a commodity for export. Geobotanists agree that coffee, America’s favorite non-alcoholic beverage, originated in Ethiopia, where the wild berries were generally mixed with fat and eaten. Kola nuts, which had been chewed as a stimulant in Africa for centuries, became the basic ingredient in “cola” drinks throughout the world (Boswell 1949; Fox 1964; Knox and Huffaker 1996).

Enslaved Africans mixed bacon, peas, seafood, vegetables, chicken, or ham with rice to make pilau (commonly called “perlow”), and many of these dishes are still served today in Low Country homes. Hoppin’ John, okra rice, and red rice are among the best known examples (Grime 1976; Hess 1992). Black cooks also created stew- like mixtures of seafood and/or meats with vegetables and served them over the ever-present rice. Okra soup is still a Low Country staple. At meal time in Low Country homes of both races, the rice is put on the stove first; then comes the decision of what to cook to go with it. Traditionally, the family rice pot, which must be a heavy pot with a tight- fitting lid and of appropriate size for the family, is used at every meal. The rice pot itself becomes so much a part of family tradition that it is actually handed down in the family as a treasured heirloom.

Gantt and Gerald (2003) cite the following slave recipe for cooking rice:

Fust t’ing yo’ roll up yo’ sleeves ‘es high as yo’ kin, en yo’ tak soap en yo’ wash yo’ hand clean. Den yo’ wash yo’ pot clean. Fill um wid col’ wata en put on de fia. Now w’ile you’ wata de bile, yo’ put yo’ rice een a piggin en yo’ wash um well. Den when yo’ dun put salt een yo’ pot, en bile high. Yo’ put yo’ rice een en le’um bile till ‘e swell, den yo’ pour off de

interaction. Quilts were usually made in the bright colors of African tradition rather than the softer colors preferred by Europeans.

The most common designs were patchwork, mosaic designs constructed from many types of cloth, although they also made pieced, strip, and appliquéd quilts. Enslaved women also made mattresses, which they stuffed with Spanish moss or stained cotton, and pillows stuffed with chicken or goose feathers (David 1989; Joyner 1985; Tournier 1984).

Today in the Low Country and Sea Islands, Gullah/Geechee women continue to follow the quilting traditions of their ancestors. Patchwork, strip, and appliquéd quilts are frequently seen in craft shops, festivals, and craft shows. “Story quilts,” such as the one pictured here, are popular collectors’ items and are also used in educational presentations. There are African American quilting groups in Georgetown, on Wadmalaw Island, and other locations throughout the region.

Beginning during slavery and continuing into the present, blacks and whites in the Low Country area



Smoked mullet is a crowd favorite on Cultural Day, Sapelo Island, Georgia. *Diedre Laird, SC Desk, Charlotte Observer*



Home cooked Low Country foods are favorites at the annual Cultural Day Festival on Sapelo Island, GA. One of many menus available at Sapelo Island's annual Cultural Day celebration. *Diedre Laird, SC Desk, Charlotte Observer*

wata en put yo' pot back o de stove, fo' steam. – Goliath, a former slave of F. W. Allston, Brookgreen Plantation, ca.1937

Average weekly food ration given in the 1800s, Brookgreen Plantation, Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 10 quarts rice or peas | 1 peck meal |
| 1 bushel sweet potatoes | 1 peck grits |
| 1 pint molasses | bacon and beef (summer) |
| 2 pounds pork | |

Enslaved African cooks had creative genius when it came to making “sumpin” from “nuttin” in their own kitchens – they were experts at stretching their rations, adding fish and game to the mix, or making communal stews shared with neighbors in the tradition of their African ancestors. They also added vegetables grown in their own gardens and leftovers from their masters’ hog killings. Many of these “variety meats” such as pigs’ feet, ears, jowls, heads, and entrails are still favored treats in many Gullah/Geechee households today.

As described above, enslaved cooks applied African cooking methods and seasoning to the ingredients available to them in plantation kitchens and their own homes. English, French, and Spanish traditions common to the area also contributed to the mix. Grits, corn bread, butter beans, chili peppers, file, squash, and other items came from American Indians in the region. In the process of cooking with the great variety of foods available in their environment, creative black women unintentionally invented what is now known as southern cooking, although credit for this accomplishment is rarely if ever given. According to Joyner (1999), “The combination created a distinctive southern cuisine, originated and perfected by black cooks in white kitchens, as well as in their own homes.”

Food has always played a very important role in the social traditions of all southerners. Family gatherings, funerals, religious occasions, celebrations, and Sunday dinners are often accompanied by tables heavy-laden with a great variety of meats, seafood, vegetables, rice dishes, and desserts.



Elijah Ford is one of several retired men in the Phillips Community who sew sweetgrass baskets.

Frequently, certain family members are given the honor of preparing specific dishes for such family meals and do so until they die or are no longer able to cook.

Food is also a key component of celebrations and festivals. Penn Center's Heritage Days, Sapelo Island's Cultural Day, St. Simons Island's Georgia Sea Island Festival, the Beaufort Gullah Festival, and many other festivals, both large and small, are known for fine foods prepared in traditional ways by local residents. Gullah/Geechee cooking – southern cooking – is definitely in the mainstream and is no longer confined to Gullah/Geechee communities.

Two of the most important outward signs of Gullah/Geechee ethnicity – coiled basketry and musical shouts – have lately achieved great prominence. Both the design and construction techniques relating to the art of coiled basketry have clear roots in African culture. Early baskets were made for various practical agricultural and domestic uses in the plantation economy and were generally made by men or elders who were unable to work in the fields. Basketry and other crafts became part of the bartering system and became another source of income for enslaved Gullah/Geechee people. Such artisan skills became even more important for economic survival in the lean years immediately following the Civil War (Derby 1989).

Dale Rosengarten (1986) tells the story of Gullah/Geechee basketry from its African roots to its earliest beginnings in late 17th - century Carolina.

Among the most readily identifiable products of this cultural tenacity are coiled sea grass baskets produced along the Southeastern coast. They belong to a basket sewing tradition – centered today in the small community of Mt. Pleasant just north of Charleston – that has survived in America for over 300 years.

Rosengarten describes the evolution of this African craft from agricultural necessity to art form. Although her work is generally highly regarded, a few modern basket makers take exception to Rosengarten's use of the term "sea grass" to describe what they call "sweetgrass baskets." To such comments, Rosengarten offers this explanation:

I'd like to clarify why McKissick Museum used the term "sea grass" in the subtitle of the exhibition and catalogue called *Row upon Row*. We wanted a term that would refer to both bulrush [*scirpus robustus*] "work" baskets, common during the era of rice plantations, and sweetgrass [*muhlenbergia filipes*] "show" baskets, a Mt. Pleasant specialty since the early 20th century. Bulrush has again come back into wide use by the basket makers, so we felt calling the tradition "sweetgrass" was not inclusive enough. We decided on "seagrass" because it was used historically and doesn't refer to any particular plant (Rosengarten, email communication, 2003).

This seemingly minor difference in vocabulary is a good example of how local perceptions of Gullah/Geechee practices can be at odds with scholarly descriptions using the more general and abstract terminology characteristic of academic discourse.

Although basketmaking was common on many of the Sea Islands, the art form has persisted and proliferated around Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, due to market demand and the creativity and innovation of local artisans. Early in the 20th century, basket makers around Mt. Pleasant began



Sweetgrass basket marker stands at the intersection of Hamlin Road and US Highway 17, Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina.



Cecelia Anderson of Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, is shown sewing a sweetgrass basket, ca. 1930. Charleston Museum

making “show baskets” to sell to tourists and local retailers. These baskets differed from the traditional “work baskets” in style, artistic design, and use of palm [*sabal palmetto*] leaf rather than palm butt for sewing the rows together. Basket makers were quick to adapt their styles to the market and constantly invented new styles and shapes (Hofbauer 1997a).

Around 1916, Clarence Legerton, a white entrepreneur from Charleston, recognized the artistic and commercial value of sweetgrass “show” baskets and formed the Sea Grass Basket Company at 263 King Street, as a mail order source. Legerton, who later changed the name of his business to Seagrassco, purchased thousands of dollars worth of baskets for about 50 cents apiece from Mt. Pleasant area women. Sam Coakley, a Mt. Pleasant area resident, served as liaison between Legerton and the basketmakers.

In 1930, a few months after the Grace Memorial Bridge, which crosses the Cooper River between Charleston and Mt. Pleasant, was opened to traffic, Lottie Swinton placed a chair along Highway 17 and began to sell baskets to tourists. Other basket makers soon followed suit and began displaying their wares in simple stands along the road (Derby 1980).

Mrs. Betsy Johnson had a sweet shop on the highway, where she sold cakes, sodas, candy, and sandwiches. Her husband Eddie Johnson hammered nails into the outside wall of the store to display baskets for sale. Johnson soon purchased baskets from others in the community to increase the inventory.

The practice continues today, and as a result, the section of US Highway 17 that stretches between Mt. Pleasant and McClellanville, South Carolina, has come to be known as the “Gullah Highway” (Rosengarten 1986). The road is also referred to by some local basket makers as AME Highway after Goodwill African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church which is located on the same stretch of road. A historical marker commemorating the long Gullah tradition of sewing sweetgrass baskets was erected in 1972 by the Christ Church Parish Historical Society and the Original Sweetgrass Marketplace Coalition. The marker is located at the site of the first roadside basket stand at the intersection of Highway 17N and Hamlin Road (Hofbauer 1997b; Quick 1997).

Following the success of roadside sales, basket makers soon began to display and sell their wares in downtown Charleston at the City Market. In the mid 1970s, around the time of the United States

Bicentennial, sweetgrass baskets and their makers became recognized both nationally and internationally as Gullah/Geechee cultural icons.

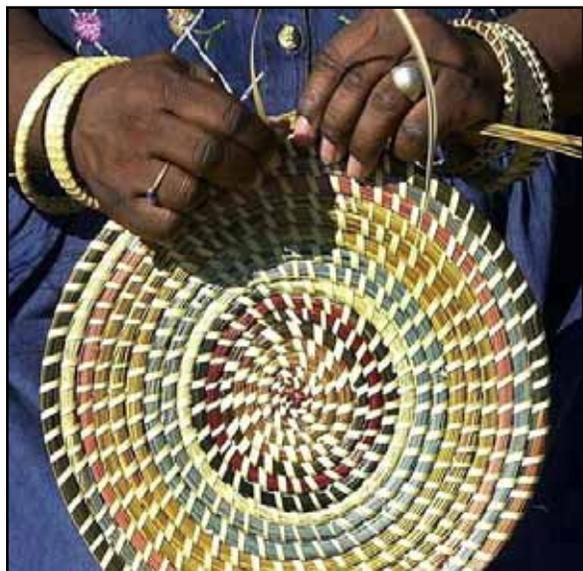
The Smithsonian Institution was crucial in this recognition of the artistic and intrinsic value of the baskets, and within a few years, sweetgrass baskets were featured in museums and galleries around the world. (Gullah baskets, probably collected by northern tourists before the 1940s, show up in such distant and out-of-the-way places as the Booth Memorial Park Museum in Stratford, Connecticut.)

During the late 20th century and continuing into the present, basketmaking became a focal point for dynamic change and evolution in Gullah/Geechee culture, as basket makers continue to develop new styles and forms to meet a growing demand for their work. Vera Manigault of Mt. Pleasant is now sewing “colorful baskets,” which feature natural dyes of several colors.

According to Manigault, she received the idea and the process in a vision and has since obtained a trademark on the name and the technique (Manigault, personal communication 2000). Manigault has traveled throughout the United States to tell about the rich history of sweetgrass basketry and to demonstrate her craft.

Like most basket makers in the area, Manigault continues to develop her artistic talents in new and different basket forms and styles. Today’s basketry often bears little resemblance to the utilitarian baskets once used for agricultural purposes. Napkin rings, earrings, hair ornaments, and even electric lamps are frequently available at roadside stands. These items are in themselves testament to the ever-changing dynamic nature of Gullah/Geechee culture, while remaining connected to the past. In addition to traditional roadside stands, sweetgrass baskets are now available for sale at craft fairs, in gift shops, and on the Internet.

Basketry also serves as a symbolic flash point for conflicts with economic developers over such issues as access to raw materials and commodification of the baskets and their makers. Sweetgrass once grew like a weed on barrier islands, in roadside ditches, and along the edges of farmer’s fields. However, as rural areas are developed, collecting longleaf pine [*pinus palustris*] needles, sweetgrass, and palm has become more and more difficult and may soon put this cottage industry at risk (Hicks 2004; Hitchcock 1995). Frequently, South Carolina basket makers are forced to purchase their raw materials from sources in Florida; some are returning to the use of bulrush to replace all or part of the sweetgrass (Wexler 1993). The principal researcher in this study learned firsthand that collecting basket materials frequently involves snakes, bees, chiggers, mosquitoes, and other hazards including occasional trespassing.



Vera Manigault, a Mt. Pleasant area basketmaker, demonstrates the art of sewing sweetgrass baskets. *Diedre Laird, SC Desk, Charlotte Observer*

As a result of the decline in local sweetgrass availability, a few publicly minded businesses and communities are planting sweetgrass as an ornamental plant so that basketmakers will continue to have access to the materials of their craft. Some private developments now open their gates for sweetgrass collection, and some even encourage it. Land manager Karl Ohlandt of Dewees Island has been replenishing sweetgrass behind the dunes. Each year Ohlandt invites basket makers to take the ferry to Dewees to harvest the grass (Hicks 2004). In addition, the United States Forest Service has

recently published a report, which states that the local supply of sweetgrass is rapidly dwindling due to the building boom in the Charleston area. The Forest Service is doing its part to keep sweetgrass alive by growing test plots in the Francis Marion National Forest (Hart, Halfacre, and Burke 2004).

Both sweetgrass baskets and their makers are now recognized as major tourist attractions, and baskets have become high- end collectibles. In popular representations of the South Carolina Low Country, coiled sweetgrass baskets have become almost synonymous with Gullah/Geechee culture.

In 1988, Dale Rosengarten, then affiliated with the McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina, and Henrietta Snipes, a Mt. Pleasant basketmaker, founded the Sweetgrass Cultural Preservation Society in order to “help our young people to develop their skills and to preserve our heritage in the art of basket making.” Now a non- profit corporation, the group has changed its name to the Original Sweetgrass Marketplace Coalition, but continues with the same mission. M. Jeannette Lee, a Mt. Pleasant basket maker who now serves as coordinator of the group, says members make presentations, educate tourists about baskets and their history, and teach sweetgrass basketmaking in the schools. Lee received the Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award in 2000 in recognition of her continuation of traditional arts that have been passed down through generations of South Carolinians. Martha Gaillard, Lee’s mother, was born to sharecropper parents in a slave cabin on Boone Hall plantation. Jeannette Lee wrote the following brief history of the basketmaking tradition.

Sweetgrass Baskets: A Blessing from God A Proud Tradition and a Valuable Investment

Because of their ancestors’ ability to cultivate rice, Africans from the Windward or Rice Coast of West Africa were particularly sought after to become enslaved persons in the...Atlantic Slave Trade. These enslaved persons felt that they would never get to return to their homeland, so they tried to bring any scrap of material that would remind them of home. So they brought pieces of their culture with them in their heads or secreted away on their bodies.

The sweetgrass basket is an example of a significant retention of the African heritage transported across the Atlantic. The sweetgrass basket, originally designed as a tool of rice production and processing, had a very real and significant religious connection for the displaced Africans.

From the Bible, we find the words bulrush and palm. These items, prevalent in Africa, proved to be a very welcome connection to the homeland. Incorporating these two ingredients in their handicraft kept the Africans close to their beloved homeland and continually reinforced their relations with their faith in the God of their salvation.

The sweetgrass basket can be traced to ancient handicraft. It is one of the oldest African crafts in America. It made its appearance in South Carolina during the 17th century. The first known sweetgrass basket in South Carolina is the fanner used for rice winnowing.

The early sweetgrass baskets were strictly for agricultural purposes. They were used in the planting and harvesting of the coastal money crops – rice, cotton, and others. The agricultural baskets were made of bulrush, sweetgrass, and split oak. Later, longleaf pine needles were introduced to the mix.

On many plantations, particularly Boone Hall, even after slavery, basket making continued. There were buyers who came in, while some ladies sold their baskets in the city market. Buyers and sellers rode the ferry to and from Charleston for the basket trade.

After the 1890s, sweetgrass baskets evolved from their agricultural purpose to other everyday uses. These baskets were no longer made from bulrush. The baskets were made from sweetgrass, pine needles, and palmetto, as they are today. These materials were found to enhance the appearance of the baskets.

Around 1948, plastics of various colors were introduced to replace the palmetto strips. Its use did not last long because there was only one supplier of the plastics. Most basket sewers reverted to palmetto strips.

The monetary value of sweetgrass baskets surged with the opening of the Grace Memorial Bridge in 1929 and the paving of Highway 17 in 1931. One lady of vision, Lottie “Winee” Moultrie Swinton, began a long-standing tradition by placing a chair along the highway to display baskets for sale. Lydia Spann Graddick [Jeanette Lee’s grandmother] quickly followed. Soon others joined in, and roadside basket stands were born.

The art and craft of basket making is handed down from generation to generation. It requires a lot of patience, as well as creativity. Each piece is unique in that there are no set patterns; each artist develops his/her own style.

Sweetgrass baskets are very durable. Their uses range from practical daily use to show pieces. They are a large part of the Charleston area’s attraction to tourists. Each year gathering materials for use in the baskets becomes more difficult as the Lowcountry’s marshes are lost to developers.

Sweetgrass basket sewing is viewed as a gift from God. The basketmakers profess to continue their craft as long as there is material available. The art form is continuing to be passed down to new generations.

Today, sweetgrass baskets are displayed on roadside stands along Highway 17 just north of Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, and in the Charleston City Market. Sewers also display their wares at the “Four Corners of Law” at Broad and Meeting Streets in Charleston. Show pieces are found in the Charleston Visitors Center, Charleston International Airport, Gibbes Art Gallery, the Smithsonian Museum, and other centers.

On November 22, 1997, a historical Sweetgrass Basket Makers’ Marker was erected to commemorate the legacy and history of sweetgrass baskets. The marker was placed at the intersection of Hamlin Road and Highway 17 where the first basket stand was located. The historical marker was erected by the Original Sweetgrass Basket Makers Coalition and the Christ Church Parish Historical Preservation Society, Inc.

- M. Jeanette Lee, Coordinator, Original Sweetgrass Basket Makers Coalition



Jeanette Lee’s baskets at Penn Center Culture Day.

Performing Arts

Less tangible than baskets, cast nets, quilts, and food is the growing success and popularity currently experienced by the growing number of performers of traditional Gullah/Geechee music. Many of these groups reach out to their audience and create an interactive performance that enables those in attendance to share in the singing, clapping, and rhythms of the music. Among the most notable of these are the McIntosh County Shouters, the Georgia Sea Island Singers; the Moving Star Hall Singers of Johns Island, South Carolina; the Brotherhood Gospel Singers of Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina; and the Plantation Singers of Charleston, South Carolina. Appreciation of traditional Gullah/Geechee music has increased to the point that some groups, such as the Hallelujah Singers, who are not native Gullah/Geechee people, are now performing the music.

Frankie Quimby, leader of the Georgia Sea Island Singers says, “I’m a firm believer that you can’t know where you’re going until you realize where you’ve come from. We have dedicated our lives to trying to preserve that rich heritage and culture that our ancestors handed down to us” (Quimby, personal communication 2000). The Georgia Sea Island Singers have performed both at the Smithsonian and the White House. They performed at the 2004 G8 Conference at Sea Island, Georgia, and have plans for another White House visit.

The McIntosh County Shouters of Bolden, Georgia, are among the last active practitioners of one of the most venerable of African American song, rhythm, and movement traditions, the shout, also known as the ring shout. The tradition of the shout itself is actually in the fervor of the hand clapping and audible foot work, rather than in the song.

First described by outsiders in 1845, the stylistic antecedents of the ring shout are indisputably African in origin and proliferated in the Gullah/Geechee religious institution of the praise house. Only members of the praise house could watch or participate in the shout. New members were frequently asked to lead the shout to demonstrate their skills (Simpson 1985) and as a rite of welcoming and initiating them to the local “praise house” congregation (Washington 1994). The shout grew in popularity in the study area when slave owners outlawed the use of drums for fear that slaves would use them to communicate between plantations. Washington describes the shout as “affirming the longevity of shared African memories, nestled within accepted aspects of American religious culture” (Washington 1994:71).

The shout consists of call-and-response singing and rhythmic dance movements in a counterclockwise circle. Shouters progress around the circle with a shuffling movement wherein feet are never crossed and never leave the ground. There are interlocking, percussive body rhythms and a type of group devotion embedded in the shout that has made it a lifeline to the West African cultural



Georgia Sea Island Singers perform at Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, Mt. Pleasant, SC.



McIntosh County Shouters. *McIntosh County Shouters*



Prayer Meeting on a Georgia Plantation: "Religious dancing of the Blacks, termed 'Shouting'. Although dating from the post-emancipation period, this scene is evocative of the late slave period. Only a portion of the author's detailed description is given here: "Just before they break up, when the 'spirit is upon them' ... they engage in a kind of shaker dance, which they term singularly enough, shouting ... A ring of singers is formed in an open space in the room, and they, without holding on to each other's hands, walk slowly around and around in a circle ... They then utter a kind of melodious chant, which gradually increases in strength, and in noise, until it fairly shakes the house, and it can be heard for a long distance ... I know of nothing similar to this dancing or shouting, in the religious exercises of any other class of people. It is entirely unknown among the white Christians here" (Stearns 1872:371-2). *University of Virginia Library online digital images* (<http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/slavery>)

legacy through times of slavery and into the 21st century. Shouters of today move in a counter clockwise circle, pounding canes on the wooden floor or a sheet of plywood in a manner not unlike early foot drums. This rhythmic movement has been described as "playing the body parts with percussive strength" or "interpretation of the parts of the body as independent instruments of percussive force" (Thompson 1981).

Art Rosenbaum of the University of Georgia, who has been crucial in documenting the ring-shouting tradition, describes it as "an impressive fusion of call- and- response singing, polyrhythmic percussion and formalized, dance- like movements" [that has] "had a profound influence on African American music and religious practice." The shout tradition has been maintained, both by isolation and by "community cohesiveness and sufficient economic support for survival" (Rosenbaum 1998). Perhaps the latest incarnation of simple percussive rhythms is demonstrated in the recent *Stomp* phenomenon on Broadway and among African American college students (Fine, 2003; Rath 2000).

Gullah/Geechee entrepreneurs have formed tour businesses in Charleston, Savannah, St. Helena Island, Hilton Head Island, and many other places. Alphonso Brown, musician, choir director, and story teller, now runs Gullah Tours in Charleston. One of the highlights of his tours is a visit with famed Charleston blacksmith and gate maker, Philip Simmons.

Today, all over the Low Country, Gullah/Geechee performers, artists, and community activists are telling their own stories. Nearly every community has story tellers, crafts people, artists and/or

performers who are keeping alive the story of the Gullah/Geechee people and their African connections. Some have written books and/or produced plays. Festivals are held up and down the coastline to celebrate Gullah/Geechee culture, traditions, and foods. While these festivals provide a day or two of entertainment and extraordinary foods, they also serve as an educational resource for those from within Gullah/Geechee communities as well as outsiders.

These performers and countless others have elevated Gullah/Geechee music to a level of worldwide recognition and appreciation. Gullah/Geechee musicians have performed nationally and internationally in such places as the White House, the Olympic Games, Moja Arts Festival, Newport Festival, Piccolo Spoleto Festival, Carnegie Hall, in governor's mansions, on national television, and in several PBS documentaries, including the recent *This Far by Faith: African American Spiritual Journey* (2003).

Musical traditions of the Gullah/Geechee people have also heavily influenced both the music of the Low Country and the music of the entire nation. According to Joyner (1999):

... Most white southerners grew up with the songs of black southerners falling upon their ears ... Most southern whites understood that the songs of black southerners somehow captured the essence of the southern irony, of the southern tragedy, and of the southern hope ... They were profoundly influenced by the songs of their black neighbors ... In the convergence of various African cultures and European cultures in the American South, white southerners had their old cultures Africanized by their black neighbors and black southerners had their old cultures Europeanized by their white neighbors.

Some of this musical syncretism, *i.e.*, the blending of elements of two or more cultures into a distinct new cultural form, is well-known today as jazz, blues, and gospel.

The ethnological sleuthing of scholars such as Mary Twining and Dale Rosengarten has produced some very dramatic evidence for direct, specific African origins of Gullah quilting patterns, basketry, and music. The musical connection is well-illustrated by the poignant story portrayed in the documentary, *The Language You Cry In* (1998), and merits further discussion here.



Anita Singleton-Prather, Gullah storyteller from St. Helena Island, SC, performs as "Aunt Pearlie Sue," Charles Pinckney NHS. C. Timmons, NPS



This 1930s photograph shows oyster boats at the docks on Lady's Island, Beaufort Co., SC, waiting for the next run to the oyster banks. Today all of the oyster and crab factories in the area have been closed. WPA



Charleston's famous mosquito fleet, described in DuBose Heyward's *Porgy and Bess*, was challenged by larger motorized vessels and was finally destroyed in a 1940 hurricane. *Charleston Museum*



Charles "CeCe" Williams of McClellanville, SC, demonstrates the traditional practice of net casting with one of his hand made nets. Residential development has made water access much more difficult. - Diedre Laird. SC Desk, Charlotte Observer

African Cultural Survival in Gullah/Geechee Culture: A Dramatic Case Study

During the early 1930s, Lorenzo Dow Turner, an African American linguist, catalogued over 3,000 names and words of African origin along the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia. When he visited the small fishing village of Harris Neck in McIntosh County, Georgia, he met Amelia Dawley, who could sing a five line song in an African language. Amelia did not know the meaning of the song, but she knew that she had learned it from her grandmother who told her never to forget the song because it was her connection to the ancestors. Turner did not recognize the language, but it was later identified by Solomon Caulker, a graduate student from Sierra Leone as Mende, his native tongue. Although Caulker had never heard that specific song, he recognized its type as an old hymn, a women's song once used to call villagers together for a funeral.

In the 1980s, forty years after Turner's visit to the Georgia coast, Joseph A. Opala, an American working at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, was studying the Bunce Island slave trade. Many enslaved people had been sent from Bunce Island to rice plantations in Georgia and South Carolina. Opala joined forces with Sierra Leonean linguist Tazieff Koroma and ethnomusicologist Cynthia Schmidt to find the roots of Amelia Dawley's song. Remarkably, they found an old woman named Baidu Jabati in the remote village of Senehun Ngoal who had preserved a strikingly similar song. The song was a funeral dirge no longer used in the village. Baidu's grandmother had taught her the song and told her that someday a lost kinsman would return who would be recognized by this song.

Opala and his team traveled to Georgia where they located Mary Moran, daughter of Amelia Dawley. Mary remembered hearing her mother sing the song and was able to sing it herself for the researchers. A reunion trip to Africa was immediately planned but was later postponed due to wars in the region. In 1997, Mary and 14 members of her family traveled to the African village of Senehun Ngola, where they were greeted with warmth and jubilation. Opala asked Nabi Jah, 90- year- old chief of the village why a Mende woman exiled two hundred years ago would have preserved this particular song. Nabi Jah replied that to him the answer was obvious. "That song would be the most valuable thing she could take. It could connect her to all her ancestors and to their continued blessings." Then he quoted a Mende proverb, "You know who a person really is by the language they cry in."

Perhaps an unknown Mende woman, kidnapped and taken thousands of miles from her home, believed that her village funeral song would connect her and her descendants forever with their lost family in Africa. Her descendants today, in both Africa and America, can indeed use her song to trace their connections to one another after more than two centuries.

A documentary film, appropriately entitled *The Language You Cry In* (1998), was produced to commemorate the story of Amelia's song and the reunion trip to Africa. In his review of the film, Philip D. Morgan, commented:

That a Mende burial song has survived among the Gullah people and can be traced to a particular location in Sierra Leone is a testament to the remarkable tenacity and spirit of an enslaved people. It also took impressive scholarly sleuthing to recover the precise links between an African village and a diaspora population in Lowcountry South Carolina and Georgia ... (1998).

The government of Sierra Leone has issued repeated invitations for Mary Moran and her family to make a return visit to their home in Africa. "We regard you," one official letter from the Sierra Leone Government said, "as the descendants of Mende people taken forcibly from our shores more than two hundred years ago."

Amelia Dawley's Song

Ah wakuw muh monuh kambay yah lee luh lay tambay

Ah wakuw muh monuh kambay yah lee luh lay kah.

Ha suh wileego seehai yuh gbangah lilly

Ha suh wileego dwelin duh kwen

Ha suh wileego seehi uh kwendaiyah.

Everyone come together, let us work hard;
the grave is not yet finished; let his heart be perfectly at peace.

Everyone come together, let us work hard:
the grave is not yet finished; let his heart be at peace at once.

Sudden death commands everyone's attention, like a firing gun.

Sudden death commands everyone's attention, oh elders, oh heads of family

Sudden death commands everyone's attention, like a distant drum beat.

– (translated by Tazieff Koroma, Edward Benya, and Joseph Opala)



Wilson Moran wears African clothing he brought back from the reunion trip to Africa.

Mary Moran's son Wilson has been involved in this special resource study from the beginning and has added valuable insights and comments to the process. Moran took the field research team on a tour of the area around Harris Neck in McIntosh County, Georgia, and shared the story of the Geechee community once located there. According to Moran, Harris Neck was once a thriving community with a church, a cemetery, a school, and a post office. Residents were not dependent on cotton culture or sharecropping. Moran recalled his grandfather's self-sufficiency on the 111 acres of land he once owned. The family grew table crops, raised animals, fished, and trapped mink and other animals for meat and skins. Moran remembers traveling up and down the coast to barter for whatever else they needed.

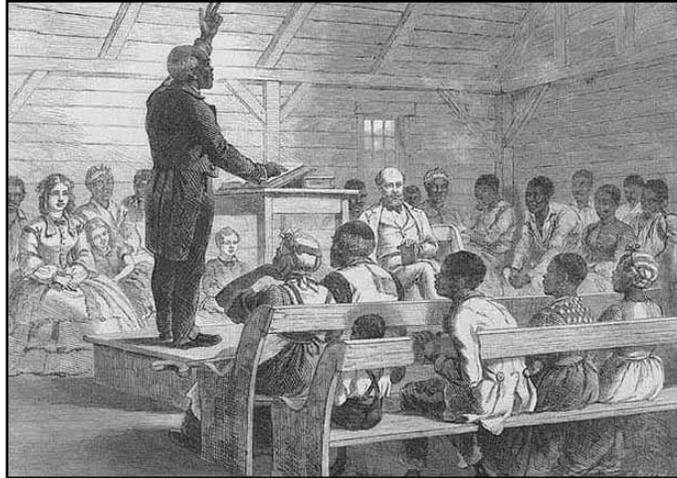
After the tour, Moran invited the field research team to share a meal in his home and introduced them to his wife Ernestine and to his parents. Members of the field research team chatted with her as she fried fish for supper. As of this writing (Fall 2004), Mary Moran is alive and in good health.

During the 1940s, the Harris Neck lands were condemned for strategic military defense purposes, and the 75 families living on the property were relocated. Thus, the Harris Neck Community ceased to exist in 1942. The property is now included in the Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Amelia Dawley is buried in a small community cemetery inside the refuge. Today the Moran family still raises some table crops, and Wilson is "in the creek" (fishing, shrimping, or gathering shellfish) as often as possible. He takes pride in teaching his grandson the traditional skills and stories he once learned from his own grandfather.

Gullah/Geechee Institutions

Even before Emancipation, a distinct body of social institutions and cultural traditions evolved to sustain and order Gullah/Geechee community life. Relative isolation and autonomy from a minority white population in the Low Country and Sea Islands helped to sustain the traditions of Gullah/Geechee populations. While sharing general characteristics with similar communities worldwide, *e.g.*, importance of wider kinship connections, these institutions and traditions support the persistence of unique Gullah/Geechee communities.

In these institutions and traditions, Gullah/Geechee communities sometimes show close similarities to other Afro- American creole cultures of the Western Hemisphere, as well as direct parallels to specific African analogs. Sometimes, the similarities can be striking, as in the funerary custom found in both South Carolina and the Virgin Islands. For example, both on St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands, and in at least some Gullah/Geechee communities, there is a death rite of passing an infant or young child across the body of a deceased relative to ensure the spiritual well-being of the child (Creel 1988; Hjerpe 2000:18; Nichols 1989).



Slaves and the master's family worship together on a South Carolina plantation. (Reproduction of a drawing from the Illustrated London News, December 5, 1863.) US Gov't Publications

Despite the absence of official political institutions in most Gullah/Geechee communities, leadership and social control have been effectively maintained by kinship and religion. Through multi-family residential compounds, extended kinship ties, and respect for elders, Gullah/Geechee people historically maintained a high degree of social solidarity and insularity from outsiders. Women served as leaders in some areas of religious life and frequently played a central role in perpetuating the distinctive Gullah/Geechee traditions.



Slave funeral in the woods of a coastal rice plantation. Woodcut, 1859. - Granger Collection, New York

Religion and spirituality have always played a major role in Gullah/Geechee family and community life. During slavery times, slaves worshipped with great enthusiasm, since religion offered a refuge from their many miseries and offered hope for the future. Some masters required slaves to attend church with their families. In such cases, slaves generally sat in a gallery that was designated for their use. Other plantation owners hired preachers, some of whom were white, to lead the slaves in Sunday worship services. Some masters and their families attended religious services on the plantation together with the slaves and with a black preacher in the pulpit. Slaves often turned scriptures to their own purposes. Thus, Moses became a model for their own dreams of freedom, and African traditions were woven into the Euro- Christianity they practiced.

Almost every plantation had a praise house, a small shack where the Negroes met nightly for religious services (Crum 1969). Religious and community life was centered around these praise houses, as the buildings used for both spiritual and civic activities. Even in slavery days, Gullah/Geechee people had their own internal community standards of conduct and those who did not follow the community

rules were punished. The elders managed these grassroots courts, and generally were able to keep strict order in the community. Many of these praise houses are still standing and some remain a vital part of Gullah/Geechee spiritual life.

Funerals were frequent events for enslaved Africans, since deaths occurred by the thousands, particularly among children. In the coastal region, historians estimate that nearly 90% of enslaved African children died before they reached the age of 16. Funerals were generally held outside and at night, possibly so that people from other plantations might attend, but more likely because that was the only time that people were not working. Creel cites the story of a 19th- century slave funeral as related by a former South Carolina bondsman. The funeral was for Mary, a very pretty and popular young woman who died after a lingering illness (1988:314- 15).

The coffin, a rough home- made affair, was placed upon a cart, which was drawn by an old Gray, and the multitudes formed in a line in the rear, marching two deep. The procession was something like a quarter of a mile long. Perhaps every fifteenth person down the line carried an uplifted torch. As the procession moved slowly toward “the lonesome graveyard” down by the side of the swamp, they sung the well-known hymn of Dr. Isaac Watts:

When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear
And wipe my weeping eyes.

Mary’s baby was taken to the graveyard by its grandmother, and before the corpse was deposited in the earth, the baby was passed from one person to another across the coffin. The slaves believed that if this was not done it would be impossible to raise the infant. The mother’s spirit would come back for her baby and take it to herself.

... the corpse was lowered into the grave and covered, each person throwing a handful of dirt into the grave as a last farewell act of kindness to the dead ... A prayer was offered ... This concluded the services at the grave.

Graves were traditionally marked in a number of ways from sticks to stone slabs to a unique style of carved wooden grave markers. Some graves were marked using plants, such as cedars or yuccas. Frequently, glass, china, or objects belonging to the deceased were used to decorate the grave. At times, conchs and other shells of various kinds have been used to mark or even outline gravesites, and this practice has continued into the 21st century. The use of seashells to mark graves, while not unique to Gullah/Geechee people, has been described by people in the study area as a connection to the water that brought them and would hopefully take them back to Africa after death. Although generations of the same family might be interred within a cemetery, they were not necessarily buried in adjoining plots (Creel 1988; Vlach 1977).

Slave cemeteries were generally located on marginal property, frequently thickly covered in trees and vines, which was not likely to be used by the planter for any other purpose. Local people often say that their enslaved African ancestors preferred sites that were beside water so that their souls might easily return to Africa. Many of these cemeteries continued to be used after the Civil War and are now being lost to development.

Parsons (1923) observed that the most African American burial grounds were:

... hidden away in remote spots among trees and underbrush. In the middle of some fields are islands of large trees the owners preferred not to make arable, because of the exhaustive work of clearing it. Old graves are now in among these trees and

surrounding underbrush ... [Burial spots were] ragged patches of live-oak and palmetto and brier tangle which throughout the Islands are a sign of graves within, – graves scattered without symmetry, and often without headstones or head-boards, or sticks ...

Located near the slave quarters of Thomas Spalding’s plantation and sugar mill complex, Behavior Cemetery on Sapelo Island, Georgia, is the only remaining African American burial ground on the island. At one time there was a black settlement called “Behavior” on the southern end of the island near the cemetery site, but now the only surviving black settlement on the island is Hog Hammock, located about a mile from the cemetery. Early grave markers include short posts at either end of the graves and epitaphs on wooden boards nailed to adjoining trees. Personal belongings of the deceased were often placed on the graves, including cups, dishes, oil lamps (to light the journey home), and alarm clocks (to sound on Judgment Day). Most recent markers are made of local cement but there are a few granite grave stones and metal funeral-home markers. Although oral tradition holds that burials have taken place at this site since slavery times, the death date on the oldest extant marker is 1890. Earlier markers may have been destroyed during the Civil War. Burials continue today at Behavior Cemetery, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 (National Register Information System, GA).



Jonna Hausser Weaver, NPS Intern



Mary Jenkins Praise House, one of several remaining praise houses on St. Helena Island.

Development along the coastline has exposed many of these formerly hidden cemetery sites and other sacred places to public view and has made them subject to theft, vandalism, and destruction, which have taken a heavy toll on these sacred places. The cemetery at Sunbury, Georgia, which contained wooden grave markers of a style that could be connected to African tradition, was recorded and photographed by scholars before the markers were stolen or destroyed (WPA1986).

Historical evidence affirms that Christian religious instruction was employed to control slave life and ease the task of plantation management. Ironically, this religious control planted a seed of Gullah/Geechee self-perception as a distinct ethnic group. Or, as Margaret Washington (1994) observed, “The Gullah called themselves ‘a peculiar people,’” a phrase taken directly from the New Testament:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should shew forth the praise of him who had called you out of darkness into his marvelous light [1 Peter 2:9].

Such sentiments as these provide a powerful force for the fruition of the strongest expressions of Gullah/Geechee ethnicity at the turn of the 21st century.

Although many Gullah/Geechee people subscribe to the basic tenets of European Christianity, African-derived practices and customs appear as a fundamental part of Gullah/Geechee expression



Retreat Plantation is now a gated club. Retreat Burying Ground, in use since 1800, is currently surrounded by a golf course. Although the cemetery is on private property, families of those buried in the cemetery are allowed to visit grave sites. Burials still take place in the cemetery. Many private owners of traditional Gullah/Geechee cemeteries are not as cooperative with relatives of those buried at the sites. *Jonna Hausser Weaver, NPS Intern (2002)*

of Christian worship. According to Joyner (1994), the Christian concept of afterlife was juxtaposed to the concepts of many African religions. Under those belief systems, the afterlife was to be very much as life had been on earth. Thus, for Africans of those religious beliefs who had come to America, afterlife would be a continuation of enslavement. Therefore, acceptance of the Christian idea of afterlife became an integral component of Gullah/Geechee Christianity.

After the close of the Civil War, local Gullah/Geechee settlements began to establish their own congregations and erect church buildings. Some of those early churches, such as First African Baptist Church on Daufuskie Island, have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Churches of various denominations are located all over the countryside in the study area such that even very small communities may have more than one church. Small cemeteries frequently adjoin church buildings.

On Johns Island, South Carolina, enslaved Africans first held religious meetings near Gregg Plantation. The services were held outdoors as bush arbor camp meetings within a simple structure consisting of a roof supported by uprights [bush arbor]. Hebron Presbyterian Church later became the first building to house the congregation. The church, which still stands on Bohicket Road, was built by John Chisolm and Jackson McGill, two black craftsmen. Newly freed slaves salvaged wood from Kiawah Island, more than a mile, where a ship carrying a cargo of timbers had wrecked. The organizing pastor was Reverend Ishmael Moultrie, a freedman from St. Helena Island who had been trained at the Penn School. Hebron Church was home to the first African Americans to be trained as missionaries in the Presbyterian Church (Behre 2004).



Hebron Presbyterian Church, Johns Island, SC, was built with salvaged wood from a shipwreck that washed ashore on nearby Kiawah Island. Plans are underway to remodel the building as a senior citizens' center.

In addition to formal worship services in churches, Gullah/Geechee people follow religious practices associated with praise houses and other more private places of religious experience. Baptismal sites and burial grounds are likewise important markers of Gullah/Geechee life, places of cultural expression, and symbolic repositories of culture- history.



First African Baptist Church, located within the Daufuskie Island Historic District, has been restored. The praisehouse, once associated with the church, was demolished in 2002.

Moving Star Hall, a praise house on Johns Island built just after the Civil War, was once a gathering place for the community. The weathered clapboard building was not only an important meeting place but also a “tend the sick” and burial society, a secret lodge, and a house of worship. During the Sunday night worship services, those in attendance expressed themselves freely. Each person took a turn at preaching, testifying, praying, or raising a song. The Moving Hall Singers were organized there in 1962 (Carawan 1989, 1995).

Mrs. Alice Wine, an elder in the community, had this to say about Moving Star Hall:

We don't have class meeting in the hall anymore. I miss it. We don't have it now because all these young preachers have moved everything to the church. What are a few people going to do in a big old church like that? If the people turn out, it never be too large. I like to go to the hall 'cause you have your way. You can exercise better. You can feel yourself. You can do the same thing in the church, but the church is so big.

We used to have watch meetings on Christmas night. We turn out in the hall and be there till sunrise. On New Year's, people go all night and be there till New Year roll in, then they go to preaching. And about five or six o'clock, then the ladies take over to testify. You don't find that now. Some people can't even say their prayers. A lot of people miss it.

Sam Polite, senior praise house elder on Benjamin Fripp's plantation, St. Helena Island, South Carolina, was a man with white hair and worn, lined face. He was unsure of his exact age, but knew he had “ben a man fore ‘gun shoot’” – *i.e.* the Battle of Port Royal, November 1861 (Washington 1994:47). Polite was seen as a man of vision and wisdom, a prophet to his people. In 1934 Rossa Cooley, then superintendent of the Penn School, recorded a sermon in which Polite made the following remarks (“The Long Look” 1994):

God done gib de white folk a heap of things ... but he ain't forgotten us ... 'cause he gib us Religion and we have a right to show it out to all de world. De Buckra [white people] deys got de knowing of the whys and hows of religion, but dey ain't never got the feel of it yet. I tink God ain't have much respect for no kind of religion without de feeling. De Book say, ‘They that worship me must worship me in spirit and in truth.’ There might be some truth in deys- all religion, but there ain't much spirit in a religion dat's all in de head.

Today, church services and church-related events, which frequently involve the serving of food, appear to be generally well- attended. Sunday services often last for several hours and may include



Baptism rites conducted in SC Sea Islands. Image part of Doris Ulman's photographic study of Gullah people, 1929-1933. *Liturgical Art Collection, University of Notre Dame*

discussion of broader social issues either in the sermon or in discussions before or after the formal services. Thus, the church draws families and communities together into a larger social group. Although religious issues are foremost, church services also serve as a social space for the communication of secular ideas and as social and political forums for the community.

Historically, black churches have been drawn consistently into the community to deal with important issues of a nonreligious nature. As a result, churches have evolved as focal points of social change. From helping displaced families after the Civil War to a leadership role in the Civil Rights movement to health issues such as diabetes, hypertension, and HIV – black churches have confronted and continue to confront social, economic, and political

problems facing the African American community. It is not by chance that a black church, First African Baptist Church in Savannah, was the site of General Sherman's first reading of Special Field Orders Number 15 and was later chosen by Dr. Martin Luther King for the first delivery of his "I Have a Dream" speech in July of 1963 (Billingsley 2002).

Kin-ties and religion continue to serve as a powerful bonding force among Gullah/Geechee people despite the stresses of dispersion due to emigration and breakup of family land holdings. There is grave concern, however, that continued family stress over land issues may lead to dissolution of kin loyalties.

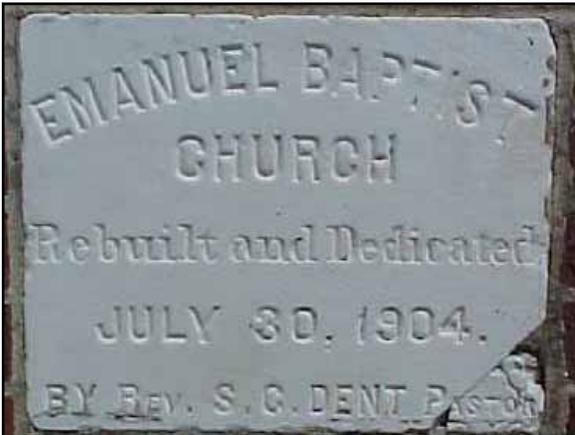
With population disruption, sites of religious expression have become even more important as anchors of communities and help to foster a sense of historical continuity for Gullah/Geechee people as they encounter the challenges of the present. Although the same may be true of former schools and other meeting places, it is the preservation of religious places that is often of greatest concern.

Baptismal sites are important spiritual markers of Gullah/Geechee community life. Traditionally, many churches in Gullah/Geechee communities conducted baptismal rites in the ocean or tidal creeks. The activities began on the high tide and lasted all day, so that sins could be washed away with the ebbing tide. Many baptismal sites, as is true of family burial places, are becoming increasingly inaccessible to Gullah/Geechee people. Golf courses, resorts, fences, beachfront development, boat landings, marinas, and the coastal population explosion are all encroaching upon and in some cases overtaking these sacred sites.

At the foundation of Gullah/Geechee cultural identity are African-influenced values and principles such as belief in God, communal rather than individual identity, honoring the continuity of life by respecting kinship bonds and ancestors, respect for nature, respect and honor toward elders, and respect for the destiny of the soul (Parks 2003).

Because of their tradition of strong spiritual connections, religious institutions frequently play a leadership role in the community. These institutions have shown remarkable versatility and vitality in helping Gullah/Geechee communities adjust to rapidly changing circumstances. Several of these churches participated in this project by inviting the NPS team to hold meetings in their buildings. Frequently, community activist and/or preservation meetings are held in churches. Given the current atmosphere of expanding stresses on community life, churches and other religious organizations may have begun to reach the limits of their capacity for maintaining social and cultural cohesion.

As rural populations have become smaller, rural congregations dwindle in size, praise houses fall into disrepair, and access to baptismal and funerary sites becomes more difficult. School houses, traditional gathering places for children from the community, have fallen victim to the racial integration of school systems. Consequently, many Gullah/Geechee community activists within the study area have taken on preservation projects related to these traditional cultural sites. Particularly noteworthy are the “Rosenwald” schools within the study area, which along with “Rosenwald” schools across the South were named in 2002 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) as one of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Sites (<http://www.nationaltrust.org/11Most/2002/rosenwald.html>). As these community institutions are lost, Gullah/Geechee people face yet another blow to their cultural identity.



Amy Roberts of SSAHC views the place where she was baptized. Emanuel Baptist Church, St. Simons Island, GA, used this beach as a baptismal site until the mid 1960s. The church was founded in 1890 and rebuilt in 1904. Most churches in the area added indoor baptismal pools in the mid 1960s.

The Impact of Coastal Development on Gullah/Geechee People

Bill Saunders grew up on Kiawah Island, a barrier island south of Charleston, South Carolina. In 1972, Kiawah was purchased by the Kuwaiti government and was subsequently developed by the Sea Pines Corporation, which also developed Hilton Head Island in Beaufort County, South Carolina. Saunders currently (2004) lives on Johns Island near Charleston and serves on the South Carolina Public Service Commission. His personal retrospective on the subsistence existence of Gullah/Geechee islanders before 1950 and the impact of coastal development on their communities follows:

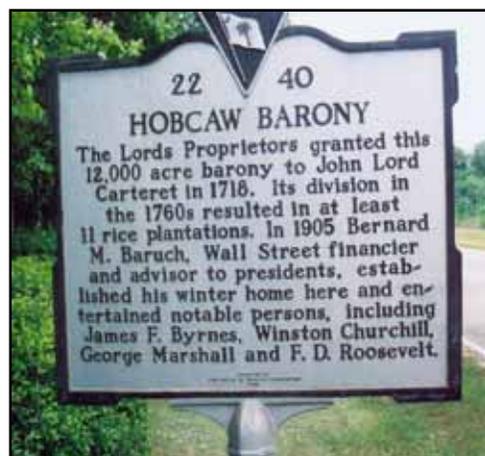
As a kid growing up on the islands in the thirties and forties, there was really no need for money. A lot of us now in our 30s and 40s are realizing we weren't so bad off then. When we were young, we looked at things as being awful. Now that attitude has changed. When I was a kid we grew our own rice, we had our own grits grinder, and we made our own pestle and mortar with which to clean our rice. We had our own smokehouse, killed our own meat, and we ate everything that was in the river in season. This time of year now you can go anyplace and buy oysters. People then never ate oysters after April. Crab wasn't eaten in the winter. All of these things replenished themselves during that time. Now we destroy them by eating them all the time.

Most of our clothes were made of material from feed bags or things that something had been bought in. We made our own mattresses, pillows, and so forth. My grandfather used to build roofs out of something that now I can't find anyone to make, or any one of the old fellows to even discuss it. They made a roof out of "palin." They had an instrument (a draw shave) they made that (when struck with a wooden mallet) would slice through pine and cut into very thin stripping like paneling, and they would overlap these strips on the roof. You could see right through it, but it wouldn't leak when rain hit it; it would just swell up. We made chimneys out of clay on the islands. We took the clay, grass, and other things and would do coloring with it. We used to make beautiful floors from rubbing colored clay onto church brick.

Most people needed to hold on to money for their nickel- and- dime insurance. Most illnesses that came up, someone had a remedy for it; we called it root medicine. They would take roots and things (such as "life- everlasting" for colds) and boil them into a medicine. We would also pack open wounds with sand or sugar. Nowadays you get a little cut, you go to the nearest hospital emergency room. There were so many things to be done and work was hard. We worked from "can see to can't see," from sunup to sundown. We were more independent and didn't recognize it. We are more dependent now than we have ever been. Most of us my age now are relooking at the past and looking at the present and saying maybe we need to go back to some of the things we came through that we didn't like too well.

People from the universities have been writing about these islands, about African heritage, and all that. I would say that as far as the islanders were concerned, I don't think that there was much pride in heritage of the past, but they were proud period. I don't think that they used to connect themselves to Africa, you know "Roots" type stuff, but they were and are just real people who show their heritage. My grandfather and many people I know never had anything, but they were so independent, they were proud of what they did for themselves. They decided what they were going to do, and what they were not going to do. They were just beautiful people. Between 1945 and 1960, we lost that. So many things changed in that era that caused a lot of people to lose sight of being proud (Saunders 1980: 481- 482).

The first inklings of massive impacts on post- Civil War Gullah/Geechee cultural stability came during the 1920s and 1930s when wealthy industrialists from the North discovered the abundant wildlife and mild winter climate of the Low Country and adjoining islands. Early



20th- century industrial magnates, such as Bernard Baruch, R. J. Reynolds, Howard Coffin, and Tom Yawkey, bought failed rice plantations from their bankrupt owners and established hunting lodges for themselves and their friends. In some cases, Gullah/Geechee people who were living on this land were allowed to continue their farming and/or work for the new landowner, while other new owners forced black families from the land.

With land ownership tangled in years of subdivision of property among families and inheritance of land without recording new deeds (heirs' property), Gullah/Geechee people could not prove their ownership rights to their home sites. As years passed and more people died intestate, the property became more entangled in communal ownership. Many were forced from their land and/or the land and waterways where they had traditionally farmed, hunted, and fished to supplement their tables and their incomes.



Collecting clams for supper – trespassing required now.

The pressures began even earlier for Gullah/Geechee people who were involved in commercial fishing. Proximity to the sea fostered an early tradition of seafood harvesting, ranging from cast netting to small-scale commercial shrimp boats. Economic gain from catching and selling seafood began before the end of slavery and continued into the 20th century. The African American shrimping fleet was a major factor in the development of commercial fishing in the region. Competition came from more sophisticated fishermen with greater capital resources. According to Benjamin Blount (2000), the formerly self-sustained Gullah/Geechee fishing boat captains were largely replaced by others and their role reduced to that of laborers in the fishing industry. Pollution from the expanding timber industry, recent catastrophic hurricanes, and pressures on commercial fishing worldwide have also contributed to further decline of the maritime economy of Gullah/Geechee people.

The military has also played a significant role in the process of change. The Marine Training Center at Parris Island in Beaufort County, South Carolina, was constructed during the 1880s. During World War II, traditional Gullah/Geechee lands in McIntosh County, Georgia, were used by the federal government for coastal defense purposes.

The great transformation, however, began in 1957 when Charles Frasier launched the construction of Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island. The availability of air conditioning made the Sea Islands more appealing to affluent people. It was not very long before other developers joined in, and resorts sprang up all over the island. Although only about 20% of the island was actually owned by Gullah/Geechee residents, much of the remaining land was owned by absentee landlords who allowed free access to their property. The absentee landlords quickly sold out to developers. Between 1950 and 2000, the population of South Carolina Low Country counties increased by 151%, while the national population as a whole increased by only 86%.

Before construction of Sea Pines Plantation, Gullah/Geechee residents had been free to hunt and fish all over Hilton Head Island. Suddenly, fences and gates blocked much of the land. Residents were cut off from their hunting and fishing grounds as well as their traditional burial grounds. Fences meant that Gullah/Geechee islanders could no longer “go in duh creek” to get supper. The Sea Pines story has been repeated on islands all over the study area.

Nick Lindsey, local historian, asked an old friend on Edisto to talk about the differences between the “old days” and today (2000), “Everything change up now. In the old day, money? Take him or leave him, be all right. Now? Must have him now. Everything change up now.” Often, the changes brought



This Daufuskie Island, SC, Community Center was once the schoolhouse where Pat Conroy once taught.

about by development and modernization seem to require the discarding of the “old ways” in favor of different behavior patterns – assimilation into the ways of the newer community.

Novels such as *The Water Is Wide* and others by Pat Conroy (1972) expressed the distinctive beauty of his beloved Carolina coast in a way that appealed to people worldwide. Although it was not the author’s intent, the popularity of these stories hastened the influx of people to the area. There was a resulting population shift on the Sea Islands from the traditional rural black majority to an affluent white majority. These dramatic demographic changes brought

intensified racial prejudice and segregation to the islands where Gullah/Geechee people had lived for years in relative isolation from the outside world. Although Daufuskie Island, South Carolina, which Conroy called Yamacraw in his novel, still has no bridge to the mainland, nearly half of the island has been overtaken by resort development. The demarcation between planned resort communities and traditional rural agricultural lands is dramatic.

Resorts, golf courses, and coastal suburban development on the islands led to steadily increasing property values and skyrocketing taxes. Island economies changed from rural subsistence farming to a service-based economy. Native islanders were often unable to bear the tax burden, and many were forced to leave their homes. Not just Gullah/ Geechee people but all islanders of modest means, black and white, have been adversely affected by the rising taxes caused by development and population growth.

With losses of land and easy access to fishing and hunting came a decline of Gullah/ Geechee self sufficiency and autonomy. Displaced and landless Gullah/Geechee people increasingly turned to hourly labor, out- migration, or both. Although some islanders chose to remain in the vicinity to work in the resort industry, they soon found that only minimum wage service sector jobs were available to them. Low wages have forced these landless resort workers to face ever-increasing commuting distances in order to find affordable housing (Thomas 1980). Many young blacks are trapped in the low- wage, low- skill job market of the resorts. “It could be argued – and is – that white development brought economic betterment to black chambermaids and to a generation of career caddies. However, a chambermaid- caddy economy never made anyone except motel owners solvent” (Good 1969:120).

During the 1960s, as the number of outsiders relocating to the islands rose to a peak, there was a second major out- migration of Gullah/Geechee people to the North. They were essentially pushed from their homeland by loss of land for agriculture, lack of job training, lack of skilled jobs, and few opportunities for advancement (Lemann 1992). Many of these people sent their children home to the islands in the summertime, so that the youngsters could get to know their relatives and experience the simplicity of island life. Others, however, may have forever lost the connection to their ancestry and culture. It is interesting to note that some of the people who left in the 1960s are now returning to their roots and are among the most active in trying to preserve Gullah/Geechee community and tradition. Some of the “returnees” spoke with the field research team and expressed a strong, almost irresistible, spiritual need to return to their ancestral roots in the Low Country.

The construction of Interstate 95 in the mid 1970s was a major factor in the transformation of coastal zones. I- 95 is the major north/south corridor and is, thus, one of the most heavily traveled interstate

highways in the United States. Coastal regions of the study area, other than specific resort developments, were still relatively remote and isolated until after the construction of I-95. The highway not only gave easy access to Hilton Head Island and its neighboring resorts in South Carolina but also created access to pristine islands and beaches. Development along I-95 in Georgia has been slower to occur, perhaps because the highway lies along the inland edges of great salt marshes. These marshes are likely to be viewed by uninitiated tourists as “swamps”, rather than as the highly productive ecosystems that they, in fact, are. Almost 50% of the remaining salt marsh along the eastern seaboard of the United States lies along the Georgia coastline and much of it is currently protected by government agencies.



Morris Island 2004; note Fort Sumter in the distance.
Carlin Timmons, NPS

In addition to loss of traditional Gullah/Geechee lands, burial grounds, and culturally significant community landmarks, there are several historic properties with strong Gullah/Geechee connections that are currently at risk of loss to development. Among these is Morris Island, which is located in Charleston Harbor adjacent to Fort Sumter National Monument. During the 1700s, the island was known as Coffin Island, probably because a pest house and its associated burial ground were there.

During the Civil War, Morris Island was used by the Confederates as part of the defense of Charleston. During the Siege of Charleston in July of 1863, Union forces landed on the south end of the island. On July 18, 1863, the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, an African American regiment portrayed in the movie *Glory*, led a fateful assault against Battery Wagner and earned itself a place in America’s history. As a result of their courage in battle, Union forces were able to recruit 200,000 African American soldiers and sailors. The assault failed to take Battery Wagner and resulted in 246 deaths, 880 wounded and 389 captured. Thirty four of the deaths and 146 of the wounded were from the 54th Massachusetts. Ninety-two soldiers of the 54th were captured. In 1900, Sergeant William Carney of the 54th Massachusetts became the first African American soldier awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery during the Wagner assault. Although the geography and size of this barrier island have changed substantially since the Civil War, the “remains of Morris Island stand as a memorial to the brave men who fought and died there” (Wise 1994).

Morris Island, which is visible from Fort Sumter National Monument, looks very much as it did in the 1860s. As there is no bridge to the island, the only access is by boat. Today the island, which is privately owned, faces an assault of a different kind. A developer has proposed to build 20 multi-million dollar residential units on a 62-acre parcel of this critically sensitive, historically important barrier island. The Civil War Preservation Trust has named Morris Island to its Most Endangered Battlefields List and the Morris Island Coalition, a group composed of many local and national organizations, is working to prevent development (<http://www.MorrisIsland.org>).

James Island, near Charleston, South Carolina, is another traditional Gullah Sea Island that has been overtaken by suburban sprawl. In the 17th century, a colonial town was established on James Island, and by 1720, St. Andrew’s Parish Records indicated a population of 215 white taxpayers and 2500 slaves. Gullah descendants of these enslaved Africans, who farmed and fished on the island, remained the predominant population until the 1950s when James Island began to be developed as a Charleston suburb. Unlike Hilton Head, James Island is not a resort community, but the residential and commercial sprawl have gradually overcome the rural agricultural character of the island. A few black communities, such as Sol Legare, struggle to survive.



Slave cabins at McLeod Plantation, Charleston County, SC.

Similar to Charles Pinckney National Historic Site in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, a small piece of the island's rural past remains virtually undisturbed in the midst of 21st century suburban sprawl. McLeod Plantation, first owned by Morris Morgan in 1696, is the last survivor of the 17 plantations originally located on James Island. Samuel Perroneau, who purchased the property in 1741, is believed to be the first to cultivate the land. The slave cabins, which still exist on the property, were constructed by his son-in-law. Although producing indigo and raising beef cattle were the primary foci in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, McLeod later became one of the South's largest Sea Island cotton plantations,

encompassing 900 acres at its heyday, and producing a large crop of Sea Island cotton with a labor force of 70 enslaved Africans.

The finest Sea Island cotton was produced on James, Johns, and Wadmalaw Islands, all located just south of Charleston, South Carolina. In his *Memoirs*, General William Tecumseh Sherman describes James Island as it appeared in 1846, "Looking down the bay on the right was James Island, an irregular triangle of about seven miles, the whole island in cultivation with sea island cotton" (1990:33).

As was customary in those times, planters maintained dual residency and left an overseer with the slaves to cultivate the property. William Wallace McLeod purchased the property in 1851, and the existing main house structure was built by enslaved Africans.

During the Civil War, the property was occupied for a time by Confederate troops who used the main house as a field hospital. During the final days of the war, the famed 54th and 55th Massachusetts regiments occupied the plantation and again used the main house for a hospital. Black soldiers who died there are buried in the slave cemetery, which still exists today. After emancipation, more than 20,000 displaced newly freed slaves were temporarily housed on the plantation grounds. The main house was used as a field office for the Freedmen's Bureau of Charleston.

Agricultural use of the property began again in the late 19th century and continued well into the latter half of the 20th century, when the owner began to sell off parcels of the property. Today McLeod, which is currently owned by the Historic Charleston Foundation, is surrounded by suburban residential and commercial development. Although located just minutes from downtown Charleston, the complex retains its rural character. The mature allee of live oaks extends to Wappoo Cut. A complete antebellum ensemble that survives at McLeod includes the main house, a slave street with five frame cabins, a kitchen, dairy, gin house, barn, and other agricultural buildings, all of which date from the revitalization of the property in the 1840s and 1850s for the production of sea island cotton.

At the present time, plans are underway for the McLeod property to be sold to the American College of the Building Arts, an organization with close ties to the Charleston community. Phillip Simmons, world-renowned Gullah iron worker and National Heritage Fellow, is one of the founders of the school. The college will not only teach a new generation of artisans the lost skills and crafts once practiced by enslaved Africans and other craftsmen in the Low Country, but also will serve as stewards and interpreters of this historic property.

Sapelo Island in McIntosh County, Georgia, is a 16,500-acre barrier island with no bridge connecting it to the mainland. A ferry boat, operated by the State of Georgia, transports people and supplies to and from the island from a dock in Meridian, Georgia. Approximately 96% of Sapelo land is now

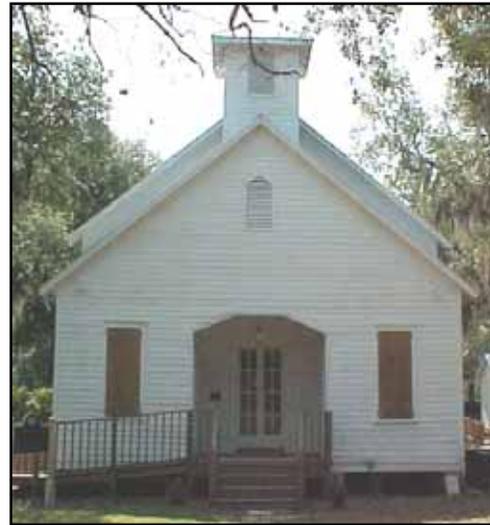
owned and administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Hog Hammock, which originated *ca.*1834 as one of several slave settlements on the island, is one of the last intact Geechee island communities on the Georgia coast. The 434-acre settlement was named for Sampson Hog, an enslaved African once owned by Thomas Spalding. Approximately 60 people currently reside in Hog Hammock.

American Indians occupied Sapelo Island when Spanish explorers established a mission there in 1566. Patrick MacKay purchased the island in 1762 and introduced large-scale plantation agriculture and slave labor. Upon MacKay's death, the land was sold to John McQueen of South Carolina. McQueen later sold the land to a group of French royalists who had fled the French Revolution. The Frenchmen divided the island into plantation tracts including Chocolate, Bourbon, and Raccoon Bluff on the north end of the island. In 1800, the lands were sold to Edward Swarback, and English sea captain, and Richard Leake, father-in-law of Thomas Spalding. When Leake died in 1802, Spalding inherited the south end of the island.

Thomas Spalding was an agriculturist, banker, and politician, who led the island through its only significant money making period. McIntosh County tax records indicate that by 1825, Spalding's land holdings totaled 7,910 acres. He relied on his workforce of 400 enslaved Africans on Sapelo to produce Sea Island cotton, sugarcane, corn, and rice. Balili, a slave who served as an overseer of Spalding's vast plantation, was the most influential enslaved African on the island. He was a Muslim and maintained writings in Arabic that are now held in the University of Georgia Library. Balili helped to ensure the survival of African traditions by instilling African customs and teaching the Gullah/Geechee language to slaves on Sapelo. During the Spalding era, there were at least five slave settlements on the island: Raccoon Bluff, Shell Hammock, Belle Marsh, Lumber Landing, and Hog Hammock.

In January 1865, when General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Orders 15, which decreed that freed slaves be given land on which to live and farm, Spalding's freed slaves established self-sufficient freedmen communities at Shell Hammock, Hog Hammock, Raccoon Bluff, and Behavior, where they engaged in timbering or farming. Many of these citizens became indebted to unscrupulous financial speculators and subsequently lost their property. Thus, the Spalding family was able to regain control over the island. It is believed that the Spalding family forced all blacks, who were not Spalding slaves or their descendants, to leave the island (Cyriaque 2001, Olsen n.d.).

Richard J. Reynolds, tobacco heir from North Carolina, purchased Sapelo in 1934. Between the late 1940s and 1960, all black residents of the island were forced to leave Raccoon Bluff, Lumber Landing, Belle Marsh, Hanging Bull, and Shell Hammock and were consolidated into the Hog Hammock area. Hog Hammock residents, who are direct descendants of Africans brought to Sapelo in the early 1800s and freedmen who purchased property after the Civil War, have held on to their land for over 130 years. The community includes approximately 434 acres of land located in the south-central area of the island. The settlement once had a population of over 300, but isolation and lack of career opportunities have contributed to a steady decline. Today, there are about 70 permanent residents, some of whom are renting rooms and creating craft items to encourage tourists to visit the island.



First African-Baptist Church, Raccoon Bluff, Sapelo Island, GA, has been restored with assistance from SICARS, SCAD, and Georgia DNR. The church is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Last state-operated school boat takes Sandy Island children to school on the mainland.

Some coastal islands such as Sandy Island, located between the Waccamaw and the Great Pee Dee Rivers in Georgetown County, South Carolina, and across the Intracoastal Waterway from Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina, are protected from development. Two small Gullah villages with about 120 residents remain on the southeast corner of the island. Most of the residents are descended from the slaves of around a dozen rice plantations that once flourished on the island. Islanders commute across the Intracoastal Waterway to jobs on the South Carolina's Grand Strand. Island children ride the only state-operated school ferry in South Carolina.

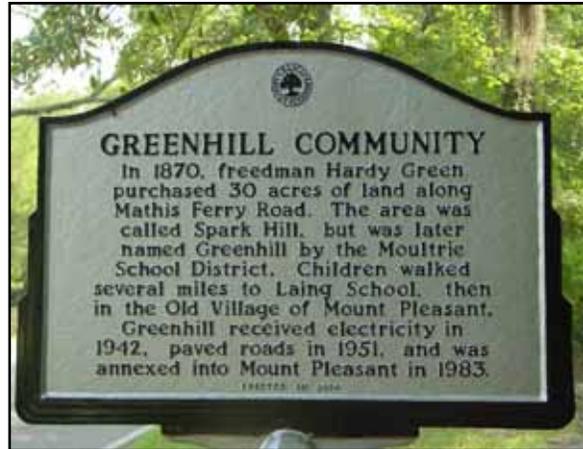
The pristine beaches of Sandy Island, South Carolina, were once seriously threatened. Textile magnate Roger Milliken and the late industrialist Craig Wall owned most of the 12,000-acre island and were determined to build a bridge from the mainland and develop an exclusive gated community. Although they struggled for 10 years, Milliken and Wall were never allowed to construct the bridge. Thus, Sandy Island, once the largest privately owned fresh-water island on the East Coast, was sold in 1996 to the State of South Carolina for 11 million dollars. It is now managed by the Nature Conservancy as part of the newly created Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge (WNWR). Although the preserve is open to the public and has several boat landings and nature trails, the rights of property owners adjacent to the WNWR are protected. Thus, Sandy Island landowners may continue to live within their communities without fear of encroachment and resort development (Huntley 1997: 1A).

The Sea Islands are not the only areas at great risk. Mainland Gullah/Geechee communities are also threatened by increasing coastal development and population growth with the resulting encroachment into rural neighborhoods. Sandfly Community, a historic freedmen's hamlet near Savannah in Chatham County, Georgia, has been fighting a battle to keep Target and/or Wal-Mart from building in their tiny community. Ironically, these chain stores expect to draw their customer base from nearby resort islands rather than the Sandfly community itself. Thus far, Sandfly residents have succeeded in stopping the construction of a Target store, but a new 24-hour Super Wal-Mart is currently under construction. The fight is continuing, but the outlook is discouraging (Jacobs 2004).

Once there were several postbellum freedmen communities in or near Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, in upper Charleston County. Among these are Green Hill, Phillips, Snowden, Scanlonville, Hamlin,

Six Mile, Seven Mile, and Ten Mile. The Town of Mt. Pleasant Historical Commission has been erecting markers to designate these historically significant black neighborhoods.

Green Hill, first called Spark Hill, was established in 1870 when Hardy Green bought 30 acres of land. It was a farming community where produce and livestock were raised and transported by boat to the Charleston City Market. In the 1920s and 1930s, goods were transported by mule drawn wagons to a ferry at Shem Creek. The road they once traveled to reach the ferry is now known as Mathis Ferry Road. According to local lore, Mathis Ferry is a corruption of Matthews Ferry, named for William Matthews, who is believed to have built both the house at Snee Farm and the one at Tibwin, two existing Low Country plantations that will be discussed later in this report. Electricity came to the community in 1942 and paved roads in 1951. The area was annexed into the Town of Mt. Pleasant in 1983.



Today, Green Hill is a thriving residential community. Most homes are owner occupied, and many of these owners are descendants of the first Spark Hill property owners. Although somewhat secluded off Mathis Ferry Road, the community is currently surrounded by upscale residential development. Some residents believe that their neighborhood may not survive. East Cooper Habitat for Humanity has recently begun building homes in Green Hill. Several have been completed and 14 more are to be built in 2004 (Parker 2004).

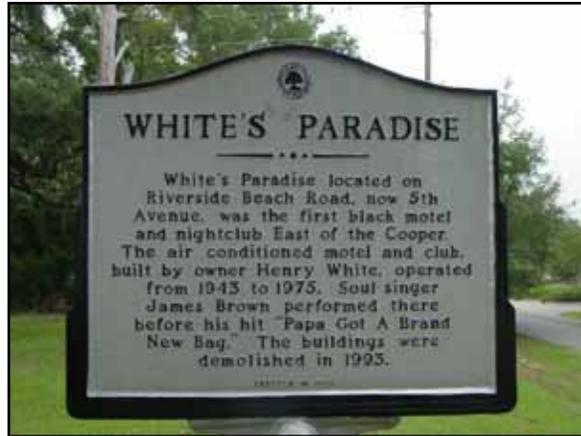


Snowden residents, though surrounded by suburban development, appear to be holding onto their lands. Snowden, however, is facing a struggle to obtain a public wastewater system. Surrounded on two sides by modern affluent subdivisions, Snowden residents are still dependent on septic tanks, many of which are malfunctioning. According to residents, much of the undeveloped land in the community cannot be utilized unless a sewer system is in place. That leaves a great deal of marsh front property unavailable for subdividing among heirs. Drainage ditches carry runoff from overflowing untreated wastewater. During hot weather, the ditches are infested with mosquitoes and other insects, which are drawn to the foul odor. The untreated wastewater eventually finds its way to the neighborhood marshlands and from there to the Wando River. Construction of the sewer system is not due to begin until July 2005 and will take a year or more to complete (Vari 2004).

Hamlin is being crowded by the upscale Hamlin Plantation subdivision, which threatens to raise property values and taxes for lifelong Hamlin residents. Their ancestors sacrificed to purchase the land, and the land therefore provides a connection to those ancestors. Land values are of no consequence to these residents, who have no intention of selling their land unless forced to do so.

Both Scanlonville and Phillips are under serious threat and have sought help from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History to be designated as historic communities. Both communities have been thwarted in their preservation efforts by





the lack of standing historic structures at least fifty years old, as ordinarily required for National Register of Historic Places status. Another tack for pursuing potential National Register status could be for the communities to seek recognition as either cultural landscapes or “traditional cultural properties.”

Scanlonville was formed as a voluntary association of freedmen, who sought to be landowners. Robert L. Scanlon purchased the 614- acre Remley Plantation at auction and held the land in trust for the Charleston Land Company. By 1870, the land had been platted into home sites, farm lots, and a communal park and cemetery. Although Chicora Foundation prepared an archaeological and historical study of the neighborhood for submission to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH) for historic neighborhood designation, the lack of standing structures was cited as the reason for refusing such designation. The cemetery, however, was approved for listing in the National Register.

Phillips Community: A Case Study

Phillips Community is located along South Carolina Highway 41, in an unincorporated area of Charleston County just northwest of Mt. Pleasant. The community began in 1878 when ten-acre parcels of land from Phillips Plantation were “sold to the Negroes” for \$63.00. To these new freedmen, \$63.00 was a princely sum. Extant plats and maps verify the sale, timeframe, and boundaries of the land transfer. The fact that descendants of the original purchasers have held on to the land for well over 100 years, signifies the depth of family connection and commitment to the land and is a tribute to their once enslaved ancestors.

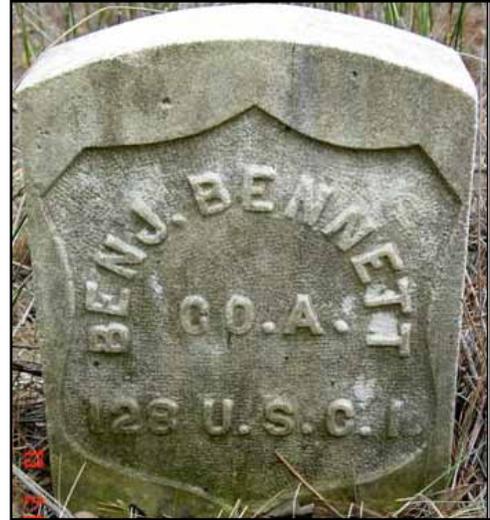


Phillips Plantation, once part of Laurel Hill and Boone Hall Plantations, was the first plantation owned by Dr. John Rutledge, who came to South Carolina from Ulster, Ireland. Rutledge married Sarah Hext, granddaughter of John Boone of Boone Hall, and acquired the land that became Phillips Plantation through the marriage.

Rutledge’s sons John and Edward gained national prominence as delegates to the First and Second Continental Congresses and later as governors of South Carolina. John was a signer of the Constitution and became the second Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Edward is known as the youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence.



Rev. Henry Palmer, Sr., tends the goats and hogs in his yard. Although surrounded by suburban development, Phillips is still predominantly rural.



Benj. Bennett, Co. A. 128, U. S. C. I.

Today, as it has been for more than a century, Phillips is a small, rural Gullah/Geechee community that still occupies the footprint of the original settlement. Landowners in the area are descendants of the freedmen who purchased the land more than 125 years ago. Since families never thought it necessary to subdivide the land and have individual ownership, land was shared among family members. As family groups have grown, the land has been shared to form family compounds. Because much of the land was not formally transferred by wills and registered deeds, most of the community land base has become a classic example of “heirs’ property.”

Phillips is currently bordered on all sides by upscale residential development. Parker Island, location of the traditional cemetery, has been reborn as River Town Country Club. Graves have been vandalized and many grave markers have been stolen. Elders in the Phillips community remember when there were many stones, but as of this writing, there are but four remaining grave stones, all dating to the 19th century, one of which is for Benjamin Bennett, a veteran of the United States Colored Infantry during the Civil War. Currently, there is no protection for this cemetery. The remaining stones and unmarked graves lie in the rear of private subdivision lots where they are inaccessible to descendants and unprotected from further vandalism.



Two of the oldest houses in Phillips. Vernacular architecture is giving way to modern brick houses and mobile homes.

A logging bridge once existed between Phillips and Parker Island. The bridge was not only a link to the cemetery, but also a neighborhood gathering place where people swam, fished, caught crabs, and socialized. Once construction of the River Town Golf Club was completed, contractors bulldozed the bridge access on the Parker Island side and destroyed the cultural link which had existed for many generations.



Richard Habersham stands on the old bridge that once connected Phillips to Parker Island.



Tomb of Dr. John Rutledge SC Hwy. 41, Phillips Community.



One of two abandoned wells in the Phillips Community. Well was constructed with bricks handmade on Parker Island, which is now River Town Country Club.

Not only have Phillips residents lost their path to Parker Island, but they have also lost their neighborhood gathering place. Chemical runoff from the golf course has had a serious impact on the marshes and waters of Horlbeck Creek. The fish and crabs are no longer abundant. Fiddler crabs, though plentiful on the Phillips side, decline in number and disappear entirely as one approaches the golf links. Even places of traditional cultural expression like the Parker Island Bridge, are compromised by the impact of real estate development.

The most valuable cultural resource in these places is strong family connection to the land, a link that has existed for more than 125 years. Such stories of cultural loss have been repeated again and again in Gullah/Geechee communities within the study area. Vernacular architecture is gradually giving way to brick houses and mobile homes.

Now an even greater threat looms over this historic neighborhood. Plans are under way to widen South Carolina Highway 41 which runs through the Phillips Community. The road widening project has been designed to reduce traffic congestion caused by upscale residential development nearby. Although other options may be available, the path of least resistance seems to be through this historically black village. Dr. John Rutledge's brick tomb lies hidden from public view, adjacent to Highway 41 in the Phillips Community and would be lost in the road widening project. Phillips residents see this tomb and the Rutledge connection to Phillips as a part of their own history. Another piece of their story may soon be lost. If, however, the Town of Mt. Pleasant chooses to use federal funds for this road project, there still may be hope for saving these culturally important sites.

Phillips Neighborhood Association, a grassroots organization led by Richard Habersham, has been gathering historical data, holding meetings, and trying to work to save the community. Communities like Phillips or Scanlonville, which have few historic buildings remaining, could seek recognition as "traditional cultural properties" through the National Register of Historic Places. "Traditional" in this context refers to those

beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community of people that have been passed down through the generations, usually orally or through practice. Information on evaluating and documenting traditional cultural properties is contained in National Register Bulletin 38. For more information, see www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb38.



Meeting of St. Simons African American Heritage Coalition (SSAAHC), First African Baptist Church

Gullah/Geechee Revitalization

Historically, societies under stress from war, rapid economic change, population losses, and political oppression frequently undergo what anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace (1970) calls “revitalization processes” of socio-cultural change in order to survive. Oftentimes, these processes take various forms of “nativism,” described by an earlier anthropological theorist, Ralph Linton (1943). Nativism includes not only “nativistic movements,” such as the 19th-century Ghost Dances of the Plains Indians or the Cargo Cults of Melanesia, but also the less obvious forms of “nativism” evidenced in, for example, “the Englishman’s insistence on dressing for dinner even when alone in a remote outpost of empire” (237). In Linton’s scheme, nativism can assume many forms, which may be analyzed as various combinations of the “magical” and “rational,” the “perpetuative” and “revivalistic.” In the model developed by Wallace, revitalization movements depend upon a consciously conceived effort by charismatic leaders to conceptualize a new goal culture, convert followers to this vision, and attempt to establish a new “steady state” of social “equilibrium.”

These concepts and models of revitalization and nativism have special relevance for understanding what Gullah/Geechee people are doing today to grapple with the increasing forces of modernization, urbanization, and globalization that endanger their collective cultural memory and their traditional social identities. In their struggles, Gullah/Geechee people confront the problems of specific local communities and in their cultural world at large – sometimes stretching far beyond the Carolina/Georgia coast.

Gullah/Geechee people are pursuing many approaches to cultural survival. A number of communities have organized festivals and other fundraisers to support cultural education and historic preservation movements to rescue and restore significant buildings and/or educate communities and their children in the importance of their culture and heritage. Lorraine White, a music teacher at Alston Middle School, and Becky Dingle, Social Studies Coordinator for the Dorchester County, South Carolina, School System, received a grant from the South Carolina Humanities Council to teach students about Gullah culture. White, a descendant of Drayton Hall slaves, coordinated the year-long program. Field trips included Drayton Hall and the Avery Institute.



Local artists such as sweetgrass basket makers and professional dancers came to Alston to talk with the students. The program was designed to immerse both black and white students in the Gullah culture in an effort to promote understanding and acceptance of others. Together White, who is black and Dingle, who is white, developed a poignant program with Dingle telling a story that is liberally



SSAAHC members posted this sign to discourage land sales in traditional African American communities. *Jeanne Cyriaque, Georgia DNR*



Amy Roberts examines deteriorating window sill, Harrington School House. SSAAHC hopes to restore the school as a museum or community center on St. Simons Island, GA.

sprinkled with White's singing. After the conclusion of the grant program, White and Dingle have continued to present their programs in schools and other venues throughout the area.

Amy Roberts and the St. Simons African American Heritage Coalition (SSAAHC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 2000, are working not only to teach children about their culture, but also are trying to save the historically black Harrington School building on the Island. In the spring of 2002 SSAAHC launched a land retention initiative; owners placed bright yellow signs on their property declaring, "Don't Ask - Won't Sell." Fundraising activities - from weekly barbecues to an annual Georgia Sea Island Festival - have helped in their efforts. The Trust for Public Land is now working with SSAAHC to assist in the acquisition of Harrington School.

A key part of SSAAHC's purpose has been to teach the area young people about their rich cultural heritage so that they will learn to take pride in their Geechee ancestry. To this end, the group sponsors bus trips to culturally significant sites such as Penn Center, Seabrook Village, and American Beach. As part of this project, Vera Manigault of Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, traveled to St. Simon's Island to demonstrate her craft and teach them basic basketry skills.

Sapelo Island Cultural and Revitalization Society (SICARS) was founded in 1993, incorporated in 1994 as a Community Land Trust, and achieved 501(c)(3) non-profit status in 1995. The organization's mission is to "address systemic threats to the survival of the community through land retention strategies, land use planning, and policy reform. These threats include tax and government planning agendas that directly affect our community and encourage or directly create the loss of descendant-owned land." Believing that the Sapelo Island community "... can take ownership and responsibility for our future only to the extent that we can develop an accountable, representative, and well-informed leadership," SICARS has taken political action to halt further land losses through public education on heirs' property, land retention, tax reforms, and zoning laws (SICARS home page <http://www.sapeloislandgeorgia.org>).

SICARS sponsors, organizes, and promotes heritage/cultural tourism events such as the annual Cultural Day Festival to teach both Gullah/Geechee people and outsiders about the richness of Gullah/Geechee culture and to raise funds for community projects. SICARS, with the assistance of the Savannah School of Arts and Design (SCAD) and the Georgia State Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources, restored the First African Baptist Church building at the historic

Sapelo Island settlement site known as “Raccoon Bluff.” Raccoon Bluff, sold to freedmen in 1871, is the only part of Sapelo never owned by the Spalding family (Olsen n.d.).

SICARS has recently received a Georgia Heritage grant to develop a restoration plan for Farmers’ Alliance Hall, which was built in 1929 by the Colored Farmers’ National Alliance and Cooperative Union. The main floor was historically used as a brokering agency for local Geechee farmers, while the second floor was the local Masonic Hall and meeting place for the Order of the Eastern Star. Today the Farmers’ Alliance Building serves as the backdrop for entertainment at the annual Sapelo Cultural Day festival. Ray Crook, who has spent a number of years working on the Gullah/Geechee archaeology of Sapelo Island (2001), collaborated with local Geechee historian Cornelia Bailey to record oral histories and traditions of elders from Hog Hammock Community. The proceeds from the resulting publication were dedicated toward the restoration of Farmers’ Alliance Hall (Crook *et al.* 2003). Long- term plans include creation and construction of a living history village project on 16 acres near Hog Hammock. SICARS also plans a study to determine the feasibility of purchasing its own ferry boat to transport residents and visitors to and from Sapelo.



Marquetta L. Goodwine, Founder, Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition.

One of the newer organizations in the study area is the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation (DIHF), a 501(c)(3) non- profit corporation. DIHF was organized in 2001 for the preservation of the cultural heritage of Daufuskie Island, South Carolina, and for acquisition, preservation, and restoration of historical sites, documents, and artifacts. The Foundation has purchased two historic structures on the island – Mt Carmel Baptist Church and the Brothers and Sisters Oyster Society Hall – both of which were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 as part of the Daufuskie Island Historic District (National Register Information System, SC). The church building has been restored for use as an island historical museum.

Newly formed preservation groups, such as DIHF, and grassroots organizations such as SSAAHC and SICARS, are but a few of many similar organizations along the Gullah/Geechee coast. Working in concert with more external non- profit organizations, such as the South Carolina Bar Foundation and the Penn Center, local community- based organizations throughout the study area are fighting to keep their traditional homelands from being overrun by suburban sprawl and resort development. These groups seek to heighten awareness of heirs’ property problems and educate their constituents about conditions that make traditional communal land ownership unworkable today.

By far the most dramatic and visible movement – locally, nationally, internationally – to affect Gullah/Geechee cultural revitalization region- wide is the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition (Goodwine 2000). The Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition was founded in 1996 in Brooklyn, New York, by Marquetta L. Goodwine, a native of St. Helena Island, South Carolina, who returned to full- time residence on the island around 1999. Director Goodwine describes the organization as a community- based organization that “promotes and participates in the preservation of Gullah and Geechee history, heritage, culture, and language; works toward Sea Island land re- acquisition and maintenance; and celebrates Gullah/Geechee culture through artistic and educational means electronically and via ‘grassroots scholarship’” (Goodwine, Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition home page).

Goodwine and the Coalition worked with the Beaufort County Planning Commission to establish specific zoning protection for Gullah lands by establishing a “Cultural Protection Overlay (CPO) District.” As of this writing, Beaufort County is believed to be the only county in the United States to have specific laws to protect Gullah culture. The laws establish this CPO District “to preserve traditional land use patterns and to retain established customs and rural way of life” (Beaufort County Planning Department, Electronic document 1). In addition to the CPO, these laws provide protection for family compounds, lands that have remained within a family for a period of 50 years or more, “to allow longtime rural residents to protect a traditional way of life and provide affordable housing for family members, who in turn will help stabilize and preserve the county’s rural communities.” Owners of such family compounds, working within the prescribed guidelines, are granted density bonuses that allow for traditional clustering of family residences (Beaufort County Planning Department, Electronic document 2).

In addition to leading the practical efforts of the Coalition, Goodwine proselytizes for an almost quasi-transcendental achievement of cultural solidarity, consolidation of Gullah/Geechee ethnic identity, and even “nationhood” of Gullah and Geechee people throughout the Low Country and Sea Islands. Such a development is a specific manifestation of panhuman processes of social and cultural change identified by anthropologist Wolf (1994). For her efforts, according to Goodwine, some of her followers “enstooled” her in 2001 as “Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation.” The group has adopted a formal constitution and a national flag. Goodwine’s more far-reaching efforts include a videotaped message – *Yeddy Wi: Gullah/Geechee Living Ways* – which was presented to the First International Conference on the Right to Self-determination & the United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, in 2000 (Kly 2001).

Goodwine also leads an effort to win eventual reparations for past wrongs to Gullah/Geechee people, with reparation funds to be managed by her and the “Wisdom Circle Council of Elders of the Gullah/Geechee Nation” (Goodwine, 2002; cf. Kly 1994a, 1994b). Nonetheless, she recently wrote in response to the public review draft of this document, “... the ultimate goal of the Gullah/Geechee Nation is not reparations ... It is self-determination and empowerment of Gullah/Geechee people to return to being self-sustaining.”

The coastal area, which Goodwine describes as a “Gullah/Geechee nation,” though having no federal recognition or status, has all the earmarks of classic revitalization movements. Such movements have been described by anthropologists as processes for indigenous peoples and others whose cultural identity and way of life is threatened (cf. Paredes 1974). Strictly speaking, Gullah/Geechee people are not indigenous to North America. The point may be made, however, that despite ancestral roots in Africa, Gullah or Geechee culture developed in America as a distinct “creole” society. In this respect, Gullah/Geechee language and culture could be said to be “indigenous” to the Low Country and the Sea Islands. Whether or not they are “indigenous,” Gullah/Geechee people presumably are covered by the “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities,” as Goodwine (1998) has suggested.

As with some leaders of revitalization movements throughout history, Goodwine attracts followers with near religious fervor while repelling others who look at the movement with skepticism, among whom are many Gullah/Geechee people themselves. Some people grant unwavering loyalty to Goodwine’s political and cultural legitimacy and view her as a true savior of her people; others dismiss her as a self-serving opportunist. Some change their minds. Although to outsiders Goodwine might sometimes appear to be speaking for all Gullah/Geechee people, many prefer to speak for themselves or through less-publicized grassroots organizations in their own communities.

From small-scaled localized efforts at saving historic buildings to the more sweeping vision of “Queen Quet,” much that Gullah/Geechee people do today can be comprehended within a framework of ideas discussed by renowned anthropologist Wolf under the rubric of “peoplehood”

(see also Deloria 1969). Peoples disfranchised, marginalized, and oppressed by the expansion of nation- states, colonial empires, and industrial economies;

... arise and define themselves as against others also engaged in the process of development and self- definition. There is hardly a study of an ethnic group now that does not describe how the locals use ‘agency’ to ‘construct themselves’ in relation to power and interest. This is ... much to the good. It transcends the bland, power-irrelevant relativism of much of the talk about “culture” (Wolf 1994:6).

Conditions along the Gullah/Geechee coast at the beginning of the 21st century are ripe for classic processes of cultural revitalization and affirmations of “peoplehood.” Tourism, rapid economic development, land losses, and dwindling community autonomy are major stresses. Added to these is a decline in traditional sources of income from fishing, lumbering, and agriculture. These multiple stressors from many directions place Gullah/Geechee people in an at-risk condition which Faulkenberry, *et al.* (2000: 94, 95) described as a culture of servitude:

Sam Vaughn, a white business owner, echoed a deep concern for the future, shared by many residents: ‘We’ve got a whole culture ... of servitude [on the islands]. A hundred years ago they had plantations. They were owned by white masters ... [African Americans] lived ... outside the plantation ... What do we have now? We have a plantation, that’s run by people who’ve moved to the community who want the same kind of services. We have buses that transport people from outlying areas off the plantation to come and do the plantation work.’

Insightful African and Euro- American residents recognize the danger in allowing this new ‘culture of servitude’ to develop even more ... without ... [certain] ... modifications, the ecological and economic impact of tourism and development along South Carolina’s coast will exacerbate class and racial divisions, further erode the social fabric of the islands, increase the psychological frustration and despair of the lower middle class, and commodify existing cultural traditions. On the other hand, with prudent and immediate actions to eliminate the expanding ‘culture of servitude,’ the pleasurable quality of life in this beautiful part of the United States will continue.

Development of gated communities has rendered some sacred sites and cemeteries inaccessible. Not only do some Gullah/Geechee people feel choked out of their communities, but also in some respects, they view resort development as virtual reincarnation of the plantation system. Some of these people expressed their frustration to the SRS research team. With only minimum wage service sector jobs available, they feel subservient once again to their resort “masters.” Many of these exclusive communities have even used the word plantation as part of their names (Pinskey 1982, 1993).

In her review of scholarly writing, Hargrove (2000) has described the inexorable confluence of external pressures for change on one Gullah community. She concludes with a hopeful note that this NPS Special Resource Study could itself serve as a catalyst for reconstituting Gullah social vitality. It is, indeed, the conundrum of this SRS that the study itself has become intertwined with the very cultural resource that it purports to study, i.e., contemporary Gullah/Geechee culture. The SRS has become one of a suite of ongoing activities that Gullah/Geechee people and communities seek to turn to their advantage in order to “save our culture.”

The very existence of all the many Gullah/Geechee efforts at cultural preservation and revitalization could be seen as evidence in themselves of the precariousness of Gullah/Geechee survival. Even so, the fact remains that the survival of a recognizable, distinct Gullah/Geechee culture is questionable. Indeed, Gullah/Geechee people of Georgia are included in a recent scholarly work entitled

Endangered Peoples of North America: Struggles to Survive and Thrive (Greaves 2002). As William Pollitzer so bluntly yet hopefully wrote:

The sea islanders of today are threatened by the ever-increasing pace of modern life with its economic demands. They are not a museum piece, relics of the past, but rather survivors of enslavement, bondage, discrimination, and white privilege – fellow human beings entitled to work out their own destiny. Hopefully the best of sea island life, language, customs, and values can be preserved, even as the people take advantage of new opportunities and move into mainstream America.

The Gullah people can cherish individual differences and take pride in a unique heritage ... The Sea Islands will then become more than the ‘see islands’ for tourists; ... and the Low Country will become the High Country of the African American experience (1999).



Children play on the grounds of Farmers' Alliance Hall, which serves as the backdrop for the annual Cultural Day celebration on Sapelo Island. *Diedre Laird, SC Desk, Charlotte Observer*