

ABSTRACT

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NAVIGATING THE GULLAH CULTURE USING MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY

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The primary focus of this study was to combine traditional research along with new media technology to create an interactive tutorial on the Gullah culture. The study involved conventional historical and anthropological research on the inhabitants of St. Helena Island, South Carolina. Documentation of the culture followed, with the use of black-and-white and color photography, audio recording and digital video taping of interviews and events. Mixed-media was used to capture behavioral patterns and cultural ideologies within the culture's environment. The outcome was written text on the historical and anthropological significance of the Sea Island culture. A multimedia tutorial complemented the text as pedagogical units incorporating preexisting materials and data gathered during field research for this study.

The conclusions to this study confirmed that familiarity with language and behavior of the Gullah people gave access to portions of the culture not documented previously. The result shows that more people can gain an understanding of a marginalized culture with the use of specifically designed interactive tutorials incorporating a range of research and new media technology materials.

NAVIGATING THE GULLAH CULTURE
USING MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: PRESERVING THE MEMORIES OF A PEOPLE

Statement of Purpose

Documentary studies in relation to cultural inquiry and human development allow for an intensive study concerning the documentation of cultural traditions, especially with the inclusion of media as the principal tool for recording cultures. Synthesizing an electronic medium with more traditional academic study such as History and Anthropology seems to have added potential as a method to document cultural traditions as a form of preservation and future research, especially for the preservation of cultural norms among more marginalized groups. The media component is a tool not only for documentation of existing customs, but also for communicating to a larger populace the relevance of a specific cultural group.

The use of electronic media as documentation tools of a culture is not limited to audio recording and video taping a person or an event. The electronic means of documentation has expanded into new media technology, e.g., digital production, internet-accessible research, and interactive multimedia CD-ROM. Once documentation of a culture has taken place, the flexibility of providing information in multiple formats is possible, e.g., a documentary, a photography exhibit or as written text. New media technology introduces a new dimension in communicating. Interactive learning is

possible with digital technology and software design that lends themselves to new modes of communicating a topic or research--for example, in the form of a multimedia tutorial.

Research Hypothesis

Combining Humanities, the creation of ideas and the cultural transmutation of those ideas, along with new media technology presents an opportunity to create presentations using multimedia technology on specific cultures. With the purpose of creating ways for people to understand other cultures, the use of multimedia technology can make learning about a culture either a personal attainment or a tutorial for classroom exploration.¹ Documentation of a culture by conventional forms (art, print, photography, video, film, and audiotape) can be used to capture behavioral patterns and cultural ideologies within that culture's environment for the purposes of preservation and future studies. The more immediate application would be to draw from this accumulation of materials in order to produce a multimedia tutorial that enables the program user, the person interacting with the specific program, to learn about a culture.

The tutorial itself is a combination of text and CD-ROM that must be used together in order for the interactive program to be utilized. In this manner, the user can learn about the topic or culture at a personal rate or become involved with an entire group of users. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that new media technology is an effective tool to document the Gullah culture for purposes of preservation and the creation of multimedia tutorials.

Justification for the Research

On St. Helena Island, South Carolina, despite enslavement and Northern influences during the American Civil War, Gullahs have held on to much of their traditional behavior stemming from parts of West Africa. New social and educational values were learned through their association with northern troops during the Port Royal Experiment, and with the advent of formal education introduced by the Freedmen Society of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Port Royal Experiment was the reconstruction plan of the U.S. government for the recovery of the South after the Civil War. Beaufort County, South Carolina, was the incubator for the plan, from 1861 until 1865. The Port Royal Experiment and the development of the historically designated Penn School, the first school for blacks in the South, added to the possible changes for the African islanders.² In effect, Penn School's teachers combined the uniqueness of the Gullahs with the values of a northern society, thus influencing Gullahs into a form of duality as a means of survival.

From the end of the Civil War until the 1920s, Gullahs of St. Helena Island were self-sufficient. Agriculture and education went hand in hand. Many of the plantations were sold to the newly freed who had once worked the land for free. Education continued to be provided by Northern teachers for the African descendants in the St. Helena Island Township, that is, those islands located to the east of the town of Beaufort, South Carolina.³ Much of what was preserved in the Gullah culture is now accepted as a continuation of West African traditions.⁴ To the Islander, a way of living was maintained.

At the beginning of the 1900s, people began leaving the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia primarily for northern cities. They were escaping racism, low income, and the stigma of belonging to a culture filled with mystery. By the end of the 1930s, the migration from St. Helena Island alone was so great that nearly half of its population left to find other means of living, after two major hurricanes and the boll weevil changed agricultural success into economic disaster.⁵ The traditions of passing on stories to the next generation also changed, as influences from the outside began to alter a way of life. The construction of a connecting causeway between Beaufort and the township made it easier for tourists to reach the newly created state park, Hunting Island.

Although Penn School maintained prominence in the education of the Islanders, its principals and teachers incorporated the knowledge of Gullahs into the standards of Western education. When Penn sponsored midwife programs, the herbal medicines of the islands were not discounted but were instead used to maintain the health of the Islanders. Gullah people became professionals, such as teachers, doctors, and politicians.⁶ Some stayed on St. Helena Island; some left. The ones who stayed passed on what they could to the next generation.

The language, even the culture itself, was neither publicly acknowledged nor academically accepted until the late 1970s. Prior to that time, the rich Gullah culture was discounted as abnormal or substandard. The language was reduced to "bad" English, and knowing with whom to speak standard English became a means of diminishing the shame of being Gullah. Outsiders were allowed to come into the true spirit of the community up to a certain point. By the 1980s and '90s, what began as a charitable amount of respect had come full circle. Many outsiders began running to the islands to research the

uniqueness of the Gullah culture and to reconnect with the traditions of West Africa. It was hoped that this interest in the culture would be more than a fad, but rather a celebration by others who would help to erase the stigmatizing treatment cast upon Gullahs, especially during desegregation in the 1960s. Growing up Gullah during the desegregation period meant being treated as "different" by the public school system or any person not from the islands. The name Geechee was given to these people, sometimes as a sneer of disrespect.

Voluntary integration of the public school system was approved by the Beaufort County School Board in 1964. One black student from the town of Beaufort entered Beaufort High school as the test case for desegregation during that year. The following year, more black students from in-town registered in the voluntary program, but were joined by the busloads of students from across the bridge. Not only were island blacks to become a part of desegregation and encounter cultural shame at the hands of whites, they would encounter similar types of shame from "in-town" blacks and would be perceived as a people practicing voodoo on the islands. The stories of so-called "race riots" with whites or fights between in-town blacks and island blacks would become a part of the daily storytelling on the buses, as the islanders made their way back across the bridge into the relative safety of the "mysterious" island culture.

The dissimilar nature of the language and culture of the islander became a reason for teasing by other students that would usually lead to fights. Within each public school grade, some teachers were not always kind to students whose culture was known only by the statement "those people from the island." The desegregation experience of the 1960s, along with closer encounters with blacks from a different social view, ingrained in many

island students a shame so severe that hiding one's culture behind perfect English and New England standards of behavior became a survival tactic that was to become difficult to erase many decades later. The busloads of islanders learned to develop a duality that exceeded the one their parents had been taught in the private-school program of Penn School which graduated its last class in 1953. An educational system that failed to recognize the cultural differences during the 1960s, and that had yet to fully acknowledge the Gullah culture even into the 1990s--despite a substantial amount of identifying the significance of the culture--pointed to a limited scholastic concern for a culture that had dominated the county school system in recent decades.

Many people visit the coastal islands in search of members from the Gullah culture that speak a strange language and have held on to their traditions from Africa. The Gullah people seem elusive, having learned to change languages at a moment's notice and be other than who they are in their own homes as a result of previous ridicule and unwelcome humor at their expense. It does not matter if a visitor is a person of African descent, as are Gullahs; the visitor is still an outsider. Gullahs have learned to be protective of themselves and of the past that hints of nearly forgotten ancestors.

Since 1981, Penn Center (Fig.1), which became a community center after the graduation of its last students, has held a heritage festival beckoning around the country to descendants of islanders and those interested in hearing Gullah history. After meager beginnings, the Festival eventually began to attract over 10,000 people who spend four days on St. Helena Island during the second week of November. Many of these people are in search of any remaining member of the Gullah culture. Exhibits and programs appease these seekers, giving them hints of stories, history, and food that have long

sustained a people in whom others are gaining interest on an international scale. Now the success of a children's television program, "Gullah, Gullah Island," has brought new pride to a people who are still not allowed to speak their language in the local public schools.

Methodology

As a researcher, I have with a unique combination of professional experiences, years of production in the television industry, years as researcher in a state archives with an interest in History and Anthropology, now, a growing career in multimedia technology. As a member of the Gullah community who has encountered many visitors expressing the excitement of wanting to make St. Helena Island the Ellis Island of Americans of African descent, my personal stake in this research is to tell the story of the islanders from the inside. There is a need for visitors to understand the Gullah people through their own stories. Visitors to the islands' annual heritage festival can have an opportunity to learn from a history that is lived every day, not on special occasions. Elders of the community can have a chance to pass on their stories as they should, not as a point of curiosity from an outsider, but as a link from ancestors to the next generation. With the use of multimedia technology, an example of creating a tool for cultural understanding can be studied through the research for this dissertation.

What could be gained from a contemporary gathering of materials and resources on the culture is the ability to show how a people have been able to maintain a culture in the midst of large-scale tourism and accelerated development. Resorts on islands such as Hilton Head Island are becoming a principal economic venture for many local

governments along the coastal Sea Islands. Throughout this text, the term Gullah Coast will be used to identify the islands inhabited by the Gullah people that span the coastline from Sands Island, South Carolina, to Amelia Island, Florida.

The following text is the amalgamation of traditional historical and anthropological research combined with the techniques of documentary production for the purpose of introducing concepts in multimedia technology. With the growing usage of computers in schools and in homes, such multimedia technology lends itself to the creation of educational tools in academic areas such as African and African American Studies. Making tools of this type available to computer-literate persons (an ever-growing number of the population) could tap into the educational potential of a new generation of students and the creators of internet accessibility.

The field research for this dissertation took place during the summer of 1998. Using two still cameras (one for color, the other for black-and-white), an audio cassette for interviews, and a digital video camera for documenting events, time was spent collecting stories and images on Saint Helena Island, South Carolina. Previous research into existing texts helped to guide some of the interviews, but much of what was recorded from family and friends were stories that had yet to be documented. Although there were connections to historical events and places, the impressions of the people who lived through certain historical times were never researched or published. Compact audio cassettes, smaller still cameras and digital video technology were less obtrusive and easier to manage around an older generation skeptical toward a researcher trying to document their lives. Surprisingly, much of the history and culture were still intact, confirming that the Gullah culture was not lost, as many contemporary researchers

appear to believe. Answers to questions as to the continued existence of the Gullah culture were readily found when the elders in their 70s, 80s, and 90s began telling stories, some of them relating to events from the late 1800s.

Images and sound collected from Saint Helena Island, coupled with footage from existing documentaries and other source materials, will be discussed in the chapter on how to design an interactive multimedia tutorial. Consideration for existing research will be incorporated into the design, giving an historical and contemporary view of the Gullah people. Previous research on the Gullah culture reveals that there was no single West African cultural contribution, although dominant cultural patterns may be found at differing periods of the European enslavement of Africans. Congo-Angolans, Senegambians, and Rice Coast Africans are the principal contributors to the Gullah cultural formation. The most influential West African ethnic group that contributed to the development of the Gullah culture was from the Mende Society of Sierra Leone.⁷ The significance of this cultural link and how the Gullah people survived into the 1990s forms the basis for designing an educational tool to tell the story of these people from an insider's point of view.

Literature Review

Historical documentations and publications since the early 1800s can be found on the language, the culture, and spirituality of the Gullah people. Researchers have found commonalties to West African cultures using the same research method as the search for language and culture among the Sea Islanders. Modes of agriculture, common foods and cooking, kinship patterns, even children's games have been analyzed. The most familiar

research published on the Gullah culture is from the earlier part of the 1900s.

Documentation predating the 1920s, when researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill spent months at a time on Saint Helena Island, is sporadic and covers several islands along the South Carolina and Georgia coast. Of the many islands on the Gullah Coast, Saint Helena Island has held the most interest for scholars of Anthropology, History, Linguistics, and Sociology. Publications since the 1930s have captured a culture still maintaining an extraordinarily high retention of a heritage that few Americans of African descent can claim.

Specific mid-20th century publications have been able to address the role of Africans in the Americas. Two such publications that attempted to educate a larger population on African contributions and retention were ill-received during the decades of their publication, but have since become important research tools documenting African traditions in the United States. Melville J. Herskovits's The Myth of the Negro Past (1958) addressed African heritage with some mention of coastal African retention, and the Georgia Writers' Project Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes (1940) has been instrumental in collecting oral history from African descendants on Georgia Sea Islands.

Originally released in 1941 at the time of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Herskovits's The Myth of the Negro Past met with the same fate as Drums and Shadows. Herskovits's intent to "debunk the racist myth that black Americans have no cultural past"⁸ was the start of a field later to be known as Afro-American Studies. Herskovits' anthropological study of African and Afro-American culture uncovered that:

The millions of Africans who were dragged to the New World were not blank slates upon which European civilizations would write at will. They were peoples with complex social, political, and religious systems of their own. By forced transportation and incessant violence, slavery was able to interdict the transfer of those systems as systems; none could be carried intact across the sea. But it could not crush the intellects, habits of mind, and spirits of its victims. They survived in spite of everything, their children survived, and in them survived Africa.⁹

The 1990 reprint of The Myth of the Negro Past was unchanged from the original printing. The document now had an occasion to fulfill Herskovits's purpose: to educate Americans about the Afro-American past.

Sea Island folklife on the Georgia coast, conjuring, and African spirituality are the basis for the Georgia Writers' Project Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes. The Federal Writer's Project of the Franklin Roosevelt New Deal era provided income for over six thousand persons affected by the Depression. The result of the countrywide project was the most extensive compilation of folklore and folklife in the entire country. The Savannah Unit of this project concentrated on African survival stories, folkways, and religion on the Sea Islands.

The publication of Drums in 1940 aroused controversy due to the displacement of images portraying the South in the movie version of Gone with the Wind, released the previous year, which depicted assimilated, complacent Negroes. The book met with little acknowledgment and no public support. Until recent years its significance was neither realized nor accepted. As Charles Joyner observes in the introduction of the reprint, "The importance of Drums and Shadows is much clearer in retrospect. It was the pioneering book in demonstrating the continuing, living influence of African folklore among Afro-Americans."¹⁰

Instead of presenting an overview of the African Diaspora in the United States covered by Herskovits, the focus is on texts relating to the Gullah Coast and the historical influences upon that region. Peter Wood's Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (1974) chronicles the early rice plantation development in South Carolina and the significance of Africans in contributing to the economic success of that colony. Rice was the crop that created wealth for the new European venture. Knowledge of how to cultivate this crop came from the West Africans with the cultural skill dating back centuries. Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina (1981) by David C. Littlefield and Down by the Riverside (1984) by Charles Joyner explore the world of the rice growers on the plantations and the culture that could be traced to a specific location in Africa. This specificity was possible not only because of slave ship manifests, but also due to certain distinctions within the culture. Littlefield refers to the Rice Coast of Sierra Leone and the knowledge of indigo, rice, and cotton recorded by European entrepreneurs.¹¹ With a specific location identified in the business ledgers of entrepreneurs, the origins of the culture found on the Gullah Coast could be traced using more than language and culture. Written documents from the European slave trade can confirm the origins of ethnic groups.

Christopher Fyfe Sierra Leone Inheritance (1964) and A.P. Kup Sierra Leone: A Concise History (1975) are historical publications on the West African country, chronicling history before the African encounter of Europeans up to a contemporary view that includes many of its repatriated ethnic groups. Within this one country now exist the Mende, the dominant ethnic origin of the Gullah people, and the Krio people who came

full circle from the coastal islands of South Carolina and Georgia. The language link between the two continents was first established through the work of Lorenzo Dow Turner in Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect (1949). The work of Turner was continued in the 1980s by anthropologist Joseph Opala who confirmed the language connections linking the coast of South Carolina and Georgia to the cultures of Sierra Leone. The 1987 publication by Opala sponsored by the United States Information Service in Sierra Leone, "The Gullah: Rice, Slavery, and the Sierra Leone-American Connection," led to a presidential visit the following year to St. Helena Island, South Carolina, by the dignitaries from that country. In 1989, a group of Gullahs and Black Seminoles from South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma was part of a countrywide homecoming celebration in Sierra Leone making the connection between the cultures complete.

Other resources on the Gullah Coast constitute a wide range of materials published within recent years. The 1991 publication of Sea Island Roots: African Presence in the Carolinas & Georgia by Mary A. Twining and Keith E. Baird is a compilation of essays on varying aspects of Sea Island culture and its continuity to West Africa. Twining also completed a dissertation on the Gullahs of Johns Island near Charleston, South Carolina in 1972, noting that the culture researched in the 1930s was still intact and maintaining some level of its creolized language. Earlier ethnological research on Johns Island inhabitants by Guy and Candi Carawan, Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life, published in 1966 served as a comparative resource for stories and songs in connection with stories and songs from other islands on the Gullah Coast. The research by Patricia Jones-Jackson, When Roots Die: Endangered Traditions on the Sea Island (1987) and by Margaret Washington Creel, A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and

Community Culture Among the Gullahs (1988), utilizes works of the 1980s which link a continuity that extends from documentation of the 1930s.

The most extensive research on St. Helena Island was in the 1920s and '30s. These publications have been used by scholars to trace the West African ethnic groups that helped to form the Gullah culture. Some of the well-intentioned researchers and authors were the following: Guy B. Johnson, Folk Culture on St. Helena Island South Carolina (1930); Guion Griffis Johnson, A Social History of the Sea Islands (1930), two members of a larger research team, documenting and studying the cultural phenomenon created by a people living in isolation; Clyde Vernon Kiser, Sea Island to City: A Study of St. Helena Islanders in Harlem and Other Urban Centers (1932), tracing the migration of Saint Helena Island residents facing an uncertain economic future after the hurricanes of 1893 and 1911, followed by the destruction of King Cotton caused by the boll weevil; Rossa Cooley, then principal of Penn Normal, Industrial and Agricultural School, Homes of the Freed (1926) and School Acres: An Adventure in Rural Education (1930), documenting the educational process of a people living in the culture they created and their transition into a larger society in which they were expected to work; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (1869) and Charlotte Forten Grimké, The Journal of Charlotte Forten Grimké (published posthumously in 1953), each writing about their first contact with newly freed African descendants during the Civil War, as they took part in the Port Royal Experiment in Beaufort County, South Carolina, that led to the plans for Southern Reconstruction.

Historical analysis is also provided by the publications on St. Helena Island establishing a continuity over a period of time: Edith Dabbs in Sea Island Diary: A

History of St. Helena Island (1983), a comprehensive history of St. Helena prior to the first Spanish colony until the 1980s; Theodore Rosengarten's research of a plantation owner and the descendants on St. Helena Island in Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter (1986); the effect of Civil War and the plans to rescue the South through a redevelopment program, explored in Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (1964) by Willie Lee Rose and in Port Royal Under Six Flags: The Story of the Sea Islands (1960) by Katharine M. Jones.

Multimedia Technology

Multimedia, an outgrowth of new media technology, is a computer-based program design using specific computer software to produce education, entertainment, and information-sharing tools. When interactive components are added into the design, a person can explore the program at an individual pace or share that program with a larger group. Combining interactive multimedia program design with textual information in a workbook structure turns the computer-based-only tool into courseware, specifically educational courseware. Courseware becomes the utilization of text and CD-ROM to teach about a specific topic or issue. "Multimedia can be defined as a computer-based interactive communications process that incorporates text, graphics, sound, animation, and video."¹² This simplified definition of multimedia has become a standard description of the materials incorporated to create a specific courseware. Additional materials can be included with film, photography, digital production, and the inclusion of internet research. The basic idea is that multimedia does not exclude any possible material in the design and outcome of a specific multimedia tutorial. A user can interact with computer-

generated components and pursue a chosen direction in a random process informed by the text that has been developed on a topic. The final design of a multimedia tutorial then becomes the prerogative of an individual or a production team focused on creating a certain experience for the user. The design process is as flexible as multimedia itself. Creating a final outcome has the potential to be successful or to lead to misuse, leaving the user with faulty information. Multimedia, interactivity, and courseware together form the foundation for a new paradigm in experiential learning.

Multimedia development in education during the 1980s has been examined through the perspectives of Charles Heimler, James Cunningham, and Michael Nevard in Authoring Educational Software (1987). As early developers of computer-based training, their understanding of multimedia is a precursor to the contemporary version of the 1990s. A beginning view gives a developmental juxtaposition to what is effective and what has changed in educational software. Contemporary sources for multimedia in education include articles from educators describing software utilization and design elements in Multimedia for Learning: Development, Application and Evaluation (1993), edited by Diane M. Gayesk, and Handbook of Research for Educational Communications and Technology (1996), edited by David H. Jonassen. Tay Vaughan, considered a multimedia pioneer and expert, introduces in Multimedia: Making It Work (1994) concepts of CD-ROM as courseware-style material, also demystifies multimedia for any person wanting to learn about multimedia usage and creation.

Interactivity is one of the design components that add excitement to the idea of learning. With its beginnings in kiosk games at the mall, a growing population has become comfortable with game interactivity, interfacing with what is seen on the

computer screen. Interactivity makes a passive experience active, placing the information at the control or pace of the user. The experience the user expects when facing a computer must be considered in the software design. When and how to include an interactive component in the design must be considered by the tutorial producer throughout the software. Interactivity is a more recent manifestation of educational materials arising from the many-faceted uses of the computer "mouse."

Interactive design has been studied by companies who produce the software enabling a producer to create a tutorial. Making the computer image respond to the actions of the user is an important design aspect of the tutorial. The discourse on interactivity in multimedia is on-going, but the collected works of educators and companies exploring this phenomenon have been researched primarily from The Interactive Learning Revolution: Multimedia in Education and Training (1990) edited by John Barker and Richard N. Tucker and Learning with Interactive Multimedia: Developing and Using Multimedia Tools in Education (1990), edited by Sueann Ambron and Kristina Hooper. Both texts are collections of essays from educators and software designers in the industry. With the knowledge that interactive multimedia is more than a temporary fad, educators and technologists give their perspective on the uses of interactive multimedia development in this new teaching paradigm.

The word courseware is new terminology describing the interrelated usage of book and computer. An example to be used as a guide in courseware development is a tutorial on multimedia by James E. Shuman, Multimedia in Action (1998). This text includes a CD-ROM as the exercise component to understanding the material. Although this courseware is a tutorial for learning multimedia, the style of incorporation can be

researched as a basis for effective interaction between the two mediums. Shuman, a college educator, used his experience teaching multimedia as the basis for researching and designing his courseware. The text teaches how to create multimedia titles for general use. Incorporating these two diverse media, text and multimedia technology, and helping a person learn about culture is the principal concern for this research.

This demonstration on courseware design will be culturally specific. Researching and designing effective courseware on teaching about the Gullah people on St. Helena Island is the outcome of this dissertation. Discovering the means by which outsiders can understand the Gullah culture off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia is a long-term effort for which the requisite contemporary tools may now be available. The stages for designing a courseware unit on Saint Helena Island are analyzed as a prototype for a work-in-progress on the entire Gullah Coast. A complete courseware on the Gullah culture will become an on-going endeavor inspired by a personal connection to a culture that has long been misunderstood. Using this study as a guide to making cultures more accessible to a larger society can be beneficial to researchers exploring the uses of the newest communication technology as a tool for education.

Summary and Conclusion

Each chapter of this text represents a specific approach to gathering information on the Gullah culture. Chapter 1, "Introduction: Preserving the Memories of a People," identifies the reasons behind the need for this text-and-multimedia combination.

Documentation of a culture through the use of media tools can complement traditional forms of academic research and has the potential to expand how educators can present

materials. Multimedia also can be used as an independent form of educating about cultures.

In Chapter 2, "Rice Coast to Gullah Coast: The Beginning of the Gullah People," the content is based on research compiled from scholars who have provided substantial material on the connection between the coastal areas of Sierra Leone and the Sea Islands of the United States. This chapter represents an anthropological capsule of the African background of the Mende Society, continuing with the subsequent forced migration of these people into the coastal islands of the Southern United States. This dominant cultural identity has been traced within the Sea Island region through aspects of language, culture, and spirituality. An analysis is presented on various items found to connect specific African ethnic groups to the creolized Gullah people.

A historical overview of the culture is in Chapter 3, "Saint Helena Island, South Carolina: Plantation to Community." Although an overview of Beaufort County history is described, this chapter concentrates on the periods between 1860 (during the American Civil War) and 1920, when economics and the building of a bridge became two strong factors in creating changes within the culture. The Gullah people on St. Helena Island were independent and self-sufficient. Their isolation on the island not only kept much of their pre-Civil War heritage intact, but also cultivated social mores that defined them as a stalwart people left to their own devices by the local county government. Penn School's influence on the islanders is discussed, describing how the school became a part of the history-making of the island through the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. This chapter concludes with references to research on the Black Seminoles and Krios and their cultural connection to the Gullah people.

Chapter 4, "'Look'um een de yeye': Gathering Stories from the Elders for Multimedia Production," analyzes the research procedures used to record oral histories during field research in 1998. The interviews were collected from the older residents on St. Helena Island who were raised by the generation closest to the independent people of the Reconstruction era. "Look'um een de yeye" is a phrase that represents the attitude of the St. Helena Island residents. Many of the residents had never been interviewed for research or preservation purposes. The stories that have now been recorded are just the beginning to many more questions that need be answered about coming of age in a unique community. The chapter continues with the design decisions on how to use the collected documentation for producing a multimedia tutorial. Further analysis is made on how this form of research and documentation for preservation can be implemented as a larger project along the entire Gullah Coast. As an investigation into understanding the Gullah culture through multimedia, this dissertation should be regarded as a prolegomenon for continued research along the Gullah Coast.

Chapter 5, "Conclusion: Documentation for Preservation of the Gullah Culture," reviews the cultural survivalism and creolization of the Gullah people. An argument is made in support of using new media technology to introduce marginalized cultures to a broader constituency. This will insure that a new generation will learn about the cultural history and contributions of a significant West African population residing within the United States.

NOTES

¹ Ann E. Barron and Gary W. Orwig, New Technologies for Education: A Beginner's Guide (Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1997), 4. Barron and Orwig introduce concepts in the use of New Media Technology as a teaching tool. Trends in technology and specific forms of classroom implementation are discussed as guides for educators.

² Union troops captured Beaufort County, South Carolina from the Confederacy in 1861, and held this territory throughout the Civil War. Such a strategic point in the South became central to making military forays into Confederate territory. The population on these islands nearly doubled with African descendants escaping plantations in surrounding counties and nearby states. Harriet Tubman used this location as one of her resting places while rescuing enslaved people through the Underground Railroad. The Port Royal Experiment is a significant part of US history during the Civil War that should not be forgotten, introducing land ownership and educational programs to the island. Northern teachers were supported by freedmen societies of Philadelphia and New England. Willie Lee Rose has compiled this history in Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), 29.

³ A daily account of life on Saint Helena Island, South Carolina, during the Civil War can be found in Charlotte Forten's journals. She was a Northerner of African descent in contact with Southerners of similar heritage. She taught the islanders according to her standards as a native of Philadelphia. Forten gives information about her pleasures and hardships as a teacher for islanders of various ages. Her personal contact stories are insightful, describing events of the period and the island culture whose lives changed due to Civil War. Forten, Charlotte. The Journal of Charlotte Forten Grimké (New York: The Dreyden Press, Inc., 1951; repr., edited by Brenda Stevenson for The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Women Writers, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 386.

⁴ Twining and Baird compile essays on the topic of African retention on the Gullah Coast. Each essay confirms that the island inhabitants have retained many of their West African traditions due to isolation of the islands from the mainland. Naming, basketry, and quilting are some of the more obvious cultural behaviors that separate the Gullah people from other Americans of African descent. Twining, Mary A. and Keith E. Baird, eds., Sea Island Roots: African Presence in the Carolinas & Georgia (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1977), 1-18.

⁵Clyde Vernon Kiser had access to census information and agricultural statistics that show a population change over a few decades. The loss of being able to sustain oneself and family without outside help was the turning point for this island in the 1930s. Having held on to land and culture since the Civil War, these islanders began to face the new invaders--tourists. Sea Island to City (New York: Atheneum, Columbia University Press, 1969), 82-84.

⁶Unlike so many historical accounts of the Sea Islands during the Civil War to present, Edith Dabbs begins by telling the history of St. Helena Island from the days of its original habitants, the days when the region was named Chicora. Sea Island Diary: A History of St. Helena Island (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1983), 217-237, not only includes details on the history of Penn School, but also gives a lengthy history on the significance of this island in the making of the Americas:

The first attempted settlement in the New World, the first fort erected, the first ocean going boat built and launched from the New World, the first religious pilgrims, the first churches (6), the first Negro Girl Scout south of Baltimore (245).

⁷The research of Joseph Opala has led to an official anthropological and political connection between Sierra Leone and the Gullah Coast. In 1988, the president of Sierra Leone made a visit to St. Helena Island, South Carolina, after reading Opala's accounts of the cultural link to this location. A documentary was made of this event and the event one year later when a contingent of Gullahs from South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Oklahoma was invited by the president to return "home." "Family Across the Sea," produced through South Carolina Educational Television, shows the return of descendants from that society returning to the country of their ancestors birth, and to the slave prison where their ancestors were shipped to the Gullah Coast. Joseph Opala's "The Gullah: Rice, Slavery, and the Sierra Leone-American Connection" (Freetown, Sierra Leone: United States Embassy, United States Information Services, 1987), is the pamphlet that the president of Sierra Leone read which began this journey. Opala, Joseph A., "The Gullah: Rice, Slavery, and the Sierra Leone-American Connection" (Freetown, Sierra Leone: United States Embassy, United States Information Services, 1987), 1-10.

⁸Melville Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (Boston Beacon Press, 1941; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), back cover.

⁹Ibid., xviii.

¹⁰Work Projects Administration, Georgia Writers Project, Savannah Unit, Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1940; reprint, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), xv.

¹¹Daniel C. Littlefield, Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1981; reprint, Chicago: Illini Books edition, University of Illinois Press, 1991), 76. Littlefield's descriptions of rice, indigo, and cotton as familiar crops on the Rice Coast of West Africa establishes the existence of these crops in Africa before their introduction to the Americas. Translocation of West Africans to the coast of South Carolina and Georgia was based on the agricultural knowledge of these crops, primarily rice. European expansionist attempts to grow rice in North and South Carolina failed. Littlefield then illustrates the development of coastal plantations by European enslavement of West African ethnic groups who could cultivate these crops.

¹²Shuman, James E., Multimedia in Action (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998), 5.

CHAPTER 2

RICE COAST TO GULLAH COAST: THE BEGINNING OF THE GULLAH CULTURE

Africans enslaved in the New World were believed to have forgotten the ways of living that were part of their African past. The historical and social acceptance by European descendants in the United States, as it relates to African descendants, was that of a people who had no history, according to the research of Melville Herskovits's in The Myth of the Negro Past. The forced enslavement of Africans by Europeans into the colonies of the Americas was such a successful commercial venture for Europeans that the physical and psychological trauma suffered by those Africans that were transported seemed insignificant.

The enslavement of Africans that began by the Portuguese in the 1440s, for the purpose of cheap labor in the Iberian Peninsula, escalated by the mid-1550s in response to burgeoning British capitalism. A labor force was needed to build the New World of the European expansionists; cultivation in the territory of the Americas would need a work force of slaves. The trade in humans as a labor force was not new in Africa, or in Europe. However, the conditions of legalized enslavement, coupled with the massive destruction of communities and countries which fueled this economic endeavor from the 16th through the 19th centuries, developed into the contemporary search for the origins of Diasporic Africans.

According to Dr. Walter Rodney, Guyanese scholar and leader in the Working Peoples Alliance:

No one knows for certain how many Africans were taken from their homes to be reached the American continent and the Caribbean islands as a result of the Atlantic slave-trade. Since a high percentage of people died on board the slave-ships when crossing the Atlantic, the numbers leaving Africa were much higher than fifteen million. Furthermore, many Africans were killed on African soil during the brutal process of obtaining slaves. It is not surprising that altogether West Africa lost forty to fifty millions of its population because of the Atlantic slave-trade.¹

Dr. Rodney was assassinated in 1980 for his work with the Alliance and his analysis on the redevelopment of Africa after the centuries of European colonialism. His historical insight on the enslavement of Africans merges the economic prosperity of European merchants, and the divisive politics of Europeans promoting conflicts among African kingdoms to trade the losers for commercial goods, with the build up of the American colonies. He describes barracoons (trading "factories" that held captured Africans) with notorious reputations for always having enslaved Africans ready for transport to any ship that needed a new supply of humans.

An estimated 7 percent of the Diasporic Africans made it to what is now the United States of America. West and Central Africa lost approximately one third of their populations by the 1850s, a decade of political dissension between the northern and the southern territories of the United States that would lead to civil war.

The resilience of a people to survive the tragedy of capture, the waiting for the unexpected at an encampment on the coast of West Africa for unknown periods of time, only to be transported in the bowels of a ship for weeks surrounded by illness and death, is testimony to survivors creating a link with one other. Creating language, culture, and religion was a phenomenal challenge for Africans of many cultures surviving an unknown fate.

The presence of millions of surviving African descendants in the North and South American continents, as well as the Caribbean, have evolved into a testimony of human endurance, not only of physical determination, but also for the remarkable ability of

uprooted women, men, and children to retain language, culture, and spirituality. There were deliberate attempts on the part of traffickers in human bondage to suppress the identities of Africans in order to curb resistance and revolt. "The danger of mutiny was greatest when all the slaves on board [slave ships] belonged to a single tribe."² Separating families also meant a loss of identity and an initial break with the past. Recreating a newly found human commodity for economic gain meant an effort at ending within Africans any knowledge of Africa. Despite shipping implementations to control human cargo, some attempts at curtailing resistance were not always effective:

Men, women, and children who for generations had helped create families, tribes, nations, and empires--who had known no other land but the land of their fathers, no other rule but the rule of their African peoples--must have develop within themselves a powerful will to break free from this captivity.³

The Sea Island Gullah

Charles Town, later known as Charleston, South Carolina, was one of the major seaports and markets for international trade and commerce in the colonies, and eventually the United States. A major commodity was that of enslaved Africans. Africans from designated ethnic groups were insisted upon by owners of lowland plantations for their mastery of specific crafts and agricultural skills. Low-country agriculture was prosperous after being nurtured by the African people who had the technical knowledge for the development of each crop. The marshy region off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia was renowned for the production of indigo, rice, and cotton--each at differing stages of Sea Island history.

During each phase of agricultural investment, a new African cultural group was introduced to the Sea Islands. The first agricultural phase was the rice and indigo crops of the 1720s through 1744 (Angolans until the Stono Rebellion in 1739, then the Gambians). The middle agricultural phase, from the 1750s to the 1780s, was a period of

rice growing (Senegambia and Rice Coast). The third and final phase, 1804 through 1807 (Bantu-speaking people of Central Africa), was the time for southern agricultural prosperity in cotton.⁴

The African slaves' cultural heritage was based on numerous West and Central African cultures brought together collectively from Senegambia (Wolof, Mandingo, Malinke, Bambara, Fulani, Papel, Limba, Bola, and Balante), the Sierra Leone coast (Temne and Mende), the Liberian coast (Vai, De, Gola, Kissi, Bassa, and Grebo), and the Slave Coast (Yoruba, Nupe, Benin, Dahomean [Fon], Ewe, Ga, Popo, Ebo-Bini, and Fante). From the Central African coast came Bakongo, Malimbo, Bambo, Ndungo, Balimbe, Badongo, Luba, Loanga, Luango, and Ovimbundu.⁵

Each cultural group left its own impact on the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands. The Angolans were the earliest cultural group imported to the islands as field hands. Members of the Rice Coast (Sierra Leone and Liberia) were then abducted for their skills in cultivating indigo, rice, and cotton. Senegambians added to the coastal agricultural development and to the experience of fishing and netcasting--a continuity from the cultural locality of the Senegal and Gambia Rivers.

The enslaved West and Central Africans recreated culture and tradition on the Sea Islands. Each ethnic group contributed language, culture, and spirituality into a creolized identity now recognized as Gullah. According to Peter Wood in Black Majority, "The etymology of the term 'Gullah' itself remains in some doubt. It could represent an abbreviated form of Angola, . . . it could also derive from the Gola tribe of the Windward Coast, which would relate to expressed preferences for slaves from the rice-growing region. The most likely answer is that both sources contributed to the word, and that it has a multiple etymology . . ."⁶ Due to the isolation of the islands, separated from the mainland by the intercoastal waterway, the Gullah culture evolved with little interference for the next two hundred years, ensuring the continuity of traditions and rituals from Africa.

The Sea Islands are replete with little-known stories of Africans building the

plantations that would become the images of the Ante-bellum South, growing the profitable crops of rice, indigo, and King Cotton for sale in the United States and in European countries. More commonly revered by historians of Southern heritage are impressions of wealthy landowners of European descent living on expansive verandahs in leisure and comfort. Some of the richest Southern plantations were on the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, owing to their proximity to the Charleston and Savannah ports, surrounded by the boggy marsh used as fertilizer that yielded superb harvests year after year. Landowners became absentee landlords gallivanting in Northern society and in Europe, leaving the operation of the plantations to the devices of overseers and "drivers."⁷ Whips and chains were a greater incentive for hard work than individual purpose for those Africans who happened to survive the three-and-a-half century long holocaust of the Middle Passage (Fig. 2).

Identifying a dominant African cultural contribution to the development of the Sea Island Gullah has been the focus of research since the United States Civil War. Despite the legalized control mechanisms of plantation management, there was an emergence of language, culture, and spirituality on the Sea Islands unlike any other location of Diasporic Africans in the United States. A compilation of research on the Gullah culture reveals that there was no one West African cultural contribution, although dominant cultural patterns may be found because of various agricultural investments. Particular cultural locations were confirmed by shipping manifests from the port of Charleston and accounts listing plantation owners' requests for certain ethnic groups. The Temne and Mende cultures were dominant, with some traces of the Vai, Kissi, and the Gola. The migratory Mande influenced these groups, as they traveled into and claimed portions of contemporary Sierra Leone and Liberia. "Mande traders spread civilization to the south, . . . The Mande diaspora did not diminish their cultural identity. Such was the

Mande strength of ethnicity that the cultural focus of the civilization was maintained, even among its widely dispersed members."⁸

Traces of the Mande are subtle and not accurately documented for the purposes of academic research. Three items that have been officially documented are aspects of Gullah language, strip formation in quilting, and rice cultivation.

The Mande Ancestors

Lexicons have been designed comparing Sea Island and African languages. The 1940s research by linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner became the groundwork for unbiased and accurate studies on the Gullah language. "Up to the present time I have found in the vocabulary of the Negroes in the coastal South Carolina and Georgia approximately four thousand West African words, besides many survivals in syntax, inflections, sounds and intonations. . . . I have recorded in Georgia a few songs the words of which are entirely African."⁹ Also common in the link to West Africa is the naming practice and the African names present on the Sea Islands.

Basket names, given to a child soon after birth, are traceable to several West African ethnic groups. The names are usually used only by the child's family or community. Basket names are not "outsider" names. Turner listed over 1,000 names on the Sea Islands with origins in nearly thirty West African languages. In the 1980s, Patricia Jones-Jackson, researching in the tradition of Turner, made a current list of words still common usage among the Sea Islanders. Some words that can be traced to Mande influences are:

African	English	Ethnic Group
<i>gumbi</i>	"medicinal weed"	Bambara
<i>heh</i>	"yes"	Vai
<i>jambi</i>	"yam"	Vai
<i>chicabod</i>	"seesaw"	Mandingo
<i>pinto, bento</i>	"coffin"	Temne ¹⁰

The creolization of the Gullah culture and the language are testimony to the survival of a people through adverse conditions. In order for languages to meld and continue for many generations, lessons are passed on through everyday living. Although the meanings of many words and names have been lost, their influence is still present. Echoes of Africa in daily living also can be found in the making of quilts. A part of Mande heritage has continued, as has the language, with no knowledge of its origin, but with its purpose intact.

The quilts made by African descendants were different from those of European Americans in that the cover design materials featured a "staggered, 'syncopated' strip formation, and utilized differences in color to achieve the effect of highlights placed in dramatic dispersion on the quilt top."¹¹ Patches also can be used to make the strips of cloth before connecting the strips into a staggered pattern. The strips or patches are more than utilitarian in the Gullah culture. "The quilts are cryptic chronicles, readable only by those who are initiated into the lexicon and context of the familial documents involved. They are an historical record, a primary source, coming directly out of the life of the family."¹² A patchwork record of family history is passed to the next generation, the young child being told the stories behind each patch or each strip of cloth as part of the bedtime ritual.

The similarity in structure found in the quilts of the Gullah culture is traceable to

Mande influence. The aesthetic transfer of this form of cloth piecing may be intact, but the spiritual significance is not noted in the Gullah culture. What is a family history in one culture was a deterrent of evil spirits in another. "In Senegambia it was important to randomize the flow of paths, since 'evil travels in straight lines.'"¹³ Each culture influenced by the Mande textile pattern added its own group code. Group affiliation can be noted in contemporary kente strips, each style denoting the group and the protection from evil the cloth promotes. The migratory Mande added parts of its own culture to other ethnic groups as they spread from inland savanna regions west to the Atlantic, north to the Niger River and south to the Akan territory of the Ivory Coast.

The Mande-speaking people were not known in the area of Sierra Leone and Liberia until the middle of the 1500s. The Mande were not invaders, as would be the encroaching Europeans, but rather a trading collective that left behind parts of their culture as they moved on. Settling on the Rice Coast of West Africa (Sierra Leone and Liberia) put the Mande in direct line with the European enslavement of Africans.¹⁴

It has been speculated that the Mande-speaking people existed in the West African territory for centuries before the Common Era. This enduring ethnic culture seems to have maintained an identity that thrived until its expansion out of the savannas of Africa. Once on the coast of West Africa, the next migration was by force: the African Diaspora to the new world intertwined the Mande aesthetic with other ethnic peoples also forced into the trauma of enslavement.

Retention of Mande cultural influence by the Sea Island Gullah was happenstance. The initial influx of the members of the Mande kingdom was large enough before the incorporation of Sierra Leone to lay the foundations of certain beliefs on the new territory. All other groups of West Africans who were shipped to the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia only added their cultural identity to the one

acknowledged as the cultural infrastructure, which becomes evident upon reviewing the three agricultural phases between the 1720s and 1807.

Another component for the cultural connection with this ethnic group in West Africa is the cultivation of rice, considered a new staple crop desired by Europeans in the 17th century. Colonists determined that the subtropical territory of South Carolina was an excellent location for rice cultivation. Many early attempts by European laborers to grow rice failed due to ignorance of the extensive process required for a successful harvest. The agricultural solution for European colonists introducing rice in the North American continent would next come from Africa.

Researchers on African agriculture have found that "as early as 1500 B.C. two important centers of rice cultivation emerged in Africa, the first (circa 1500 B.C.) just west of the bend of the Niger in the Western Sudan--in the Central Niger Delta--and the second (between 1500-1800 B.C.) in Senegambia in the area of the Casemance River."¹⁵ Many researchers have speculated on a possible connection to rice cultivation in Asia, but have recognized that the variety of *Oryza glaberrima* is different from the Asian *Oryza sativa*. and could be indigenous to the African continent.¹⁶ Rice-growing cultivation practices have been found to be part of cultural habits and diet, generating cultural lore in ethnic groups in the area of West Africa which Europeans would soon label as the Rice Coast. Other crops would be transplanted from this region to the European colonies of North America, along with the enslavement of the people who had the agricultural knowledge. According to one European observer traveling through the Rice Coast region, "I beheld an agreeable champaign, intersected with morasses, where rice grew naturally without being sown. The higher grounds were covered with millet; and there also the indigo and cotton plants displayed a most lovely verdure."¹⁷

Within fifty years of colonial development in South Carolina, and the introduction

of rice as a potentially profitable crop, the cultivation of rice began to create wealth for the plantations of South Carolina and, later, Georgia. Specific requests for Rice Coast slaves were made by plantation owners at such a pace that "two decades after 1695 when rice production took permanent hold in South Carolina, the African portion of the population drew equal to, and then surpassed, the European portion."¹⁸ The majority African population on the rice plantations of the coastal territory lived in near isolation because of the high mortality rate of Europeans from tropical diseases. According to anthropologist, Joseph Opala, this isolation is the primary reason for the development of the Gullah culture. His research on the Sierra Leone-Gullah connection has lead him to conclude:

The Gullah slaves in coastal South Carolina and Georgia lived in a very different situation from that of slaves in other North American colonies. The Gullahs had little contact with whites. They experienced a largely isolated community life on the rice plantations, and their isolation and numerical strength enabled them to preserve a great many African cultural traditions. By the early 1700s the Gullah slaves were already bringing together distinctive language, rituals, customs, music, crafts, and diet drawing on the cultures of the various African tribes they represented. The emergence of the Gullah was due, above all, to the isolation of black slaves in a disease environment hostile to whites and to their numerical predominance in the region--but another important factor was the continuing importation of slaves directly from Africa, and especially from the rice-growing areas along the West Coast. The South Carolina and Georgia planters realized that the specialized nature of their crop required a constant influx of slaves born in Africa, not in the West Indies or in the neighboring colonies. So, a black community, already isolated from whites, was being constantly renewed by forced immigration from Africa.¹⁹

Rice, along with cotton, continued as principal crops on the islands of South Carolina and Georgia until the United States Civil War (1860-1865). Through constant attendance by the culture that cultivated these products, rice and cotton would remain the crops which sustained the economics of a culture learning to operate free from enslavement. Members of the Gullah culture became owners of the lands that were once plantations. They remained in isolation on the islands of South Carolina and Georgia as a

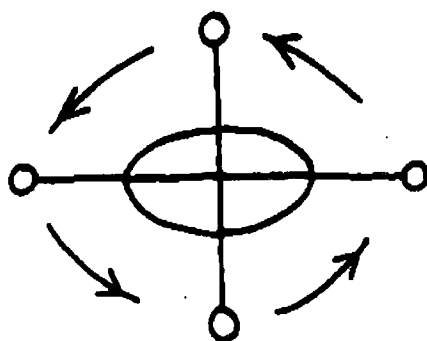
self-sustaining group, keeping their West African heritage intact, until a change in agriculture began to alter the economy. "The rice economy of South Carolina and Georgia collapsed after about 1890 due to competition with rice farmers farther west in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. By 1900, the rice plantations were all abandoned, and the fields were returning to swampland."²⁰ The Gullah cultural identity is as creolized as their language and as dominant as rice. Commonalties with West African cultures have been traced by the same research method as the search for original language. Modes of agriculture, common foods and cooking, kinship patterns, even children's games have been analyzed. A significant transformation of West African culture can be found in religious practices. Margaret Washington Creel, historian and scholar, has studied Gullah culture and spirituality. Among her observations on Gullah religion:

For the African--and this was also true for the Gullahs--religion was a process of total immersion. Spiritual concerns could not be set apart from secular or communal ones. Religion assumed a meaning outside of a "holy" building, a "sacred" day of the week, or a set of dogmas and creeds to be accepted at face value. In the traditional world view, spirituality affected one's whole system of being, embracing the consciousness, social interactions and attitudes, fears and dispositions of the community at large.²¹

Symbols and songs are the primary references to connecting spirituality of the Gullahs to West Africa. Conjuring methods for healing are common on both continents. Tales of ancestors' spirits and rituals of caring for both the living and the dead persevered over the centuries. One of the most notable symbols identified that connects the Sea Islands to West Africa is the Bakongo sign of the cosmos and the continuation of human life. Archeological digs on plantation sites in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida located marks on the bottoms of Colono Ware bowls (classification for Native American "period" pottery) and traced the origin to the Bakongo of southwest Africa. "Their

homeland is in the area identified in discussions of the Atlantic slave trade as the 'Congo-Angolan regions.' Bakongo culture has been so influential that many non-Bakongo people in Zaire and northern Angola have adopted Bakongo practices, especially in religion. During the time when traders brought slaves to North America, almost half of those arriving in South Carolina came from the Congo-Angolan region, the region of Bakongo influence."²²

The Bakongo image of a cross has been recognized as the Four Moments of the Sun. The horizontal line divides the living world from its parallel of the dead. The concept of death means rebirth. Time has no end and the future can also be the past in Bakongo ideology.²³



Yowa:
the Kongo sign of cosmos
and the continuity
of human life

The above symbol of immortality²⁴ in the Gullah culture is "most readily discernible in four major forms of expression: cosmograms marked on the ground for purposes of initiation and meditation of spiritual power between worlds; the sacred Kongo medicines, or *minkisi*; the use of graves of the recently deceased as charms of ancestral vigilance and spiritual return; and the related supernatural uses of trees, staffs,

branches, and roots."²⁵ The pouring of libations on the ground, conjure jars, the dressing of graves with glass beads and pots, and bottle trees as memorials to ancestors are but a few Sea Island cultural customs transformed over the centuries.²⁶ The Four Moments of the Sun also has evolved into the spiritual songs of immortality and into the Ring Shout, danced counterclockwise, found in the old praise houses of Sea Island religious culture.

Praise houses became the only accepted religious outlet for enslaved Africans and their descendants allowed by plantation owners. The ability for "worshippers" to transcend the oppression wrought by slavery through the singing of songs and moving in a circle, never crossing the feet, established a musical genre that has become contemporary gospel. Songs collected by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, commander of the first military battalion of newly freed slaves during the Civil War, noticed the courage the songs of the "hereafter" gave to the soldiers. "Almost all their songs were thoroughly religious in their tone, . . . The attitude is always the same, and, as a commentary on the life of the race, is infinitely pathetic. Nothing but patience for this life,--nothing but triumph in the next."²⁷

The island custom of holding Homecoming (funeral) services as symbolic for recognizing the hereafter, extends from the belief that a person's spirit is eternal. Using elements from West African spiritual practices and enfolding European religious ideology is one of many examples of how African cultures in the Diaspora have maintained links with a traditional past. Language and culture also connect Diasporic Africans to heritage, demonstrating the strength of human survival. Connecting the Gullah people in the United States to their African origin is a continuing research.

Homecoming has new meaning for inhabitants of the Gullah Coast as they turn to Sierra Leone in the search for ancestors.

Sierra Leone of West Africa is acknowledged by anthropologists as the birthplace for African descendants known as Gullahs off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia. Whether the Sea Island Gullahs are descended from the same ethnic group or from a combination of groups in West Africa continues to be debated in academic scholarship. Sierra Leone, under the protection of Britain, became a repatriation project in 1787²⁸ for Africans living in England, Jamaica, and loyal to the British during the American Revolution. It is difficult to believe that Sierra Leone continued to supply forced laborers to the plantations of the Sea Islands after this decision of protection was made. Despite this fact, plantations on the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia continued to receive enslaved West Africans.

Further research shows that enslaved Africans were shipped into the low country well beyond January 1808,²⁹ when the United States government denounced the shipping of humans directly from Africa. The enslavement of "fresh-water" contraband continued, supplying a black market in human cargo for the next several decades. The slave ship *Wanderer* was confiscated in 1858 as the last known vessel to the United States leaving a cargo of captured West Africans on a Sea Island plantation in Georgia.³⁰ With the inability of rice cultivators from the Rice Coast to be supplied to coastal plantations legally, plantation breeding systems and the sale of humans within the United States became the means by which the system of slavery was maintained until the Civil War. Despite an insubstantial addition of African descendants to the coastal islands, the language, cultural, and spirituality that would define the Gullah people was already

established and would continue into the 20th, and, one can assume, into the 21st centuries.

NOTES

¹Walter Rodney, West Africa and the Atlanta Slave-Trade (Tanzania: East African Publishing House, 1967), 4.

²David Mannix, Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlanta Slave Trade 1518-1865 (New York: The Viking Press, 1962), 108.

³Vincent Harding, There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 9.

⁴Margaret Washington Creel, A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 36-37.

⁵Joseph E. Holloway, Africanisms in American Culture (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 11.

⁶Peter H. Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina, From 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 172.

⁷Frances Anne Kemble, Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839 (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1863; reprint, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1984), xxii.

⁸Robert Farris Thompson, Flash of the Spirit (New York; Vintage Books, 1984), 195-196.

⁹Lorenzo D. Turner, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 296.

¹⁰Patricia Jones-Jackson, When Roots Die: Endangered Traditions on the Sea Islands (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 137.

¹¹Mary A. Twining and Keith E. Baird, ed., Sea Island Roots: African Presence in the Carolinas & Georgia (Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press, Inc., 1991), 135.

¹²*Ibid.*, 137.

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- ¹³Thompson, Flash of the Spirit, 222.
- ¹⁴Curtin, Phillip, African History (Essex, England: Longman Group, Inc., 1978), 231-232.
- ¹⁵Littlefield, Daniel c, Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1981; reprint, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 81.
- ¹⁶Wood, Black Majority, 59.
- ¹⁷Littlefield, Rice and Slaves, 76.
- ¹⁸Wood, Black Majority, 36.
- ¹⁹Opala, Joseph, "The Gullah: Rice, Slavery, and the Sierra Leone-American Connection" (Freetown, Sierra Leone: United States Embassy, United States Information Services, 1987), 9-10.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, 10.
- ²¹Margaret Washington Creel, "Gullah Attitudes Toward Life and Death," Africanisms in American Culture, Ed. By Joseph E. Holloway, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 72
- ²²Ferguson, Uncommon Ground, 114.
- ²³John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy 2nd ed. (Oxford, England: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd., 1989), 24-26.
- ²⁴Thompson, Flash of the Spirit, 109.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, 109.
- ²⁵Works Projects Administration, Georgia Writers' Project, Savannah Unit Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1940; reprint, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986).
- ²⁶Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston: Beacon Press, 1869; reprint, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 192.
- ²⁷James W. St. G. Walker, The Black Loyalists (London, England: Longman Group Ltd, 1976), 96-106.

²⁸Harding, There is a River, 60.

²⁹Gleason, Gene. 1984. "The Wanderer: Racing Yacht to Slave Ship" Southern Exposure 12(2): 59-62.

CHAPTER 3

SAINT HELENA ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA: PLANTATION TO COMMUNITY

The Fight for a Corner of Heaven

The African history of Saint Helena Island and the surrounding area is intertwined in the publication of European history. First, Africans are accepted as slaves in the accounts of European exploration and development of the region, then through the research of scholars curious about the African descendants allied with Penn School. The worlds of the plantation owner and the enslaved collided on the Day of the Big Gun Shoot on November 7, 1861, in the Port Royal Harbor at the southern end of Saint Helena Island. This day, marking the beginning of Union occupation in Beaufort County, South Carolina, during the American Civil War, was remembered for many decades to come by the newly freed Africans. Some history of the island from an African perspective can be told from this period forward.

The 1998 publication on the history of Beaufort County, The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina, Volume 1, 1514-1861 by Lawrence Rowland, Alexander Moore, and George C. Rogers, Jr., is the most comprehensive historical text on the development of Beaufort County. Although the authors should be commended for extraordinary details on European, then American, agricultural and political achievements in the region, the African story is contingent upon the goals of plantation owners. On the chapters relating specifically to African presence in the region, most of the sources used are from

the publications accumulated during the 1930s when researchers from the University of North Carolina visited St. Helena Island.¹ Learning the history of African achievements on St. Helena Island will be from the perspective of European research.

The first African presence in the United States, and the first revolt with African participation, was noted in the coastal region in 1526 as part of the Spanish expedition of Lucas de Ayllon.² It was not until the early 1700s that the forced importation of Africans became a norm for European plantation owners. The intervening years between the Spanish exploration of the area and the English establishment of the county seat of Beaufort in 1711, is a history of three European nations battling one another and the indigenous population for control of a region crucial to agriculture and navigational trade winds to Europe.

The land the native population named Chicora was initially explored in 1514 by an emissary of Ayllon. The report back to Ayllon about an expansive harbor surrounded by fertile lands would "set in motion the events which led to the establishment of the first European colony in what is now South Carolina."³ "The oldest continuously used European place names in the United States" were given to the region and subsequently to an island still bearing the name of St. Helena, by the captain of the expedition after the patron saint Santa Elena who is honored on the day the explorers made landfall.⁴ From this day forward, Spain, France, and England made claim to this region for the next two hundred-thirty-eight years. Sociologist Guion Griffis Johnson, in A Social History of the Sea Islands (1930), best describes the rivalry between European countries for the region:

The Spanish were first to claim the St. Helena region both by exploration and by occupation. Spain, indeed, shows a record of one hundred and forty-two years of activity in this territory before 1663 when King Charles II of England by letters

patent included it in a grant to eight Lords Proprietors and delivered it to one hundred years of protested ownership before England finally gained a clear title to the region by the Treaty of 1763.⁵

St. Helena Island is one of the largest islands on the coast of South Carolina. It is the most central island on the Gullah Coast that spans north to the southern-most islands of North Carolina and south to Amelia Island in Florida. With a length of approximately fifteen miles and a width that varies from four to seven miles in places, the primary waterway to St. Helena Island is the deepest harbor known on the southern coast of North America. Also, this region is the location where voyagers following the Gulf Stream can "encounter the prevailing westerly trade winds off the North American coast"⁶ on voyages to Europe.

Not until after the Yemassee War [Yamassee considered correct spelling by Donald Grinde, a Yamassee native] and continuous assaults by the indigenous population from 1715 to 1728 did the English proprietors expand their hold on Beaufort County. The Muskhogean-speaking confederation--primarily Creeks, Choctaws, Natchez, and Yemassee--made a final attempt to retain the vestiges of Chicora. Since the 1670s, land grants were given to any British citizen who would risk raids by the Spanish moving north from Florida or by the French trying to establish small colonies within the region. Despite the economic loss sustained during this period, the British prevailed and maintained control until the American Revolution fifty years later. With a secure colony established, the 1730s became known as the beginning of economic growth that would lead to the "first large influx of African slaves to the Beaufort District."⁷

Enslaved Africans learned quickly about freedom in Spanish-held Florida. A well-established route for runaways was through the swamps of Beaufort County. With Florida across the border, until 1733 with the granting of Georgia, Beaufort County lost many Africans to the maroon society, a term used for runaways, of the Seminole Nation. The newest threat to the success of rice cultivation as a means to create wealth for colonists was the loss of human labor. The surrounding swamps at times became such a safe haven that a group of maroons were able to sustain themselves for four years without detection during the American Revolution.

A new ally for runaway Africans evolved during the American Revolution. The British, losing political hold of their successful colonies, enlisted the support of enslaved Africans as soldiers of war. Making the plantations weak by giving freedom to any African who would join the British, meant immediate freedom. Included in the devastation of property, thousands of enslaved Africans ran to British-held lines, while many more escaped to Florida or died during the war. The most exceptional story was that of the maroons who continually raided Beaufort County from their swamp stronghold. As described in The History of Beaufort County:

This group of irregulars had run away to join the British army, but had been left behind after the evacuations of Savannah and Charleston. They called themselves the "King of England's Soldier" and established a fortified encampment on an island in the Savannah River swamp. Their stronghold was half a mile long and 400 feet deep with twenty-one houses and fields of corn, potatoes, and melons. The whole encampment was surrounded by a four-foot breastwork of log and cane pilings. At night, they issued out of the swamp to raid the plantations of St. Peter's Parish.⁸

In response to the level of civil disorder on the plantations, the South Carolina legislature stopped the importation of Africans in 1781. Even though human contraband was still imported into the newly formed state, the economic slowdown of the plantations

could no longer sustain a large population of labor. Not until seventeen years later, after long-staple cotton was introduced to the Sea Islands from the Bahamas, did the legislature reverse the law, allowing enslaved Africans into the state once again. The new cotton market replaced the earlier rice and indigo crops, creating profits for plantation owners that would rival the economic success of rice cultivation in the early 1700s. "Between 1803 and 1808, forty thousand new African immigrants were transported to South Carolina; as many as had been imported between 1720 and 1740, which had been the longest period of unrestricted slave importation in South Carolina history. In addition to the forty thousand slaves legally imported, perhaps half that number had been illegally smuggled in between 1795 and 1804."⁹

In January 1808, the United States Congress passed a law ending "American participation in the African slave trade, the bill was intentionally so weak that its provisions proved easy to circumvent. More ironic yet, the law proposed that any Africans found on interdicted slaving ships, instead of being hastened toward freedom, should be sold into bondage in the South."¹⁰ The illegal importation of Africans persisted until the beginning of the Civil War. The plantation community became a mixture of African descendants and Africans newly arriving in the region. Retention of African traditions in the region may have been enhanced by this recent influx.

Another result of the retention of African traditions may have been the result of the "task system" devised since the rice cultivation period. The labor management system allowed planters the luxury of absenteeism, leaving the labor force with limited European contact. The management system, predominant in the low country of South Carolina, provided a daily work schedule for each laborer. When the day's work was

done for the plantation, each individual could work for the rest of the day on personal jobs. "The task system allowed the slaves the free time to form their own communities, develop and practice their own religion, devise their own amusements, provide extra sustenance and comforts for their own families, and even acquire wealth. The task system provided a measure of freedom for the slaves"¹¹

The independence allowed on the plantation sustained a degree of placidity not familiar to a region always in conflict. On St. Helena Island, the fifty-five African communities remained in isolation from the plantation owners who spent most of their time socializing in other cities and Europe. African communities developed in the island with little European presence until the beginning of the next war.

The plantation owners of Beaufort County began the political movement for the secession of South Carolina from the Union. In the midst of the 1850s, the best economic period since the advent of Europeans to Chicora, Beaufort County politicians led the South towards state's rights and the support of slavery against the tariff policies of the federal government and the abolitionists. Southern justification for secession can be summarized in an 1861 statement by Edmund Rhett, to a reporter for the London Times. The Rhett family of Beaufort County dominated the political arena for secession and Edmund Rhett considered himself a spokesperson for the Southern cause.

We are an agricultural people, he said, pursuing our own system, and working out our own destiny, breeding up women and men with some other purpose than to make vulgar, fanatical, cheating Yankees—hypocritical, if as women they pretend to real virtue; and lying, if as men they pretend to be honest. We have gentlemen and gentlewomen in your sense of it. We have a system which enables us to reap the fruits of the earth by a race which we save from barbarism in restoring them to their real place in the world as laborers, whilst we are enabled to cultivate the arts, the graces, and accomplishments of life, to develop science, to apply ourselves to the duties of government, and to understand the affairs of the country.¹²

Six months after this statement, Edmund Rhett's family plantations in Beaufort County would be lost forever to the Union and to the newly freed Africans who would become owners of the land they once had worked for free.

The last of the plantation owners on St. Helena Island watched the Battle of Port Royal from the veranda of a plantation house overlooking the harbor. As they began to flee their homes, "some planters tried to take their slaves with them, but most refused to go. Some masters told the field hands that the Yankees would sell them to the particular rigors of the Cuban sugar plantations if they stayed. Other planters suggested shooting a few recalcitrant slaves to force the rest to leave. Threats and lies did not work."¹³ The Day of the Big Gun Shoot was the day when the Union gained control of a renowned southern navigational location for the duration of the Civil War. This day signaled the end of enslavement for a population that would begin learning how to determine their own purpose in a new life.

Plantation to Community

Stories from the newly freed about St. Helena Island are sporadic, but two recordings were made in the early 1900s about the Union takeover of Beaufort County. Sam Polite was ninety-three years of age when a local librarian interviewed him. His memories of enslavement on St. Helena Island became part of the slave narrative collection sponsored by the 1930s Work Projects Administration.¹⁴ Clare McDonald Sanders of St. Helena Island, who moved from Philadelphia to become one of the teachers at the new school, interviewed Juliana. Juliana's story, Recollections of Juliana, was published in 1924 as a fundraising tool for Penn School.

Juliana was taken from the island when the Union troops entered Beaufort County.

When the war bruk out all the white people be afraid to stay ober here on the islant, so dey done tuk we house serbants an' went to Beaufort. But, me fren! We want no better off dere. One night the Yankees' big guns boom all night an' shake ebery house in Beaufort like a ben a eart' quake. The nex' mornin' Miss Ann Elizabet tuk we all, an' we go away in a boat; but we ain't fine no safe place, so we had to cum back an' tak de train for Cha'ston. Jesus, me fren! What a whoopin' an' howlin' dere wuz dat day! All de ladies dey guine off an' tak dere serbants wid dem, an' we ain't know where we guine, or if we ebber see home any mo' We get to Cha'ston, but we ain't res' long dere,' an' go on up country to Winnsboro.

After de war we hear 'bout freedom, but we ain't know nuttin' fo' true. Miss Ann Elizabet' tell we niggers dat de Yankees hab set we free, but she say dey lick we harder den ebber. I say, "None ain't guine lick Juliana. After you-all ain't lick me, what fo' de Yankees do um? An' Miss Ann Elizabet say:

"Mind, Juliana girl, you better mind."

Well, we all go on livin' peacable 'til one day ma uncle an' brodder from St. Helena cum to take we'all home. Miss Ann say, "So you guine to leave us, Juliana?"

An I say, "Ef we ain't go now mebbe we nebber see home again."

So Miss Ann Elizabet' gave us bread an' meat an' t'ings to keep we from hongry on de way, an' de coach come to carry we-all to de depot.¹⁵

Sam Polite was able to convey details of the plantation workday and some history of St. Helena Island before the Day of the Big Gun Shoot. A selection from his story:

When gun shoot on Bay Point for Freedom, I been seventeen-year-old working slave. I born on B. Fripp Plantation, on St. Helena Island. My father belong to Mr. Marion Fripp, and my mother belong to Mr. Old B. Fripp. I don't know how much land, neither how much slave he have, but he have two big plantation and many slave--more'n a hundred slave. . . .

. . . When war come, Missus take me and two more niggers, put we and chillun in two wagon, and go to Barnwell. My mother been one of the nigger. We stay in Barnwell all during the war. My father, he been with the Rebel, been with Mr. Marion Chaplin [Each Confederate soldier was allowed specific provisions, including Servants.¹⁶] When Freedom come, Missus didn't say nothing; she just cry. But she give we a wagon and we press [stole] a horse and us come back to St. Helena Island. It take three day to get home. When we get home, we find the rest of the nigger here been have Freedom four year before we.¹⁷

Comments on plantation life from other post-occupation inhabitants on St. Helena Island can be found in journals and military reports written by participants helping the newly freed African descendants rebuild their lives. Beaufort County was a Union

encampment providing an opportunity for the federal government to devise a reconstruction plan for the South. In early 1862, a program began with the intent that "schools should be established to teach all, old as well as young, who were willing to learn. Simultaneously, the Negroes on the plantations should be organized to carry on the planting routine with two important innovations: they should work as individuals loosely supervised by white superintendents, rather than in gangs as they had in slavery; and they should be induced to work by the payment of wages rather than by the use of the whip."¹⁸ The Port Royal Experiment was incubated in Beaufort County as a blueprint to reclaim the South after the North won the Civil War. The presumption that the federal government would win the war proved to be accurate. But reconstruction of the South was not as successful in terms of land and education programs, as experience on St. Helena Island would demonstrate.

Making citizens out of people who once had been denied freedom was approached in two ways: ownership of land to maintain a livelihood, and voting rights through education. Three journals proved to be important documents about accomplishments of the Port Royal Experiment. The politics of formulating a system for land ownership, and military actions to maintain Union control of Beaufort County have been documented in Thomas Wentworth Higginson's Army Life in a Black Regiment. The commanding officer of the First South Carolina Volunteers, the first Negro regiment in the south, collected stories on plantation life from his new recruits and reported on skirmishes into Confederate territory.

Educational aspects of the Port Royal Experiment are best recounted in the diary of the first principal of Penn School, Laura Matilde Towne. Letters and Diary of Laura

M. Towne, Written from the Sea Islands of South Carolina, 1862-884 was edited by

Rupert Sargent Holland in 1912, after Towne's death in 1900. The diary chronicles the adjustments she made on encountering a culture very different from her own Philadelphia background. St. Helena Island became her home. Her dairy relates the many years of maintaining a school that incorporated two worlds, the western and the Gullah.

One other journal from that period was by Charlotte Forten, the first teacher of African descent on the island, who came from Philadelphia in 1862. She participated for two years in the Port Royal Experiment, learning from the islanders about plantations and the traditions they exhibited, while teaching them how to understand the responsibilities of freedom. One of the most comprehensive resources on the Port Royal Experiment is Rehearsal for Reconstruction by Willie Lee Rose, published in 1964. This historical analysis describes the success and mishaps of teachers and government officials producing citizens from people formerly enslaved. The land program fell short of its intent because of land grabbing by carpetbaggers. Schools failed to fully westernize the population because the islanders chose their own future.

A major event that clarified freedom for the islanders was the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation in the midst of the Port Royal Experiment. Even though many considered the Day of the Big Gun Shoot the day of freedom, civil war was still proceeding beyond the safety of Union-held lines. January 1, 1863 at Camp Saxton in Beaufort County was well documented by Northern reporters, and by journal entries of island teachers and government officials. An accounting of that day, when the Emancipation Proclamation was first read publicly, was told to one of the Penn School

principals many years later. Prince Polite was a young boy on that day and told the story of his grandfather, who was a leader of his village in Africa before being enslaved.

Big Pa been a pretty old man when Freedom came. Folks say he must be one hundred. His hair been white, like the cotton, but his eyes could see as good as mine, and he ain't never lost his hearing. . . One day Big Pa hear that Massa Lincoln has sent down a paper called the Emancipation Proclamation to say we'se all free! And they been going to have a big celebration at Port Royal. All the people who been able got up before day clean [sunrise] and they take the babies in their arms, because they didn't want the little ones left out of freedom, and they start off to hear that paper which was going to set we poor slaves free!

But Big Pa been too old and feeble to walk all that way. I wished mightily to go, but ain't like to leave the old man alone. When all the other folks done gone, Big Pa stand up and called me kind of soft like—"Son," he says, "I was borned free and I's goin'to die free! And I ain't dast say nothing though I knowed he never could walk all that six miles to the ferry. But his eyes they burned like fire, and there was no denying his look! I gave him his stick in one hand and in the other I put my hand so we started out to get our freedom.

. . . Seem like Big Pa grow stronger and stronger as he walked. I ain't never going to forget that walk so long as breath is spared in my body. There been aplenty of people on the road, all hastening to get their freedom too!

At the ferry we got into a boat which took us round by the Old Fort to Camp Saxton and there been a great crowd of people! I never seen so much of people before in my life. I feel my heart most burst when I see all those Negro soldiers in their grand uniforms, and the bands playing and the flags a'flying! Some of them been from our Island, but they been most too proud to look at us that day!

When we done arrived, a man been reading the paper from the President. I couldn't get the understanding of it, but Big Pa, he look like he could go on listening until Judgement Day! There was a platform with a lot of white ladies and officers, and Colonel Higginson, he stood between his two color-bearers, Robert Sutton and Prince Rivers. They been so big they make the Colonel look small, though he been a sizable man hisself.

When the man finish reading the paper, some one gave a flag to Colonel Higginson. He took it in his hand and started to wave it, when of a sudden I feel Big Pa catch me hard by the shoulder and then he began to sing:

"My country 'tis of Thee
Sweet land of liberty
Of Thee I Sing!"

At first only one of two joined in, and then it seemed like all the colored people of a sudden know that the flag belonged to we people and that for the first time we had a country of our own—and nothing could keep them from singing it out.

After that the Colonel spoke, but I never hear what he say because big Pa, after the singing lost all his strength and fell where he stood. They carried him away from the crowd a little and put him under one of the big oak trees. He lay so quiet I

think he must be dead, when of a sudden he opened his eyes and said, "There, Son, don't cry, but go tell the Colonel please I must for see him before I die!"

When the Colonel came, he said, "Colonel, is you plum sure I is a free man?" And I mind how the Colonel said, "You are as free a man as I am this day!"

"And do that flag belong to we colored folk same as you?" he asked, wishful like, pointing to the flag waving so brave and pretty in the bright sunshine.

"It does," said the Colonel.

"Colonel, if I been a soldier could I have that flag to cover my coffin at the funeral,--could I, Colonel?" and Big Pa's voice kind of trembled. "Please, Colonel, you couldn't let me enlist today, could you? I know I'se an old man, but I'se dot some strength in my arms still, and if I could serve my country and my flag for one day, I could die proud and happy! A ain't got but one wish in all the world, now, and that is to have the flag cover me when I die!"

Then the Colonel bent over and took Big Pa's hand. "I can't let you enlist now, but I can promise you that your country's flag shall cover you when you die." "My country's flag, my country's flag," said Big Pa kind of soft like—"Thank the Lord, I born free and I die free!" Then he just smiled and shut his eyes. He never opened them no more on earth!¹⁹

Many islanders became part of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, including Robert Smalls, born in Beaufort, and elected to Congress as State Representative, then Senator, until 1887. The islands of the Port Royal Experiment achieved Reconstruction years before the concept was introduced to other parts of the South. Freedom was exhibited in the political clubs that evolved after the war, and in the level of participation at the polls on voting day. Hastings Gantt of St. Helena Island was elected to State Legislature, leading the way for years of local representation in state politics.²⁰

Freedom for the islander did not stop the work on the plantations. A living had to be made, and crops were still attended, especially the famous long-grain cotton. The first year of freedom proved that the islanders could support themselves. Sufficient amounts of food were grown to feed the islanders, the military, and thousands escaping from areas in the South to the safety of Beaufort County. Harriet Tubman used this location to

become a spy for the Union and continue the Underground Railroad, helping many escape plantations to freedom.²¹

Redistribution of plantations on the island was decided through taxation. Congress passed the Act of 1862, a new tax levy required by all the states, including those that seceded from the Union. This measure was to raise money to support the war, also providing a way to confiscate property in the south. "The rebels were to be given sixty days to pay, or forfeit their lands to the United States. Plantations thus acquired by the Government would be offered at public sale in lots not exceeding 320 acres. Only 'loyal citizens' and freedmen would be allowed to bid."²² Sale for plantations controlled by the government began on March 9, 1863.

Missionaries and entrepreneurs, who took advantage of the Experiment and moved into Beaufort County, were vying to own land just as much as the teachers and military personnel assigned to that location. Because the islanders had no means to buy the land they had worked prior to freedom, two plans were devised. One plan was through government intervention, reserving certain amount of land for government use and charitable purposes. Another plan was made by one of the members of the Experiment to buy a number of plantations and form a private enterprise. Acting as agent, Edward Philbrick used funds from "fourteen other investors, and quite largely as a temporary precaution against the power of speculators to take the land permanently out of the reach of the freedman, bought up eleven plantations and leased two more. He began at once to re-sell to the freedmen in such amounts as he believed they could work."²³ This enterprise was profitable to Philbrick, who became very wealthy, and many

islanders were able to purchase land that was not otherwise affordable through the government land sales.

The final outcome for acreage sold in the county is as follows:

Of the 76,775 acres put up for sale, the commissioners [Land Commission agents for the government] struck off to the government by far the greater part, 60,296 acres. Individuals bought 16,479 acres at an average price of 41.00 per acre, . . . Several plantations, about 2,000 acres of land, were purchased cooperatively by the Negroes, who by pooling their small savings were able to preserve their right to live and work on their own places

. . . Some land went to people with no connection with the missionary work, but the largest unit of land passing into private ownership went to Philbrick for the Boston join-stock company. For a piddling \$7,000 the company bought eleven fine cotton plantations, comprising 8,000 acres, and leased two others from the government, thus gaining possession of one-third of St. Helena Island and indirect control over nearly a thousand people who lived upon the land.²⁴

The concept of the government granting Forty Acres and a Mule to newly freed African descendants is a myth that has continued into the 20th century.²⁵ After purchasing the land, islanders had the means to grow crops for larger markets and produce others to feed families. Cotton remained a primary crop until the 1920s, when the boll weevil destroyed the last of the plants. Poultry, pigs, and fishing provided food for an inter-island exchange that supplied produce during economic struggles through the Depression Era. The independence of the islanders would remain intact well into the twentieth century.

Education was necessary for the citizenship programs planned by the Port Royal Experiment. Through the auspices of the Philadelphia Commission, supporters of the teachers and volunteers assigned to St. Helena Island, three one-room schoolhouses were sent to the island in two ships in January 1865. These schools were to replace the temporary locations in plantation houses and the local church. Connecting two of these

schools together in a central location was the beginning of Penn School, an institution that would by the 1940s become a fifty-acre campus with sixteen historical.

Supporting the educational aspect of the Port Royal Experiment was the venture of abolitionists and volunteers. Some became the first teachers who would live through summer heat and sub-tropical maladies, surrounded by troops at war. Laura M. Towne was the first principal, along with Ellen Murray, who lived out their lives on St. Helena Island. The diary of Laura Towne reflects many years of their successes and failures, as did the publications of the subsequent principals who would continue the Penn School legacy into the 20th century. The work of Rossa Cooley and Grace House, the principals who began their tenure in 1900, can be read in Rossa Cooley's Homes of the Freed (1926) and School Acres (1930). Cooley and House remained on the island until 1942, when economic recovery from the Depression Era meant changing the focus of Penn School.

Laura Towne and Ellen Murray did not hesitate in assigning teachers to their positions around the island. When an official school was placed in a central location for many islanders to reach, the women considered the educational program established. Laura Towne named the school for William Penn, the Quaker reformer of the seventeenth century who founded Pennsylvania as a refuge from religious persecution in England. Smaller schools around the island were maintained through Penn, giving assistance to teachers and raising funds for teacher salaries through the support of two Quaker organizations in Philadelphia--Philadelphia Commission and the Benezet.

The educational program became a success of the Port Royal Experiment, although the schools had few resources the first three years, including books. Despite the

limitations, Laura Towne wrote in June 1865 that the "children have read through a history of the United States and an easy physiology and they know all the parts of speech, and can make sentences being told to use a predicate, verb and adverb, for instance. . . . Ellen's class is writing composition"²⁶ Thousands of children and adults learned how to read and write, some former students becoming the next generation of teachers for island schools.

The programs expanded into community service and health-care programs. The people on the island were becoming independent. "There remained some six thousand people whose labor experience, for the most part, was limited to farming. Undisturbed by white supervision and unhampered by any bureaucratic knowledge of how to develop a society, they proceeded to build their own by trial and error."²⁷ The community programs expanded even further during the tenure of the next principals.

Rossa Cooley and Grace House added to what Towne and Murray started. Northern support was at its highest and continued until the 1940s. The school and island continued to draw interest from influential people. Edith Dabbs, in her book Sea Island Diary, lists some of the dignitaries interested in Penn School.

Representatives trained for service for service in the colonies were sent by the British government to study Penn School as the last stage of their training. The school was seen by educators and missionaries in many countries as a model to be imitated wherever teachers and leaders among deprived people were striving to lift the economic and cultural level of whole communities. The guest books read like a Who's Who of government officials from the United States, England, India, and Africa, of educators and religious leaders from many countries and diverse persuasions. There was endless line of such interesting and important visitors as Sir Gordon Guggisburg, governor of the Gold Coast of Africa; Isaac Sharpless, president of Haverford College; Miss Harriet Ware, who had taught on the island during Reconstruction; Mary and William Cadbury, who organized the first Boys' Club in America; Helene C. Jenks, Miss Towne's niece; Alva & Gunnar Myrdal of Stockholm, Sweden; Mrs. Henry L. Stimson, whose husband was later secretary of

state under president Roosevelt; Dr. Henry Noble McCracken, president of Vassar College; Ambassador and Mrs. Francis Biddle of Washington; Margaret Noyes of Intervale, New Hampshire, who made some very fine documentary pictures while visiting Penn for several weeks; Dr. S.C. Mitchell, president of the University of South Carolina; Mrs. Reinhold Neibuhr; and Evelyn B. Longman Batchelder, the sculptress who designed the Peabody Peace Medal.²⁸

The Peabody Peace Medal, given in appreciation of George Foster Peabody, was a coveted award for the best essay on world peace written by students from any of the island schools. Peabody, a philanthropist and entrepreneur, was a member of the Board of Trustees, for twenty-seven years. "The National Broadcasting Company, searching for a distinctive award to be given on a national basis, discovered the Peace Medal and asked Miss House for it. With Penn's finances at an all-time low, making the award already difficult to maintain, she gave the Company full rights to the medal. It was first awarded on a national level in 1940 and has become the most treasured award given to television personnel today."²⁹

The extensive guest list continued through the decades into the 1960s with Martin Luther King, Jr. and members of the movement for human rights, as a place for strategic planning. Peace Corps training took place at Penn in the 1960s and 70s, because the island provided an ideal rural agriculture and sub-tropical environment. The Vista program begun by President Kennedy in the early 1960s trained volunteers for support in rural communities of the United States at Penn.

Farmer's Fair was one of the programs developed at Penn which attracted the attention of islanders and many visitors. The two-day agricultural event displayed island produce, quilts, and homespun items, activities by students from island schools, and

usually included representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Many exhibits went to state fairs, bringing prizes for the island farmers.

Better Homes Week was a time for community pride when people cleaned the island, and planted gardens and flowers. Demonstrations on home building led to competitions by island teams to build homes and hand-made furniture. Penn School was invited to compete in a national Better-Homes-in America contest. "Its purpose was to foster better living conditions and upgrade in every possible area the life-style of both urban and rural communities. In the first year, 1922, with 961 cooperating cities and communities (including Beaufort), St. Helena won the third prize of fifty dollars. The second year, they won the second prize of two hundred dollars. The third year brought a special first prize because the demonstration home on exhibit at Penn was constructed with material from an old house torn down."³⁰ The week concluded with Baby Day, a time for mothers to bring their babies to be measured, weighed, and checked by nurses and their island midwives.

The Midwife program was started in 1920, when the state required midwife certification. The Penn program grew to the extent that it began to certify and educate most midwives in the state. The island midwife was responsible for a number of families and childcare. Their work supplemented the work of the one doctor and nurse on the island.

The community activities were numerous. Each month saw a major event, which drew the interest of many off-islanders. The "Mystery Play" was a Christmas story, adapted from a Christmas celebration from England begun in 1916, and continued until the late 1950s. Such events provided an opportunity for the local St. Helena Quartet to

perform. Made up from the best male voices, the Quartet reached a high point when they performed at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C. and toured the United States in the early 1920s.

The first Negro Girl Scout troop south of Baltimore began in 1933 on St. Helena Island.

Penn School, renamed Penn Normal and Industrial School in 1900, continued as an educational institution until 1950. Faced with fundraising problems and the opening of the first public school on the island providing grades one through twelve, a decision was made by its board of trustees for Penn Normal and Industrial School to become the Penn Community Center. Still maintaining programs to support the agricultural community, it inadvertently became safe haven for activists of the Civil Rights Movement. As one of two places in the south that would accept interracial meetings, Penn Center once again became the vanguard for changing the political and social history of the United States.³¹

The unique culture on St. Helena Island did not go unnoticed, as documented by the constant flow of researchers. Nicholas George Julius Ballanta composer from Sierra Leone, preserved in print over one hundred spirituals, many originating from St. Helena Island. Linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner studied the language on the islands, making the initial link to its origin in Sierra Leone. And in 1928, a team of scientists from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill lived on St. Helena Island for six months, compiling research that would lead to the most extensive series of publications about the island. Every aspect of the culture was considered by the researchers, who included 'a director, historian, psychologist, physical anthropologist, cultural anthropologist,

specialist in agricultural economics, specialists crime study and taxation, and fourteen native enumerators."³² The results lead to the publications identifying a culture that has been able to retain a high level of African heritage.

St. Helena Island at the beginning of the 1930s was the coming of age for a generation that had seen the end of World War I. This period also was the last of the King Cotton crop, before the boll weevil finally destroyed it, and the beginning of a state plan to make one of the islands a state park for a new tourist industry. A bridge was built in 1927, connecting the islanders to the mainland for the first time in history. There was easier access onto the island by those who were curious, and easier access off the island by those whose lives began to be influenced by a new economic need. The crops were dying and the soil had sustained its share of ocean damage during two major storms, one in 1893, and the other in 1911. Both storms came on shore on the same day, August third.

St. Helena Island changed faster between 1930 and 1980 than during any other time. Subtle changes wrought by commercial development would lead to an industry challenging an old agricultural existence. Church elders accustomed to passing on legal judgments from the Bible for crimes against the community were soon replaced by a police system that began to protect one community against the inequitable treatment of another. Human-rights struggles and the desegregation of the public school system eventually brought cultural shame to a younger generation forced to choose between their parents and a dominant society across the bridge.

The land and Penn School were the two overriding factors that separated St. Helena Island from many other islands of the Gullah Coast. Cultivation is the reason for

their existence on the North American continent. They carry within them a legacy of survival. Ancestral survival of language, culture, and spirit binds the Gullah culture to an old way of life that is still a part of daily living. Penn School exemplifies the history of a country at war against slavery and the symbol of independence for residents of St. Helena Island.

Even though the Port Royal Experiment did not achieve its full potential throughout the south, the islanders have gained a legacy in land and have built a unique community. Retaining a heritage through centuries of separation from its origin attests to the force of will passed from generation to generation. At the end of the twentieth century, with resort developments encroaching upon the area, residents of St. Helena Island find themselves still fighting to keep their corner of heaven.

Migration of the Gullah

Since 1981, Penn Center has held an annual festival celebrating the heritage of the Gullah and the legacy of Penn School. The second week of November has become a period for islanders to remember gospels and shouts, to eat foods cooked in the island tradition, and to tell the stories of a self-sufficient people. Much of the hundred-thirty-six-year legacy of Penn has become intertwined with the island culture, becoming almost synonymous with the customs of St. Helena Island. Although the traditions of the Gullah culture extends to another continent, and Penn School was founded to support the education of newly freed African descendants during the Civil War, each infused the other with aspects of its own unique cultural and historical identity.

The cultural heritage of the Gullah people is now recognized as a story of survival for Africans in the Diaspora. Over two hundred years of ethnic traditions were passed from one generation to the other through storytelling, agriculture, and religion. The

stories and games told from mother to child were the most common means for the perpetuation of language in an oral culture. These agricultural people were used to harvesting the land and creating necessary materials for survival. In the making of quilts and baskets, a connection to the past was part of daily existence. The religion of the Gullah people is an integration of African spirituality and European Christianity celebrated in the churches of each community that even today serve as demarcations of the old plantations.

Civil War abolitionists and human-rights social-change activists left their own legacy to Penn Center. Quakers and Universalists began an institution during the Civil War that has kept ties with the Religious Society of Friends into the 1990s. With beginnings as a social-change institution, even though the focus was education, it was easy for Penn Center to harbor civil rights leaders and activists during the turbulent 1950s and 60s. As one of only two locations in the South where blacks and whites could meet and stay overnight together, Penn Center and the island community once again found themselves in the midst of a country in transition. One hundred years after the experiment to reconstruct the South and to bestow United States citizenship rights on the newly freed, their descendants were faced with the issue of citizenship once again. In the 1960s, Penn Center and the Gullah people of St. Helena Island were again partners at the dawn of a movement that would bring equal rights to the entire country.

The annual Penn Center Heritage Days Celebration commemorates "the influence of Penn School on Sea Island history and culture." Each year the celebration has attracted greater interest not only from around the country, but in recent years from around the world. The international connection stems from the confirmation by scholars of a link from Sierra Leone to the Gullah Coast. The people of two continents are now connected by a common heritage, forming a full circle for the ancestry of the Gullah people.

In 1988 President Joseph Momoh of Sierra Leone made a visit to St. Helena Island, South Carolina. The official visit by a head of state to Penn Center was a first step in reconnecting Sierra Leone to the Gullah culture of the Sea Islands. There were noticeable reactions by the attending crowd of islanders and President Momoh, when each in turn spoke in a language thought to be unique to their own culture. Just as the Gullah people understood Krio, the lingua franca of Sierra Leone, President Momoh and his delegates had no difficulty hearing within the Gullah language the words and intonations of their own country.

Joseph Opala, the United States anthropologist who researched the link and coordinated this historic event, reported for West Africa magazine on the meeting of these people separated by historic tragedy.

Mr. Emory Campbell, director of Penn, opened an emotional meeting, speaking slowly and distinctly in the Gullah language, which he said he had learned at his grandmother's knee. The crowd stirred visibly as President Momoh smiled and nodded, obviously understanding all that was said. . . .

. . . Some of the local people were weeping when the President spoke in Krio, understanding it as easily as the Sierra Leoneans had understood Gullah. They were deeply moved at hearing an African President speaking their own language, affirming so dramatically their African roots.³³

The event continued with the sharing of every day foods of rice and okra found on the Gullah Coast and in Sierra Leone. Rice dishes made by the islanders in similar fashion to the meals regularly eaten by the entourage from West Africa united two people as one. "The Gullahs have traditionally hidden their language and customs from outsiders, fearing ridicule. Emory Campbell noted that soon after the President's visit, older people on St. Helena were speaking Gullah openly for the first time and even correcting the Gullah speech of younger and better educated people."³⁴ The event ended

with an invitation by President Momoh for a homecoming of the Gullah people to visit Sierra Leone.

The following year, thirteen Americans of African descent returned to the home of their ancestors. Among the delegates were members of the Black Seminoles, descendants of runaway slaves from plantations on the Gullah Coast. All of the members represented locations where the enslaved rice growers of the Sea Islands survived or escaped and migrated into parts of the United States. Gullahs from South Carolina and Georgia met for the first time, and were joined on this "homecoming" event by Black Seminoles and Seminole Freedmen representing Florida and Oklahoma. The language and customs of each group could be traced to Sierra Leone.

The homecoming of the Gullahs and Black Seminoles was celebrated by all of Sierra Leone. The weeklong visit became a series of dinners, receptions, and traditional sharing by Gullahs and Sierra Leoneans. Common language and familiar songs for Sierra Leoneans, Gullahs, and Black Seminoles heightened people's emotions at each event. Eating rice and visiting rice fields became a highpoint, but the "most solemn moments in the homecoming visit took place at Bunce Island, the ruins of the 18th century slave trading base. Upon landing, the Gullah and their Sierra Leonean hosts walked to the end of the old jetty, where the Gullahs' ancestors last set foot on African soil."³⁵

The documentary "Family Across the Sea," produced by South Carolina Educational Television, followed the Gullahs and Black Seminoles through their week in Sierra Leone, and relates the story of research by linguists and anthropologists that spans most of the 20th century.³⁶ The history of Bunce Island and of the slave traders who set in motion the disbursement of people from one continent to another clarifies how the

forced migration of a West African ethnic group can leave its mark on another continent. Returning to the last moment when Gullah and Black Seminole ancestors "last set foot on African soil" was not an end to the journey, but rather the beginning of new research on how Sierra Leoneans recreated themselves in the United States.

The Gullah people are the most immediate descendants from West Africa. An interesting continuation of Gullah traditions can be found among the Black Seminoles. Now understood as the descendants of runaways from coastal plantations, Africans banded together with Native Americans escaping their own enslavement by other Native Americans who allied themselves with the encroaching Americans. The Seminole Nation of American history arose from two groups escaping into the sub-tropical wilderness of Spanish-held Northern Florida and became the military front for Spain. "The Seminoles, like the blacks who escaped to Florida, were mostly refugees. From the beginning of Seminole immigration many of the people who came were criminals, Indian slaves, or political descendants from the Creek Confederacy. It was the Creeks who first applied the derisive term "Seminole" to the Indians in Florida. The name is from the Spanish *cimarron* meaning an escaped slave. The English term "marroon,"[sic] which applies specifically to an escaped Negro slave, is from the same Spanish source."³⁷ Together as a creolized group, the Seminoles and Black Seminoles, as they would continue to be defined into the twentieth century, learned to survive in the nearly uninhabited territory with the agricultural ingenuity of Africans. Rice became a mainstay food item, as the two groups shared customs and rituals.

From the late 1600s until the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), Seminoles of both heritages withstood American raids and military as they fought for Spanish

Territory. Florida, for the African runaway, meant freedom. For the plantation owners of South Carolina and Georgia, Florida was siphoning away expensive labor and harboring a resistance force that could threaten the economic successes of the plantation system. "The Seminole blacks are not another example of Negro resistance to slavery in the antebellum South--they are the principal example. Nowhere else in what is now the United States did the necessary geographical and political factors converging to produce *marronage* on a grand scale. Nowhere else did maroon communities persist for generations and challenge whole armies. Nowhere else was there forged a formidable alliance of Indians and Negroes. And nowhere else did blacks ally themselves with European powers and attempt to hold the frontier against further American expansion."³⁸

The Seminole hold on Florida ended in 1842 in a stalemate with the United States. Considered by the U.S. government to be the longest and most expensive in American history until the Vietnam conflict the following century, the US government began to realize that it was fighting an African rather than an Indian war.³⁹ An agreement was made that the Seminoles would migrate to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. During periods in the 1800s, Black Seminoles migrated in several directions at differing stages of war. Beginning with the Spanish-supported move after the War of 1812 to Andros Island in the Bahamas and Cuba, the migration continued beyond Oklahoma to Nacimiento, Mexico, in 1850. There the Black Seminoles escaped a new threat of enslavement. As the Seminole Freedmen, members of the Mexican-supported group once again found themselves the military guards of the American-Mexican border. Still fighting with sharpened expertise from the wars in Florida, the Seminole Freedman ended up serving as a new haven for runaways from Texas.

In 1870, after the Civil War, when the recovering Union needed military assistance to control Indian conflicts in Texas, Seminole Freedmen from Nacimientto were solicited, and moved to what is now Brackettville, Texas. As the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts, under the command of a former Union military officer, Lieutenant John Bullis, the Freedmen continued the fighting reputation of their African heritage. "By 1882 Bullis and his scouts had virtually pacified a terrifying no man's land. That year a dozen army expeditions from Texas Army posts covered 3,662 miles and found no raiders of any kind. In eleven years, twenty-six expeditions, and twelve major engagements, Bullis and his desert fighters had not lost a man in battle or had one seriously wounded."⁴⁰ The Seminole Negro Indian Scouts were disbanded in 1914.

In November 1998, the 18th Annual Heritage Festival at Penn Center was the homecoming of Black Seminoles from Oklahoma, now calling themselves Seminole Freedmen and Seminole Negro Indian Scouts from Texas. Other than the initial meeting with Gullah representatives in the homecoming to Sierra Leone ten years before, the visit to St. Helena Island for the Heritage Festival was the first return of Seminoles to the Gullah Coast since the Second Seminole War. The research of Ian Hancock, University of Texas linguist, and Joseph Opala, Gullah-Sierra Leone-connection anthropologist, and later Penn Center resident scholar, confirmed the migration of the original rice growers from West Africa to their ties with the Texans. The people of this newest homecoming in the evolution of a culture greeted one other with familiar language and shared the same foods, once again.

The Seminole Freedmen, Seminole Negro Indian Scouts, and Seminoles continued their pilgrimage to Fort Moultrie, on Sullivan's Island, Charleston, South

Carolina. The Seminole war leader Ocoola was captured during the Second Seminole War, and died as a prisoner at Fort Moultrie in 1838. Tobacco ties were placed at the four corners of Ocoola's grave, "representing the Four Corners of the World and the Four Directions of the Wind." Melinda Micco, Oklahoma Seminole and African-Indian historian from Mills College in California, continued explaining the ceremony while the Seminole Freedmen and the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts circled Ocoola's grave. She described an ancient symbol worn by her grandfather on his belt buckle that resembled a cross, "to show that the Four Directions of the Wind are always in constant movement, in a circle, and that's what brings us back to this circle today."⁴¹ The Seminoles blessed the grave in prayer and a moment of silence, with the understanding that a circle had been completed.

The symbol of the Four Directions of the Wind is not unlike the symbol of the Four Moments of the Sun found in the secret societies of West Africa, also transformed into the Ring Shout of Gullah spirituality. Connecting the migration patterns of an ethnic group from West Africa into the United States has at times resulted from the serendipity of hearing a language or viewing a custom. At other times, there has been a persistent search, using clues left by preceding research. More clues have recently surfaced to establish another link to the Gullah Coast. Krios, called Nova Scotians in Sierra Leone, are found to have similarities in language and knowledge of rice cultivation.

Nova Scotians are primarily descendants of enslaved Africans, many escaping the plantations on the coast of South Carolina and Georgia who supported the British during the American war for independence. For black loyalists, freedom was an automatic reward and the British-held colony of Nova Scotia, in Canada, became a safe haven after

the war. Approximately 20,000 enslaved Africans in South Carolina and Georgia offered loyalty to the British for the chance of freedom.⁴² In 1791, many Nova Scotians joined maroons from Jamaica and Africans from Britain to establish Freetown in Sierra Leone. A few of the Nova Scotians were returning to the home of their birth, while others were descendants of ethnic groups found in the area who survived the initial journey to the rice plantations across the Atlantic.⁴³

Mende, Gullah, Seminole, and Nova Scotians have formed their own pattern of ethnic survival in a circle similar to the Four Moments of the Sun or Ring Shout. Ethnic continuity of West African origin has been recognized through each cultural modification. An extraordinary aspect of connecting each link has been to identify which custom has been altered from its origin, and which custom has remained intact. The circle of migration from the Mende, into the Gullah and Seminole, then to the returning Nova Scotians, is a fascinating study of cultural survivalism, which includes investigating the historical catalysts that forged a new beginning. The Gullah people of St. Helena Island are now realizing their role in the retention of heritage that has evoked a renewed sense of their history. They are beginning to reawaken the traditions of their elders.

NOTES

¹University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Special Collections houses original documents from Penn School, Penn Center, and research materials accumulated during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Some publications from this period include N.G.I. Ballanta-Taylor St. Helena Island Spirituals, Guion Griffis Johnson A Social History of the Sea Islands, Guy B. Johnson Folk Culture on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, and T.J. Woofert, Jr. Black Yeomanry: Life on St. Helena Island.

²Lawrence S. Rowland, Alexander Moore, and George C. Rogers, Jr, The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina vol. 1, 1514-1861 (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 18.

³*Ibid.*, 16.

⁴*Ibid.*, 18. Chapter two of the 1996 publication was release as a pamphlet by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in 1990. The 1996 publication contains corrected information in reference to the Spanish explorers and the specific date they arrived in the region that they named Santa Elena.

⁵Guion Griffis Johnson, A Social History of the Sea Islands (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 5.

⁶Rowland, The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina, 20.

⁷*Ibid.*, 108.

⁸*Ibid.*, 255.

⁹*Ibid.*, 348.

¹⁰Vincent Harding, There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 60.

¹¹Rowland, The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina, 353.

¹²Katherine M. Jones, Port Royal Under Six Flags (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1960), 195.

¹³Rowland, The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina, 456.

¹⁴Belinda Hurmence, ed., Before Freedom: When I Just Can Remember 7th ed. (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: John F. Blair Publishing, 1989), ix-xvi. Hurmence describes the process of selecting 284 narratives from South Carolinians who were formerly enslaved. The narratives are part of the collection from the Federal Writers' project of the 1930s.

¹⁵Ronald Daise, Reminiscences of Sea Island Heritage (Orangeburg, South Carolina: Sandlapper Publishing, Inc., 1986), 15-18.

¹⁶Jones, Port Royal Under Six Flags, 185. The St. Helena Mounted Volunteer Riflemen, organized on January 20, 1861, consisted of thirty-two men, not counting enslaved members from plantations. Under the rules of war, the following guideline was used to prepare soldiers of the Confederacy for war. "In serious provision for an anticipated campaign, it was required of each warrior that he provide himself with a horse, saber, pair of Colt's revolvers, Maynard rifle, trappings, and uniform. He was to be allowed as much baggage as he could carry in his own wagon, and it was understood that he would keep ready packed for immediate service a small tent, mattress, blankets, and bedding sufficient and suitable for a campaign. . . . The number of servants was not limited, but it was expected that only one servant would accompany a member of the company in time of action, to carry extra weapons and reload them when discharged, but under no circumstances was a Negro to fire a shot."

¹⁷Hurmence, Before Freedom, 77-81.

¹⁸Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 9.

¹⁹Edith Dabbs, Sea Island Diary: A History of St. Helena Island (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1983), 172-174.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 217.

²¹Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1964), 238.

²²Theodore Rosengarten, Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986), 260.

²³Dabbs, Sea Island Diary, 175.

²⁴Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction, 214-215.

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- ²⁵Dabbs, Sea Island Diary, 175.
- ²⁶Ibid., 185.
- ²⁷Ibid., 187.
- ²⁸Ibid., 225.
- ²⁹Ibid., 234.
- ³⁰Ibid., 236.
- ³¹J. Tracy Power, "I Will Not Be Silent and I Will Be Heard: Martin Luther King, Jr., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Penn Center, 1964-1967" (Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina Department of Archives & History, 1993).
- ³²Dabbs, Sea Island Diary, 242.
- ³³Joseph Opala, "Momoh Visits the Gullah," West Africa, 31 October 1988, 2035.
- ³⁴Ibid., 1048
- ³⁵_____ "The Gullahs Come Home," West Africa, 25 December 1990, 2144.
- ³⁶"Family Across the Sea," prod. and dir. Tim Carrier 28 min., South Carolina Educational Television, 1990, videocassette.
- ³⁷Opala, "Seminole-African Relations on the Florida Frontier," Papers in Anthropology 22, no.1 (1981): 11-52.
- ³⁸Ibid., 12.
- ³⁹Kenneth W. Porter, The Black Seminoles (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1996), 106-107.
- ⁴⁰William Loren Katz, Black Indians (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 86.
- ⁴¹Black Seminole at gravesite of Ocoola, Fort Moultrie, Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, videotaped by author, 15 November 1998. Personal collection.
- ⁴²Ellen Gibson Wilson, The Loyal Blacks (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976), 26.

⁴³Opala report to Sierra Leone head of state, 1992, preparation for visit by Nova Scotians. "The year 1992 is the 200th anniversary of the Nova Scotians' arrival in Sierra Leona. There are still black people in Nova Scotia, descendants of former American slaves who chose not to emigrate to Africa. A group of these Black Nova Scotians will be making an historic reunion visit to Sierra Leone in October of this year." Opala collection.

CHAPTER 4

"LOOK'UM EEN DE YEYE": GATHERING STORIES FROM THE ELDERS FOR MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTION

The approach to field research on St. Helena Island was as scholar and observer. Preparatory investigation into the lives of the Gullah culture through the work of other scholars gave insight into the depth of information already in existence. Having knowledge about topics that have been explored by other scholars, such as Praise Houses, Penn School, and the Port Royal Experiment, was important when an interviewee began to tell stories on topics that had not been documented. Recognizing the new information conveyed by an interviewee made electronic documentation more important. The ability to capture audio or even video added to the collection of significant facts about the culture. For the observer at events, familiarity with audio and visual documentation on the Gullah culture became essential based on the same rationale as was evident in the review of preexisting written materials.

Publications on coastal area topics were located in the South Carolina Archives and History and the South Caroliniana Library of the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina. Journals and documents on Penn School and the Port Royal Experiment were found in the research library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Beaufort County Library special-collection houses copies of most books and journals on or about Beaufort County. Searching the materials on St. Helena

Island led to the realization that between a personal collection and those of relatives, obscure works published by island residents were accessible. Any islander who wrote a book or pamphlet contributed a signed copy to the family library.

Understanding aspects of previously recorded behavior, songs, and stories through a visual medium supported preparation for the field as much as having studied written research. Visual resources placed people in their environment, showing dress, lifestyle, and some eating habits. Edith Dabb's Face of an Island (1970) is a pictorial of St. Helena Island of restored glass negatives found at Penn Center documenting the early 20th century. The depiction of life on the island from that period was a visual beginning point in order to recognize a time span within the population. Remarkably, some images of the island then were reflective of contemporary island existence, i.e., the making of sweet grass baskets, usage of the bateau (boat), and an environment dominated by live oak trees strewn with Spanish moss.

Of further significance to gathering current materials from the elders of the island was the ability to become participant and an informant. St. Helena Island is the home of the researcher's relatives and friends, which means visiting regularly and maintaining a connection to the inhabitants of the area. Participation in family reunions, and attending Home-going services (funerals) meant visiting often, along with using the island for vacations. Taking part in events around the island, including Penn Center confirmed the research of various scholars. For a participant, the ability to interact with islanders in a familiar manner also provided an opportunity to experience activities heretofore undocumented in any research. The details on methods of cultivating certain vegetables,

raising turkeys for income to pay taxes, the process used to can shrimp, and stories of the religious practice of Going into the Wilderness, are a few examples of stories gathered.

The position of informant originates by my keeping a journal of memories from childhood. While researching the materials of other scholars, undocumented aspects of island life became easier to recognize during interviews. Stories of daily living hold clues to cultural beliefs and commonalties that are now being linked to Sierra Leone. A starting point in collecting stories was to record my own memories beginning with childhood. Within these stories, and the stories of the elders, a clearer picture of daily living began to unfold. Personal impressions of the environment, certain events, and cultural behavior were familiar and recorded in similar form to that used with the elders. Their stories confirmed aspects of memories that corroborated the researcher's position as informant. The difficulty inherent in the duality of scholar and informant of one's own culture was reviewed regularly to make certain that the focus was from the perspective of other inhabitants within the culture. Furthermore, contributions made to the research in the form of personal experiences were organized with other documentation with the same potential for analysis.

The following story, "Plum Juice and Rosetta" is a reflection of childhood. Plum juice refers to the condition of bare feet when walking upon the overripe plums on the ground. The lack of concern for getting feet dirty with soil and fruit juice reflects comfort with the surroundings. The interaction with Rosetta, grandmother to the children in the story, illustrates the mode of transgenerational education. This story, told in the first person, is an example of the memories used in order to initiate interviews with the

elders. In effect it presents the researcher as interviewee, complementing the other interviews.

"Plum Juice and Rosetta"

I remember my childhood as if it were a fantasy. Two of my brothers and I like to sit among our friends and tell stories of growing up in the country, on an island surrounded by marshland off the coast of South Carolina. The 50's and 60's has its own place in history, but not all my memories of that time can be found in a classroom. It cannot be taught in a classroom--a childhood filled with magic and the memory of wanting for nothing.

I remember summers best. Not having shoes on our feet was a choice. We learned to walk over the earth trusting in instinct and having the protection of youth against the briars and brambles of the woods, the hot sand of the coast, and acres of fields planted with tomatoes, watermelons, cucumbers, beans, greens. Summer was a time for fruit trees, growing wild, bearing a child's dream.

My memory is of the amazement at always having food to eat. The ocean, the fields, and the woods helped my parents raise a family of three boys and one girl who now own a treasure box of memories in their being, and a bond to the earth that makes part of the mystery of Saint Helena Island.

As soon as the weather became warm enough, my shoes remained in the closet until those times when we went shopping in town, or every Sunday when the family went to church. From a young age, I learned to run down a dirt road and protect my feet from being burned by the hot sand. Some times were too daring and too foolish, but the challenge was to find a blade of grass to stand upon until the really hot places on my feet were cool enough to move on, to the next blade of grass.

One of our favorite journeys was running down the road from our house to the plum bush, over a football-field distance away, past an acre of broom straw and briar patches. The best time to eat plums was when the spirit moved. A peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich at lunch would be reason enough to dare the hundred-degree sun and the scorching sand. The plum bush was a large cluster of little trees standing over six feet each. The cluster was so thick my brothers and cousins and I could hide from each other among the leaves and branches hanging to the ground with huge, sweet, red plums cooking in the sunshine.

The sugary smell of overripe plums was one of the smells of summer. Pushing each other off small clumps of grass as we ran down a road of loose sub-tropical sand was one of the games that brought laughter. Playing tag through skinny plum branches laden with fruit, our bare feet becoming black with the mixture of plum juice and sand, is one of the memories that make me realize how much my childhood is only fantasy for too many others.

You had to turn off the main road of rock and asphalt and drive down the dirt road past the plum bush to get to our house. My father's house, my uncle's house, and my grandmother's house formed a triangle on the edge of swampy woods and pasture. Each clapboard house had six rooms: three bedrooms in a line, living room, dining room, and a hall near the kitchen and bathroom which formed a line opposite the bedrooms.

My father's house was covered in brown speckled tarpaper with a green tar paper roof. My grandmother had four squared-off rooms and an outhouse past the crab apple tree, the fig orchard, and the chicken coop. Windows were always open and no doors were ever locked. There was a hook on each door that was latched each night. If we were on the outside of a latched door, we just turned the knob and pushed until we saw the hook. Take a stick from anywhere on the ground and lift the latch. But summertime was too hot for closed doors. The screen doors and windows did not always keep out the

mosquitoes at night. Keeping out the flies during the day was a trial, with children going back and forth, inside to outside and inside again.

As the roosters started crowing every morning, my mother would already be in the kitchen making breakfast. The morning chores came before anything else. The boys took the horse out to pasture somewhere in the fields or the marsh. My mother fed the chickens and the turkeys, and I fed my cats and dogs. My father took care of the pig. It was a big sow that had a litter one summer, before we made her our dinner.

There were a lot of animals around the house. Chickens and turkeys were raised for meat and fresh eggs. The horse was kept for labor, tropical fish and parakeets just for fun. There were even rabbit burrows behind the chicken and turkey coop. Sometimes we would catch a baby rabbit and keep it locked in the screen porch for us to play with. It is no wonder I learned to wiggle my nose as fast as any rabbit.

As an adult, I understand the blessings given to me from childhood. I now know how my parents raised their children in a world of segregation during the 50's and 60's. So much of what they did for food and clothing and medicine was due to limitations surrounding color. Going into town for food meant separate water fountains and blatant discrimination. So my parents grew three acres of food that the children harvested over the summer and we had tomatoes and greens and beans and okra and many other vegetables until the next summer. We also had fish and shrimp and crab from the ocean.

My mother was a seamstress by trade and taught her children how to mend their clothes. She made dresses for the two females to wear from bulk material bought at the store in-town. For medicine, my mother consulted a health journal she received through mail order for diagnosis of many conditions. Then we depended on our grandmother for cures, because going to see the doctor meant a trip into town. It meant sitting in the Colored Section waiting your turn, sometimes for hours.

My grandmother was one of the last midwives on St. Helena Island. She became a midwife in the 1950's, certified through the midwife program at Penn School. One significant part of the midwife program was its acceptance of "root" medicine known to the African descendants now inhabiting the Lowcountry of South Carolina.

I did not realize until now that when my grandmother sent us into the woods to pick some plant for her, she was passing on her medicine. She made root tea and medicines that I cannot completely remember, but she put us in physical touch with her knowledge. Now I find myself trying to recreate so much of what my family learned to do out of necessity during that time.

There is so much I do not remember, except that out of our own need arising from not having access to a doctor, we found our own way to live as very healthy people. I still accept doctors only as a secondary resource, especially when I think that it is more important to help my body find the natural medicine that would help to heal it. Although my grandmother could not treat every illness or condition--she did not perform major surgery--we did survive very well. In my kitchen cabinet today are some of my grandmother's medicines. I have made my own commitment to learn more of these medicines that come from the soil. They will always be a part of my method of healing.

Somehow I remember that a certain tea is to be used for a certain ailment, such as chinaberry with fried onion for whooping cough, garlic for hypertension, and horehound tea with pine needles and lemon as a diuretic. Then I ask my mother what she remembers of the earth-giving medicines and she recalls things even from her own mother's time. However, I realize now that in order to know more, I must learn it on my own. The tea, root, or bark that came from my grandmother's practice died along with her. So many elders on the islands of South Carolina and Georgia in recent decades have--in their manner of speech--Gone Home without having someone of the new generation with whom to leave their knowledge.

General Procedure for Documentation

Field research and documentation extended from personal reflection to a documentary form of collecting stories using still photography, video, and audio recordings. The use of multimedia tools during each interview varied, depending upon the comfort level of the interviewee. Not all persons or situations were photographed or electronically recorded, but a written account of the interview or event became the best form of documentation. Case in point: among some interviewees, their discomfort with technology was at odds with the need to use every possible electronic tool. In such a situation, journal entries were written then reread to the interviewee in order to make certain of accuracy. A hidden recorder was not always successful with this type of interviewee due to the inability to control audio quality, but an occasion arose that made a hidden recorder successful. Ethical and legal issues must be considered when using a concealed recorder. Permission from the interviewee for usage of audio or video equipment should be secured at all times in order to maintain a level of trust, especially because future visits are usually necessary.

Other recording situations involved problems, such as running out of audiotape. In the midst of the interview with Viola Chaplin (Miz Ola)¹ who gave extensive information on island history--child rearing, religion, and doctors available to islanders--the audiotape ran out. Fortunately, a back up recorder was available to continue the interview. However, in the absence of a backup recorder, a journal was available as the only other recourse to continue documentation. Audiotaping was the only form of documentation possible due to the low available light inside her house. She did not want

to be photographed, but instead provided a black-and-white still taken nearly twenty years earlier.

How much--and which--technology, to use on an interview was decided by the availability of equipment. It was difficult to keep a supply of delicate technology in the car during the summer. The solution was to take longer breaks between interviews in order to replenish supplies. A subject is more at ease when not bombarded by unfamiliar technology. Simplified tools of documentation, in a compact carrying case, were unobtrusive during each interview and recording event.

Thanks to the condensed design of digital technology, all technology could be carried inside a Kenya basket, except for a tripod. The equipment included digital video camcorder, color still camera, black-and-white still camera, audiotape recorder, extension cord, and journals. Extra film, videotape, and audiotape were also organized in this basket.

Using a person's name as remembered from childhood became important. Most people remembered the researcher as a little girl, and referred to themselves by the names used within the family. A decision had to be made when writing about the people of the island as to whether to use their familiar names. It has been well established on the islands that when someone is called by the name on the birth certificate, there is an outsider present. The name used among the islanders is what has been termed a "basket" name² by researchers such as Lorenzo Dow Turner, Mary A. Twining, and Keith E. Baird. Showing respect and familiarity with an elder means using the person's first name with the title of Miz or Mister.

Not all islanders have "basket" names, as seems to be the practice among the children of most graduates of Penn School. Knowing with whom to use which form of address had to be remembered as a matter of respect, but addressing a person in either manner was not always consistent. For example, the researcher's mother, a Penn School graduate, is referred to as Mrs. Edith Sumpter or Miz Edith, depending on the association of the person addressing her or by the permission she has given. By contrast, the researcher's father has always been referred to by his "basket" name, Porpoise (pronounced paw-pus). When a person used the name from his birth certificate, that person would always be a stranger.

Remembering names became an important issue when referred to someone who could give specific information about Ring Shouts. A visiting researcher to the island, ethnomusicologist Cynthia Schmidt, along with anthropologist Joseph Opala, who researched the Gullah connection to Sierra Leone, was referred to a man in his nineties who could sing songs in the original shout style. Schmidt used the name Sam Brown for the singer. I did not remember Sam Brown and called upon a couple of people to help. My mother supplied the name of Mister Wez, his "basket" name, who was immediately recognized as the next door neighbor from childhood.

During the interview Mister Wez³ [There is no authorized spelling of this name, since it is spoken only] told stories and sang Shout songs. He is one of the oldest persons still shouting on the island. He demonstrated the foot movement in which the feet did not cross. Crossing the feet made the spiritual shouting into a secular dance. No dancing is allowed in Praise Houses or churches. Shout songs varied from gospel by tempo and rhythm of clapping. This maintained the circle of shouters immersed in worship.

Audiotaping was the only form of documentation during the interview with Mister Wez. The interior of his home was too dark, even for the low-light capability of digital imaging. Outside was too hot for him to tolerate, and too noisy for effective use of audio or video documentation. He did allow sometime in the summer sun for still photographs to be taken when the audiotaped interview was completed inside his home.

Videotaping the feet of Mister Wez would have added to his descriptions, but this proved not to be the best occasion to use the video camcorder. These unexpected occasions for videotaping came by word of mouth or through happenstance. The time and place for a river baptism⁴ early one Sunday morning was learned only the previous day. Videotaping the event became a favor to the person being baptized in the marshy riverside, in exchange for permission to use the footage for research. Similar circumstances involved an opportunity to document a play, "An Old Fashion Gullah Wedding,"⁵ performed at an island church. Reaching the event at the beginning, after finding out about the play an hour and a half before it was to start, meant a change of clothes from a day of interviewing and photography, getting permission from the participants to document, and hoping that the location chosen would be a good angle from which to record the play using a single camera.

This was the first time in two years that the church members held this performance, and the fourth performance in ten years since the church members began this community event. The church was packed with members from the community, and appointments with more family and friends were made in order to continue gathering stories.

Copies of events recorded on videotape were always given to a principal person. Whenever photographs were taken, copies were always given to persons involved. This gesture was to show appreciation for participating in this research.

On a few occasions a concealed audiotape recorder became beneficial. The songs and devotion from two church services were in the style remembered from childhood. These were moments when a large Kenya basket came in handy. The discreet use of multimedia tools was needed during a family reunion, although everyone agreed on supporting the research by telling stories. Some relatives became nervous with a recorder present. Concealing the small audio recorder in the fold of the journal alleviated any discomfort from a visible recorder. A recorder is better during times when multiple people are giving answers. Still photographs were taken, but the situation was not conducive to video taping in light of reactions to the audiotape recorder.

Concealing a recorder for the ease of those attending became necessary when family members were invited to a Fourth of July barbecue. Although the researcher's birthday is on the third of July, the family has celebrated it on the fourth. This date was an opportunity to have a birthday party, with the admission fee of telling stories about the island. The audiotape recorder was a prominent item in the middle of the picnic table while everyone gathered. There were more conversations about the cooking and the impending rain than was useful to the research.

During the picnic, it rained and drove everyone inside. The eating proceeded with lively conversations from uncles, cousins, and the interviewer's mother about growing up on the island. Little did they know that the recorder was now concealed under the table. Two new concerns: batteries and tape changes. The batteries lasted--with a watch used to

time the length of the tape--and the feel of the record button disengaging indicated when to change the tape. The conversation around the table became one of the most exciting experiences of the summer.

Interview and Analysis: The Fourth of July⁶

The following interview is characteristic of conversations with the elders on St. Helena Island. This example shows the relationship of the researcher to the interviewees as informant/participant and scholar/observer. The flexibility of the roles at times is to supply information urging on the interview, at times as an observer, eliciting verbal reactions to prompting information. Gullah is used at points when referring to specific people, and is the language used to tell stories.

Uncle Harry (Thomas Sumpter): Age 81. The oldest surviving sibling of six children: four boys, two girls, and a great-grand parent. Retired, lived on St. Helena Island all of his life.

Uncle Bubba (Isaiah Sumpter): Age 79. Brother of Harry. Moved to New York City in the 1940s. Retired grandparent living as a dual resident in Queens, New York, and St. Helena Island.

Edith Sumpter (Mommie): Age 71. Sister-in-law of Harry and Bubba. Husband, Edward, deceased in January of that year.

Denise Sumpter (Daughter of Isaiah): Age 36. Resident of Queens, New York. Regular visitor to St. Helena Island since birth. Mother of Carmelitta, age 14.

Beverly Sumpter (Daughter of Harry): Age 35. Life-long resident of St. Helena Island. Mother of Andrea, 11, and Tamario, 1.

Joseph Opala: Age 48. Family friend and Scholar-in-resident at Penn Center. American anthropologist from Sierra Leone.

Althea Sumpter (Daughter of Edith): Age 41. Dual resident of Atlanta, Georgia, and St. Helena Island.

Bubba: When anybody get in trouble around here, Joe Chisholm or somebody 'round there would bail him out. Then, when they go to the Sheriff, everybody go to the sheriff with him. So, the sheriff would say what you owe him now, or give him thirty days, or ask the church.

Edith: What about the church?

Harry: I know Walpole wasn't the only done that! Send you back to your church.

Bubba: What's the other one name? Cracker, Judge Cracker. That's a name, now!

Althea: Judge Walpole and Judge Cracker would send you back if you get in trouble on the island, on St. Helena; would send you back to the church?

Bubba: This was a strong island during that time. In the thirties, early forties, too.

Althea: So, the churches would be the magistrate court?

Bubba: They would say, well, he need to spend some time in jail to bring him . . .

Harry: If the judge say been wrong to hit you, if my church say I been wrong to hit you, and you go back up say, 'Yeah, the reverend, pastor of that church say yeah he been wrong.' Then, he gets . . .

Edith: Then, I thought the magistrate, whoever the judge of that time, they were going mostly by what the scripture says. You don't go to the unjust law. Christians don't go to unjust law. You settle that in the church. If you can't settle that then, the judge would have to deal with it.

Althea: So the church could kick it back to the judge.

Uncle Harry and Uncle Bubba mentions that each went before the judge. Pushed for answers by everyone, Uncle Harry decides to tell his story.

Harry: I out run the stop sign. That's the only thing I ever been in court for. They ain't never send me back here, 'cause I paid the money there.

Althea: So, you had a car! Who had the first car around here?

Harry: Manny Chisholm and Madeciah [pronounced name] Warren.

Bubba: I remember Sonny Jenkins had one. A Chevy, 1928.

Harry: That come later, though. . . .The only thing I ever went to court for is speedin' and runnin' a stop sign.

Althea: What car did you have? When?

Harry: I don't know when! Only thing I can tell you is the first year I buy a car. I think that been 'bout '42.

Edith: Harry, which one did Ed make fire came out the tail?

Harry: (*Laughs*) Ask Bubba. It been right on the curb there.

Bubba: I work a whole year to make forty-six dollars, to save up forty-six dollars, to buy that car. And, I had it two days. Ed borrowed the car that night. He, Rufus, Samuel Jenkins; they got in that car and they were gone. And, the car wouldn't start. And, he say' "Just as soon as I get it started I'm gon' burn it down." He hit (*made a sharp curve*) Madeciah Warren (*location*) right over there, the car turn over and caught a fire.

Harry: It fell down on e side, then it caught a fire.

Bubba: Yeah, well it fell on e side and caught a fire. Everybody got out of that car. Pete got burned, all his head got burned, got singed. And his finger is like that right now. (*Knuckles bent*)

Joe: What are you doing giving him your car the second day you got it?

Bubba: We were like that. I drove it that day and he drove it that night.

Denise: They knew how to share their toys.

Bubba started telling his story of facing the judge, but felt more comfortable cutting it short by referring to stories of his mother and his brother, my father. He remembered a story told to him by his brother.

Bubba: Ed the one tickle me 'bout Mama. This man came to get his money and Mama didn't have the money. But, he start talkin' say he wanted money and Mama say, "Go 'head get it."

Althea: Go in the house and get it?

Edith: He wanted the appliance. She didn't have the money then, he wanted the appliance. She was big, you know, and she put that felt hat on backwards, "Go on. Go get it. Go get it." 'Cause she had a ax. She was gonna chop . . .

Bubba: 'E left and told Ed, "I just left a crazy woman." And 'e didn't know 'e was talking 'bout Ed mother. (*Everyone laughs*)

Harry: It was a refrigerator. 'E say see, "Come on get'um. See de 'frigerator in dey. Go back dey an get'um. You go back dey an' get'um. I don't know what comin' out." Jones, that's e name. Use'ta be right there in the back of Edward's stor,' right across from the Piggly Wiggly. And Willie Pope use'ta work for the man. Jones tell Willie go get the money. Willie ain't want go get'um. 'E say, "That my cousin. Let'um go get 'e own money."

Althea: I heard she chased away the insurance man with the shotgun.

Bubba: This island was so well preserved . . . You could do anything in this community and the sheriff would come looking for you and nobody know you. Nobody know you! I remember Tom Loundes, they used to catch them for poll tax. The sheriff was going to his house and he was comin' out and he went to Philadelphia the same day. And never paid him.

Althea: The poll tax?

Harry: The man had me for that, too. Not paying the poll tax. I used to work for Harry Youman, and he tell me, "You got the tax numbers, or the tax receipt?" I tell him yeah and he tell me bring'um to me in the morning. I carry 'um to Harry that next mornin,' I gone to work. I ain't hear no more from him. He say "Go 'head on back to work." I ain't never hear no more 'bout that.

Bubba: That was a crazy thing! When you become twenty-one, you suppose to pay.

Harry: You didn't pay poll tax, you go to jail.

Althea: What is the poll tax?

Bubba: Where are you people from!

Edith: That's why you need to learn!

Joe: Was that for voting, is that what it was about?

Edith: You paid it and didn't vote, Joe!

Denise: They register you, so that way they know you can't vote.

Althea: The last year that you voted on St. Helena was 1912, I think. And then it started again in '64. 'Cause I think Grammy (Rosetta) voted.

Edith: It was before '64.

Bubba: You could vote if you paying poll tax. I wasn't old enough. I left here before I started.

Joe: Did white people pay poll tax?

Bubba: I think so! It was the stupidest thing there is!

Edith: And they said it went for the road. We didn't have any roads to maintain, but the ditches.

Bubba: Prisoners were taking care of the roads.

Althea: Prisoners, from where, in town?

Bubba: They had the mule and the. . .

Edith: Y'all know what poll tax is, right?

Althea: That's the voting tax, right?

Edith: That's the tax that men pay. For their poll!

Everyone immediately understood and laughter ensued.

Bubba: Once you turn twenty-one, nineteen or twenty-one, something like that. . . It could be a dollar, fifty cents, or whatever.

Althea: A dollar fifty cents a male would pay after the age of twenty-one because they were male. And they had the third leg!

Harry and Bubba (*simultaneously*): Yeah!

Bubba: You're sexual active, so then that was the contribution to the county.

Beverly: That's for real!

Edith: See, women didn't have no poll.

Joe: Mama Sumpter!

More laughter!

Beverly: You just had to pay that one year or every year?

Bubba: No, every year you paid.

Joe: That's a fortune!

Althea: When did they stop this?

Harry: Back in them days, ain't but Mr. King and Dr. Bailey, and Boyd and all of them, they could register to vote. So, we couldn't vote.

Althea: They could vote and you couldn't vote! [King, Bailey and Boyd were of African descent living on the island]

Bubba: Because they were qualified, they paid their poll tax, so they could vote.

Harry: They had to look for the local people.

Edith: When it started again, everybody . . . you had to read an article to pass. If you read it correctly then they will sign you up. . . . Everybody had the same article.

Althea: What did women have to pay to vote? Could they vote?

Edith: Women weren't voting at that time.

Bubba: I don't know what time, but it was about the early 30s?

Joe: But there was women's suffrage by that time, so it must be a customary thing down here.

Bubba: It was the twenties and thirties, because in the forties they stop that.

Edith: That was a county-wide thing.

Bubba: You know, they had a thing to, they would come looking for me, and they would hide me. They would shuffle me around from one house to the other house until dark to keep from payin' poll tax.

Althea: To make sure to change up how many males in the house?

Bubba: Yeah. This place was a real get together place! You know, to look back, it's something like those foreign places like Haiti, Jamaica. I've been to the northern part of Africa. You do something and you wouldn't catch or find a soul. They get mingled in a group, nobody know who did it, if you go to Haiti. And, here was the same way.

Harry: You always use your nickname. And, the man . . . the man come down ya' looking for Thomas Sumpter. Ain't but very few know Thomas Sumpter. Everybody know Harry. So, 'e didn't come ask for Harry, 'e ask for Thomas Sumpter. Ain't hardly nobody know'um.

Edith: Campbell, who was over that local housing thing, and he came Frogmore one day looking for Edward Sumpter. "No, ain't know no Edward Sumpter. I know Harry and Johnny. Ain't know Edward Sumpter." Next one he ask, "No, name the name again. I know Harry, and them other two live in New York, and Paw-pus (Porpoise) stay here." So, Porpoise was the one they looking for. (*Laugh*) But, when people used to have arguments in the community, the church would counsel them. And, you had to go sit on the back sit until you have made peace with that other person, before you can affiliate with the congregation again.

Harry: It could take as long as you don't make peace. They give you three trial. The last time if you go to conference, then the conference will settle with you. If you can't make peace, then, they turn you out the church. Then you go to monthly meetin.' That's the Thursday before communion.

The conversation around the table was starting to wane at this point. Cousins started to make take-home plates for food lying on the counters of the kitchen, as the interviewer tried to get a little more information from the uncles and her mother. The history and descriptions of churches led into a confusing discussion on which church congregation split from the other. The dialog became rapid among the elders. A decision was made to record the conversation without interruption in hopes of clarifying certain issues at another time. Internal arguments led to various separations from the principal church, Brick Baptist Church, founded in 1855. One example was Ebenezer Baptist Church, founded in 1884. Some churches began in certain locations due to the distance from Brick Baptist Church. Adam Street Baptist Church was founded in 1862 on the southern portion of the island, and First African Baptist Church began serving the northern section in 1863. Varying denominations exist throughout the island at the present time, but Baptist churches predominate.

The conversation continued in a similar jumbled fashion until the attention of the elders was focused with a question about schools on the island. Several schools were available to islanders who could not afford the Penn School tuition of one dollar a year

for first grade, and six dollars a year for grades two through twelve. The long, gray painted buildings were supported through the efforts of Penn School and northern interests, to provide education for other islanders through the sixth grade.

Each person tried to remember the names and locations of the schools. Towne-Mcdonald School at Club Bridge replaced Frogmore School when it burned down, Land's End School at Mas' Paul (Jenkins), South Pine School in Scott, Lee Rosenwald School in McTurious, Mulberry Hill School in Mulberry Hill, and Oaks Schools in Oaks community.

Edith: The last graduation at Penn was '48, or '49, and then the county took over Penn. Penn ended in '40 something. Then in '49 the County took over. That's why some of those graduated after the county [took over], some have Beaufort County [on the diploma] and some have Penn. Like when Joe Sherman graduated in '53, I think his diploma said Penn, because, although it was a county school it was Penn's property and they wanted Penn on the certificate.

Althea: Then the Siceloff's came in '50 to make the transition . . . So, the county took over while they were building the school on [Hwy.] 21? That was a temporary location, and then they finished building the school. That became the school [grades one through twelve] and Penn became the center. And then they shut down all the other schools.

Edith nodded her head in agreement to the additional information conveyed, acknowledging the accuracy of the history. She continued concurring as the history was told, recalled the ending of Penn as an educational institution and the beginning of the community center that would become a retreat location for social-change activists within a few years.

Althea: How did everybody get to school?

Simultaneously from the elders: The bus!

Bubba: That's enough?

Althea: What do you mean "That's enough?" It's never enough!

Edith: That's more than you had!

Further delaying tactics failed, as the uncles rose from the table in one breath, and Edith scurried to the kitchen to see who else needed to take some food home with them. She is a very small person who is known for feeding the community with the ever-present pot on the stove. The recorder was slipped to the side and a camera was readied for quick photos. Before anyone could refuse, black-and-white pictures were taken of the uncles but Edith threw her hands over her face. She does not like having her picture taken, and it was one month later before she would consent to being photographed in color and black-and-white.

Analyzing the Fourth of July interview meant it was necessary to understand nuances within the language in order to interpret certain aspects of the interview. The elders assumed that each person knew certain facts. Furthermore, one had to have a sense of the locations, and of the person's demeanor, in order to grasp the full significance of the stories.

Bubba and Harry shared the story of their brother borrowing the car. Within the story are elements that would become confusing if intonations of the language were not understood. Harry, making a reference to an actual person, Madeciah ["basket" name] Warren, as one of the first persons owning a car, would have been misunderstood in Bubba's portion of the story about when his brother "hit Madeciah Warren right over there." The statement would imply that a person was hit. It actually refers to the driving style used to maneuver a car around a sharp curve at an intersection where a store is located and named for the owner, Madeciah Warren.

Any interruption to confirm the meanings within the aforementioned statement would have stopped the rhythm of the storytelling, with the additional risk that the interviewer would be roundly castigated about her ignorance. Outsiders are assumed to be ignorant of island lore, but no islander, at whatever age, is to acknowledge how little they may know about the information within a story. The decision about when to ask questions and when to let the story continue was made at specific points during the interview process. Knowing that details could be found out later about a person, location or date sometimes made silence seem a better choice.

When Harry, Bubba, and Edith were remembering the saga about churches on the island, it was preferable to record the exchanges they seemed to be having among themselves, rather than stop the accelerated momentum of the conversation. Reviewing the tape later and asking about specifics helped to supply dates for the founding of churches and confirm their locations. During the portion of the interview identifying schools, it was best to join the on-going conversation to combine what the researcher already knew, along with knowledge of the interviewees.

The names and locations of some schools had been learned from other interviews. Each interview yielded another name of a school or a way classes were taught. The interview around the table confirmed other interviews about schools, and once again turned up new information. The conversation on the Fourth of July was the first time that all of the names were given at one time. One aspect that needed clarification, at a cost of scathing comments from the elders, was the location they referred to as Mas' Paul. Eventually understood as a location near Jenkins on Sea Side Road.

The spelling of the name led to a plantation map of the island, where Paul Chaplin plantation between Jenkins and Tom B. (Tombee) Chaplin plantations was noticed. Immediately, there was an understanding that what sounded like Mass should be written as Mas', an abbreviation of master, in reference to a member of the Chaplin family, who owned several plantations on the southern portion of St. Helena Island.

During some parts of the exchange, the interviewer became a participant, adding information to the storytelling. Any wrong information would be summarily corrected. The relatives would continue to nod until it seemed time to let them continue, as they wished.

Most of the people in the stories were familiar from childhood. Learning more about an unfamiliar name would not be difficult. However, finding the answers to some questions requires further investigation of county records. The poll tax needs to be clarified; how some people were able to vote while others could not is yet another question about voting. The issue of voting in Beaufort County, in general, needs more research because there seems to be the possibility that some people of African descent were able to vote at a time when it was historically not possible elsewhere.

Stories of Rosetta are special to each member of the family during gatherings. Talking of her antics always included her mode of dress and character. She always wore a hat, a West African tradition similar to wearing head ties. Her emotions could be understood when looking at the angle of her head and the direction of her felt hat. Rosetta Sumpter--other names were Grammy and Happy--reflected the image and bearing of many island women. Children were identified by the mother and not the

father. "Who yo' mama?" was a common question among islanders, comparable to matrilineal family identity in the Ashanti ethnic group of Ghana.

The image of Rosetta was immediate, as Edith described the woman with the ax. Rosetta was also known to brandish a shotgun, which could be found in each household around the island for protection against the ever-present snake, along with boars still known to exist in the woods, and the rare person who dared become a threat.

Rosetta was a reflection of West Africa. She was a sturdy woman with broad shoulders, dressed in long skirts covered by an oversized apron that could be tied around her waist as a carryall. The utilization of such clothing is a West African cultural behavior that has been retained on the island for centuries. Certain behaviors denoted in her style of dress, and in her grooming habits, were some of the prominent forms of traditional habits among many islanders.

Although Rosetta moved with an easy gait for a large woman, she enjoyed her time sitting on the porch in her rocking chair with a long stem pipe appearing from the side of her mouth. Those were the moments when she would have the researcher, as a young girl, loosen her braids wrapped in black string and massage her head with a large tooth comb. The smells of summer included her tobacco and the licorice nugget she would stick in the side of her mouth like a plug of chaw. She would intimidate anyone when she stood at her full height of five feet eight. Add the shotgun, and like many people on St. Helena Island, she would "look'um een de yeye" and take charge of her own destiny.

Rosetta educated her grandchildren the best way she knew how, by the example of how she lived and by the stories she told. Making errands into the woods to gather her

medicines put them in touch with elements that heal. The time spent massaging her head, a West African grooming behavior, were moments showing affection that taught caring for one another and respect for elderly wisdom. Children on the island learned from one generation to the other in such a manner, never needing the written word to confirm how life should be lived. This form of transgenerational education extended to working side by side in fields during harvest. Picking tomatoes and cutting okra was similar to cooperative labor common among West Africans.

Knowledge of St. Helena Island from personal experience was useful in compensating for historical information not available in books. Interviews of the Islanders contained history that has not been fully documented. Knowledge from childhood was used to confirm locations mentioned. This knowledge eliminated the need to research materials that might or might not contain the place names that the Islanders would use themselves. A comparison of published maps of the island helps to find differences in place names, such as areas on Land's End that have names given by the Islanders but cannot be located in county resources, specifically the area named Toomer.

Several people mentioned that researchers are often referred to them. Not only do the islanders find themselves constantly repeating the same stories, they also limit the information they give. Some people have been heard to say that only an islander should be told stories from the elders. With this in mind, it is important to document island culture and the significance of the aging elders who have stories yet to be recorded. The generation of people who still remember their forebears, the ones primarily affected by the Port Royal Experiment, are dying. They are the last generation untainted by drastic changes to the community experienced by their children in the 1960's and 70's. No

other island on the Gullah Coast has a history of abolitionist involvement and government programs in land ownership and education. Few islands on the Gullah Coast have been so left to their own devices, as have the residents of St. Helena Island (Fig. 3).

Research Procedures for Multimedia Navigation

Two stages towards producing a multimedia title have been introduced thus far. The initial stage, consisting of researching the topic through published materials and documentaries, has resulted in chapters 2 and 3 of this text. The written document is more expansive than a tutorial will allow; therefore, compiling specific information for the production depends on the feedback from the culture involved.

Stage two involves documentation, gathering stories, audio and video recording people and events, and shooting still photographs. Maintaining connections to the people documented for the research and design of the tutorial helps in two ways. They are able to convey which topic areas are more important than others. Moreover, it would be best to introduce the prototype of the tutorial to members of the culture first. If any portion of the tutorial is confusing to the culture, there will be similar comprehension difficulties to the user trying to learn about that culture.

One of the last questions asked of each participant during field research was the listing of important issues in each person's life. Religion was primary, and each interviewee consistently stressed the importance of educating a younger generation about certain values, i.e., honesty, integrity, and community building. When archiving the materials collected from the field research, these concepts will be incorporated into the design.

The final stage is designing the tutorial. A team--each member contributing expertise in areas of graphics, computer engineering, and interactive design--usually designs a multimedia tutorial. The length of time to produce the actual project varies, depending on hardware and software accessibility and actual production funds. Gary Powell, Assistant Professor at Wayne State University, describes the production phases for producing multimedia tutorials and the unpredictable length of time needed for production:

For those involved in the creation of multimedia applications, the reality of spending hundreds of hours in the design and development cycle is no great surprise. The time required for tasks such as creating the digitized video and sound clips, creating graphics and animation, authoring/programming, and beta testing (to name a few) adds up very quickly. It makes good sense to document the process for archival purposes. That way, you'll have a record of where you've been. Perhaps even more importantly, you'll have a means of figuring out where you are and where you're going.⁷

Archiving has two meanings. Powell defines the first as keeping a record of the entire production process. The other definition refers to filing the multimedia materials acquired for the project. In the case of this research, materials accumulated by each form of documentation tools must be organized for ease of access. After properly labeling the cassette with name of person, date, and location, the audio recording must be transcribed. A written document system should be organized, along with a separate system for the audiotape.

The above steps should be followed with each medium. Videotapes should be logged; a system, which lists items on the tape and its location in minutes and seconds. Videotape should be labeled and transcribed in similar style as audiotape. Photographs can be categorized by topic, with a logging system identifying event or person, date,

color or black-and-white, and the location. More details on each item can be attached as a note.

Designing the tutorial can begin when all of the materials have been organized. With the understanding that multimedia is one of the newest forms of educational technology, many approaches to effective design are still in the experimental phase. "Research concerning the learning impact of this medium is still sketchy."⁸ Considering that multimedia tutorial design using new media technology is still in its infancy, the fundamental design for "Navigating the Gullah Culture" is taken from the perspective of the elders.

The word navigate implies the coastal area designated as the Gullah Coast, with St. Helena Island as the prototype for this tutorial. Also, navigate is the word used by multimedia producers to create the precursory flowchart for the actual production incorporating the media components. The navigation provides information of areas of interactivity and hyperlinks, especially when the user is searching specific texts provided in the tutorial.

The prototype for "Navigating the Gullah Culture" is divided into four categories: Gullah history, Gullah migration, Gullah culture, and a category comprising stories and songs. Each area can be used as a unit of study for a class or an individual. The written text is hyperlinked to specific areas of the multimedia tutorial. As an example, chapters 2 and 3 are considered the primary text for a complimentary CD-ROM (computer disc-read only memory). Segments of the text relate to sub-topics within each category of the tutorial.

To illustrate, the navigation for the topic area on the Gullah migration consolidates research items from scholars on Africans escaping coastal plantations and forming the Seminole Nation in Florida. Audiotape, videotape, and still photographs on the homecoming events from 1988 to 1998 are the images showing reunions of the four cultures, Mende, Gullah, Seminole, Nova Scotian, reconnecting in the United States and Sierra Leone. The navigation is designed to convey information. Furthermore, the tutorial can include a testing component. The tests can vary, depending on the projected goals of the producer or even the interest of members of the culture who have learned about multimedia through this research.

Different versions of "Navigating the Gullah Culture" can be produced, thanks to the flexibility of working with this medium. The production of this tutorial will be an ongoing venture, as a result of the extensive time and funding necessary to produce multimedia projects. The version on St. Helena Island is an introduction. More expansive work will eventually include the entire Gullah Coast: "Navigating the Gullah Coast."

NOTES

¹Viola Chaplin of St. Helena Island, interviewed by researcher, 23 July 1998, St. Helena Island, audiotape recording, personal collection.

²Mary A. Twining and Keith E. Baird, "Names and Naming in The Sea Islands," in Sea Island Roots: African Presence in the Carolinas & Georgia (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1991), 37. "In the Sea Islands it is not unusual for a person to have two given names. One is the official, generally English (or European) name; the other is a nickname, or "basket" name. The official name (e.g. Joseph, George, Mary, Jane) is likely to appear on the individual's birth or baptismal certificate, school records, social security card, and other documents relating to dealings with the outside European American community. The nickname or "basket" name is known and used only in the family circle and within the individual's home community."

³Samuel Roosevelt Brown of St. Helena Island, interviewed by researcher, 7 August 1998, St. Helena Island, audiotape recording, personal collection.

⁴Nina Morais of St. Helena Island, videotaped by researcher, 24 May 1998, St. Helena Island, videotape recording, personal collection. Nina Morais has lived on St. Helena Island for more than ten years and accepted as a member of the community. She was baptized as a member of Brick Baptist Church after having changed her religion from Judaism.

⁵"Old Fashion Gullah Wedding" performed at Orange Grove Baptist Church on St. Helena Island, videotaped by researcher, 7 August 1998, St. Helena Island, video recording, personal collection.

⁶Edith Sumpter, Isaiah Sumpter, and Thomas Sumpter of St. Helena Island, audiotaped by researcher, 4 July 1998, St. Helena Island, audiotape recording, personal collection.

⁷Gary Powell, "Documenting Multimedia: Well-Taken Steps for Educational Developers," Syllabus 10 (May 1997): 16.

⁸David M. Moore, John K. Burton, and Robert J. Myers, "Multiple-Channel Communication: The Theoretical and Research Foundations of Multimedia," in Handbook of Research for educational Communications and Technology, ed. David H. Jonassen (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996), 866.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: DOCUMENTATION FOR PRESERVATION OF THE GULLAH CULTURE

The children of St. Helena Island have inherited a legacy in land and history. They are at a crossroads, trying to find the means to keep the land, cultivated by their ancestors, which has passed from generation to generation since the Civil War. The memories of their childhood are laden with a history and culture that risk eradication by the developers of luxury resorts designed for non-islanders. A culture was sustained on St. Helena Island for many generations. The islanders raised their children with stories of living from a past they did not know, linked to the same way of living in Sierra Leone and in other parts of West Africa.

A new generation of research and study on the culture of the Gullah Coast should be done to continue seeking links with African and Native American ethnic groups. Continual research and analysis could further the significance of African history in the United States, not as former slaves seeking acceptance by a dominant society, but rather as people with a heritage who brought from Africa traditions that had meaning and deserved respect. The interest of African descendants in the United States in tracing their ancestry to a place and time in Africa has prompted more investigation into the observations of people who dared to tell about the horrors of slavery in the Americas. Most names of individuals were lost during the Middle Passage of the European slave

trade. The contemporary American of African descent is still trying to rename that lost heritage through the creation of new forms of celebrations such as Kwanzaa¹ and secret societies with African names, making claims to any African group that could possibly connect to persons with an African past.

The wandering African souls of the United States have within them vestiges of a past that cannot be forgotten. Although most definitions for innate feelings and behaviors have been lost through Anglo-Saxon intervention, the Americans of African descent have made a new claim to Africa by giving names to their children that have no hint of Europe, such as Sulaiman, Ife, Neeka, Khalid, Kiwanna, Bahati.² By these acts of connection to an African past, Africans of the Diaspora seek to bring new esteem to a heritage that was considered forgotten.

As noted in Chapter 1 of this text, the most dominant custom joining the cultures is the knowledge of rice. Some of the elders on St. Helena Island can still recall the locations of the last rice fields from the beginning of the twentieth century. They can remember seeing their parents harvesting fields of rice, and can guide researchers to these locations. Recognition of words and stories also has been a part of connecting the island culture to West Africa, despite other linguistic influences from a number of West African and European groups. Unexpected discoveries have been made in relating small habits within the culture, such as quilt making, naming ceremonies and the symbols of the Four Moments of the Sun found in the Ring Shout.

Recognition by scholars on research confirming West African retention on the Gullah Coast has given rise to support from foundations and the United States government for further work on this issue. Research has expanded to plantation owners,

tracing specific people through records that have remained intact from a poignant period in the making of America. The National Park Service is launching a project to preserve Bunce Island in Sierra Leone, along with the preservation of certain plantations in South Carolina and Georgia, and their bonds to the institution of African enslavement. This renewed surge in the exploration of the Gullah culture is not unlike the impetus that spawned the 1860s plan to reconstruct the South.

The Port Royal Experiment was the creation of an incubator in Beaufort County, South Carolina, with much of its emphasis on turning the newly freed population into citizens. St. Helena Island, in moving from plantation to community, became the focus of land grants, education, and self-sufficiency. These projects were sustained through the efforts of Penn School, whose primary supporters were Northern contributors and abolitionist organizations. Residents of St. Helena Island were involved in programs at Penn School that provided the concepts of Reconstruction Era education. Many aspects of the Port Royal Experiment failed beyond Beaufort County, but within the island culture, remnants of the plan remained. Penn's continued service as a community center extended into remaining a resource for landowners trying to protect their legacy from the grasp of developers.

Development of resort areas on the Gullah Coast has become the most recent threat to the existence of a creolized culture. Land on St. Helena Island was bought by the new citizens of the United States and became a legacy for their heirs. Since the 1960s, many locations previously owned by African descendants have changed hands and become Hilton Head Island, Fripp Island, and Dataw [Datha, named after a Native American from the island] Island resorts. The encroachment of transients into time-share

housing in a warmer climate has set in motion a collision course with islanders used to isolation and self-determination.

St. Helena Island inhabitants are finding within themselves the strength to "look'um een de yeye" as they endure another alteration to their way of life. Plans by the Beaufort County Council to pass a Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance will affect the original agricultural makeup of the county.³ Gated-communities and high taxation have already displaced islanders throughout the county. Having survived slavery and struggled for human rights, the next step in continuing the Gullah way of life is rescuing the land cultivated by their ancestors. Much of the Gullah heritage is tied to the land. The cultivation of indigo, rice, and cotton in sub-tropical regions was the guiding force that transplanted thousands of Rice Coast West Africans to the Gullah Coast of the United States.

The historical and anthropological significance of the Gullah Coast is a field of study that warrants exposure to a larger populace. Introducing the traditions of the Gullah people in a multimedia format could show new ways of making a marginalized culture better known. Changes in cultural dynamics are bound to happen, as in the displacement of so many islanders since the 1930s. However, the development of prime real-estate as a money-making venture of the twentieth century may decimate the creolized group that created the economic successes for new Americans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The stories of the elders on St. Helena Island need to be documented further and examined before the customs of the culture disappear. Some scholars have erroneously concluded that the language and traditions have already ceased to exist. Interviews

conducted in field research for this dissertation revealed that many cultural norms were still intact. Although more outsiders inhabit St. Helena Island than were present thirty-years ago, and fewer children of Gullah people bond to their elders, there is immediate recognition of cultural habits once members of the culture are by themselves. The truest form of the language recorded was while interviewing some elders when no strangers were around. Familiarity with the language and specific knowledge of St. Helena Island history was beneficial in gathering information from people who remembered stories dating to the nineteenth century.

A certain comfort level also was necessary to establish in order to introduce multimedia production tools, i.e., digital video technology, audio recording, and still photography. An opportunity to document a person's life required a degree of quick judgment as to how much technology to use. Documentation ranged from simple journal writing to the use of still cameras, video, and audio recorders. In each case, the materials collected were equally extraordinary because of the subtleties captured about the culture. Each interview has further confirmed the research joining the Gullah people of St. Helena Island to other descendants of rice growers along the coast, to the migratory people of the Seminole Nation, and to the Nova Scotians who have returned to Sierra Leone.

Applying the techniques of documentation for preservation introduced in this dissertation to other islands along the Gullah Coast could build a further cultural resource telling the story of a unique people. Navigating the Gullah culture may lead to new information on how human tragedy can lead to an understanding of cultural evolution and ethnic survival. Much of the Gullah story and the phenomenon of establishing connection to an origin can be found in many cultures, but a distinctive aspect is the

Gullah's survival through oral transference of heritage and knowledge of daily living.

The use of contemporary technology, the documentation of cultural traditions--particularly those of marginalized groups--should aid in the culture's ability to withstand social and historical changes of their environment. To this end, more people can have access to understanding an ethnic group through educational institutions or by resources made available to interested persons.

Resources can easily be made available to an individual, but extending materials into a tutorial format, such as for classroom use, requires structure. Designing multimedia tutorials with the use of new media technology has been shown to add new dimensions for introducing a subject. Portraying cultural heritage through a medium that has heretofore been used more as a vehicle for understanding the sciences produces a new platform for teaching humanities.

This dissertation is a preliminary model for continued research in the documentation of cultures with the use of new media technology and the creation of multimedia tutorials in furthering cultural understanding. By taking advantage of the compact nature of digital technology as a production tool, the study of cultures can be less cumbersome both to researchers and to the person whose home could seem intruded upon. When someone with historical knowledge is comfortable being documented in his or her own environment, more people will have the possibility of learning from a visual and interactive reality that can only complement the written word.

NOTES

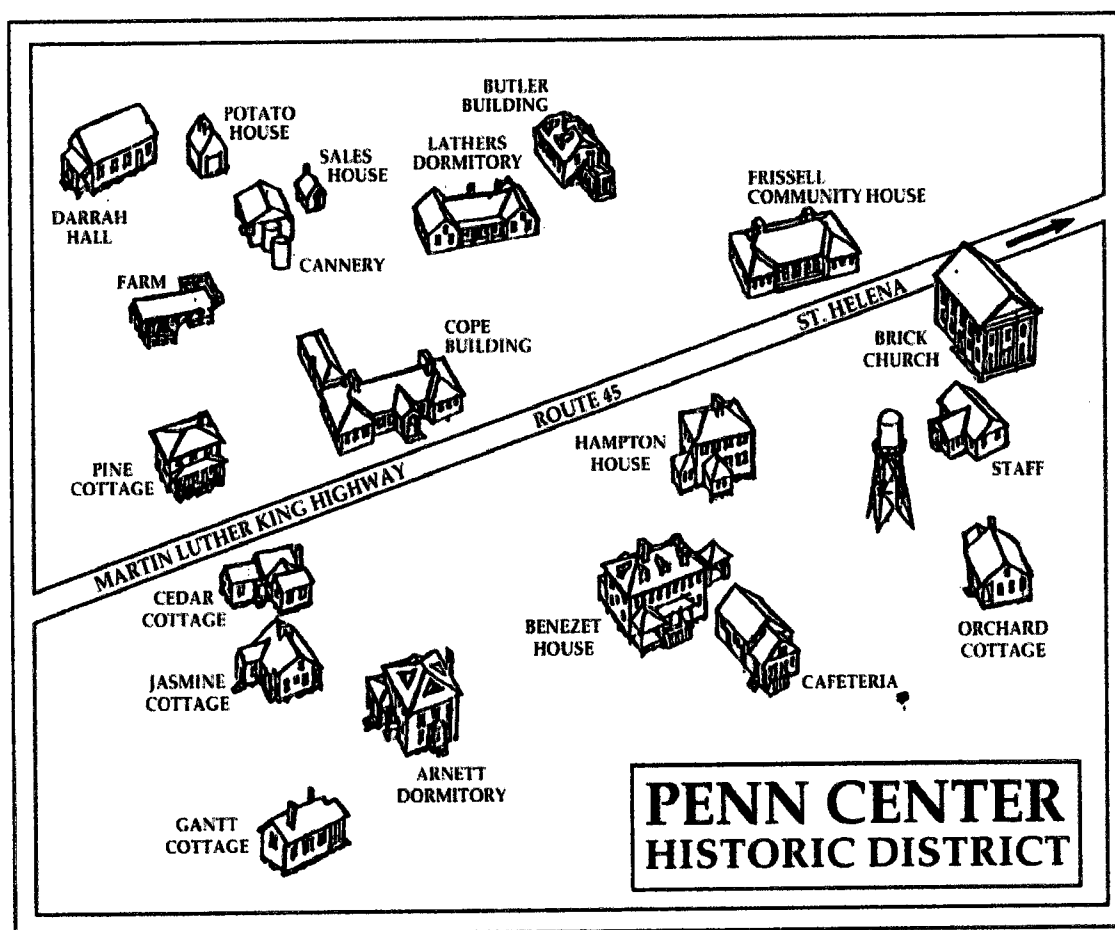
¹Karenga, Maulana, The African American Holiday of Kwanzaa: A celebration of Family, Community & Culture (Los Angeles, California: University of Sankore Press, 1988), 15.

²Ogonna Chuks-orji, Names from Africa Edited and with a commentary by Keith E. Baird. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1972), 77. Chuks-orji collected male and female names from ethnic groups in West Africa that can be identified in present-day usage by Americans of African descent in the United States. Keith E. Baird describes the concept of the naming practice within each cultural group. African names may represent the day of the week, the infant's condition at birth or relationship to a family member. African names used in the United States may be given to a child for reasons not used by the ethnic group of the name origin.

³The Gullah Sentinel (Beaufort, South Carolina), 10-22, December 1998.

APPENDIX
FIGURES

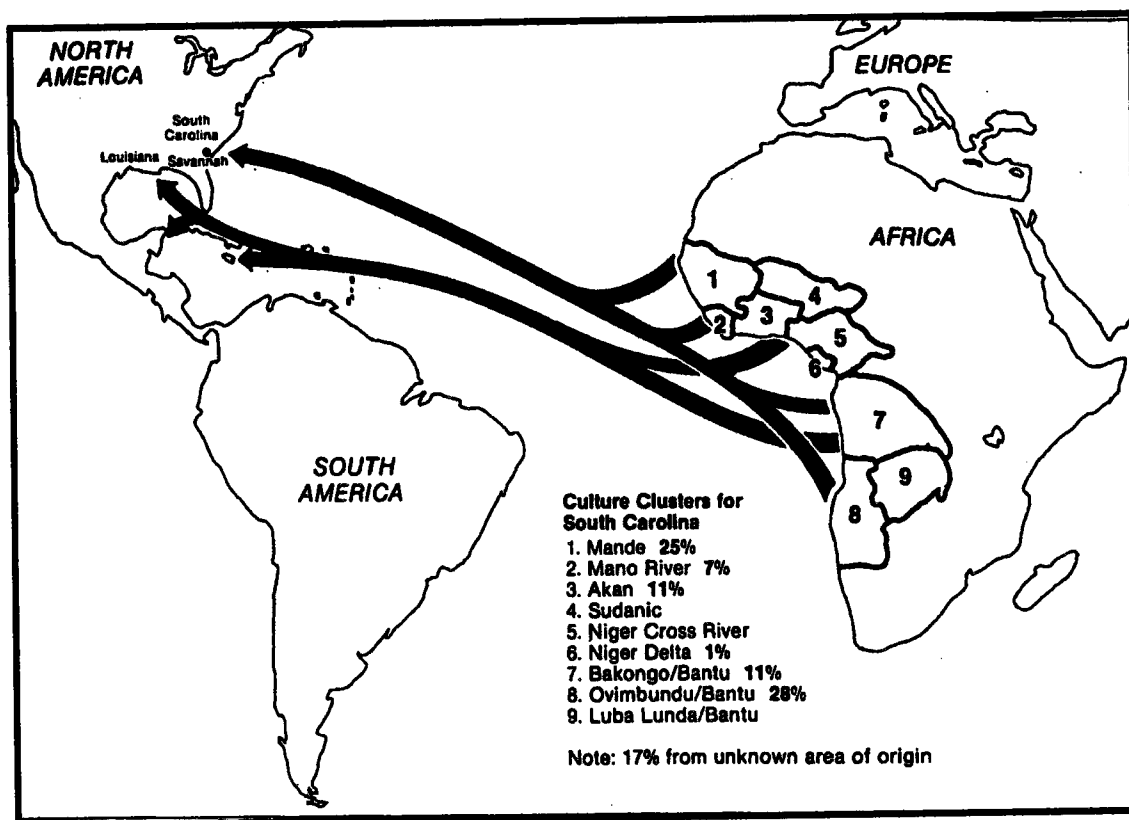
Figure 1



Penn Center is a fifty-acre campus with sixteen historic buildings dating from 1882 until 1968.

Source: Frank Martin, ed., Moments from the Past: An Exhibition in Celebration of The Penn Center of the Sea Islands (Orangeburg, South Carolina: South Carolina State University. 1993). iv.

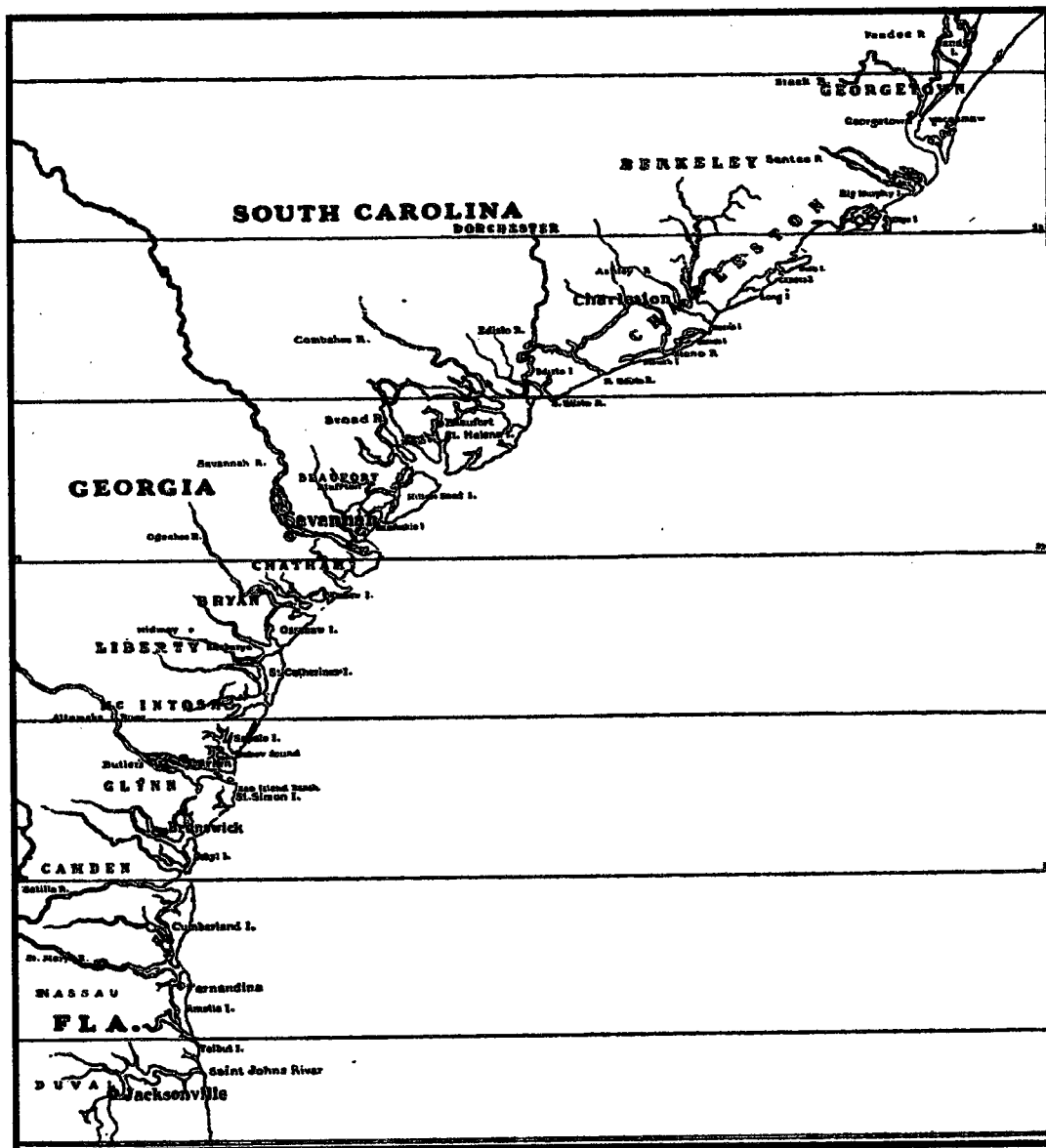
Figure 2



Estimated percentage of ethnic groups from West and Central Africa transported taken to the Caribbean and North America.

Source: Joseph E. Holloway, *Africanisms in American Cultures*. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991).

Figure 3



Map showing the Gullah Coast from Sands Island, South Carolina, to Amelia Island, Florida.

Source: Lydia Parrish. Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands. (New York: Creative Age Press, 1942. Reprint, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press. 1992).

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