

Spring 2006 Book Discussion Series Examines African-American History *"America's Unfinished Revolution": Searching for Democracy and Equality Through Reconstruction and the Great Migration*

Our very successful book groups this past fall explored issues of progress, democracy, and power during the period 1880-1920, in the context of Progressive Era reform. This coming spring, Flow of History book groups will investigate roughly the same time period and many of the same themes, but from a different and very specific angle: the experiences of African Americans trying to integrate themselves into the mainstream of American life after the end of slavery.

Columbia University historian Eric Foner coined the phrase "America's unfinished revolution" in reference to the high hopes, real achievements, and crushed expectations for racial equality that characterized the era of Reconstruction following the Civil War and its aftermath. Through autobiography, grassroots primary documents, historical essays, fiction, children's literature, and music, participants in the spring book groups will be immersed in African-American culture and history, south and north, from Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance. Readings will include diary excerpts from Northern

nurse and teacher and Penn School founder Laura Towne in the South Carolina Sea Islands; writings from the twin pillars of Washington and Du Bois; the fully restored, original edition of *Black Boy* by Richard Wright; turn-of-the-century black novelist Charles Chesnutt's race riot comedy of manners, *The Marrow of Tradition*; a children's book on the Great Migration by painter Jacob Lawrence; poetry by Langston Hughes; and maybe some Br'er Rabbit tales. And then there's the music....

Sessions will be held on March 7, March 28, April 11, and April 25 in Hartford, Brattleboro, and Claremont, NH. These book study groups are open to all teachers in the Connecticut River watershed. Books will be provided and teachers in grades 3-10 are eligible for a \$150 stipend. Further details are available on the Flow of History website, www.flowofhistory.org; or contact Sarah Rooker, 603-298-9907, sarah.rooker@valley.net.

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Flow of History Explores African-American History from Reconstruction through the Civil Rights Era

Programs in 2006 Also Look at VT/NH Connections

By Alan Berolzheimer

The history and culture of African Americans in the United States is of course a central element of U.S. history. Anyone who studies or teaches American history pays some attention to this critical subject. Up here in Vermont and New Hampshire, we're aware of the relative absence of people of color, and we tend to think that African Americans have played little or no role in the histories of our communities and our states. Well, think again.

The programs that the Flow of History will be offering throughout 2006 focus on significant themes in African-American history since the Civil War, with a special emphasis on the surprisingly rich connections between Vermonters, New Hampshireites, and black southerners. Upcoming book discussion series will tackle the black experience from Reconstruction through the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance (spring) and the modern Civil Rights Movement (fall). Our Summer Institute will find us immersed in the history and culture of the Gullah people of the Sea Islands off the South Carolina/Georgia coast—and using primary sources to investigate linkages between here and there, both then and now. For example, Martha Johnson

of Peacham, Vermont, taught in the Sea Islands as part of the Port Royal Experiment from 1862-1871, and Henry Moore of Concord, New Hampshire, photographed soldiers, sailors, and slaves there during the Civil War. Various folks from these two states went South as civil rights workers during the tumultuous 1960s. And today, rural communities in Vermont and New Hampshire are facing development pressures very similar to those confronting the people of St. Helena Island; for us it was the Interstate, for them it was The Bridge....

For more information on these programs, including the Summer Institute at the Penn Center on St. Helena, July 15-22, go to www.flowofhistory.org.

"We Glad Fa See Oonah"—Visit St. Helena Island This Summer

By Walter Mack

St. Helena Island, South Carolina, is one of the many "Sea Islands" located on the Southeastern Coast of the United States. This chain of islands extends from Jacksonville, North Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida. During the 200 years of slavery, these islands contained some of the most wealthy and prosperous plantations in America. The plantation systems were maintained and flourished through the sweat and blood of nearly two million enslaved West Africans.

In June of 1521, Native Americans of the Creek, Kiawah, and Yemassee tribes first witnessed the invasion of their island paradise by Europeans. First came the Spaniards from the island of Hispaniola, who interpreted the Indian name for the area known as "Chicora." During the late 1500s the French explorers with a sword in one hand and a cross in the other established several settlements on St. Helena and other Sea Islands. Later the English became involved in the acquisition of wealth from the New World. They established foundations for trade based upon natural resources of the country and the staple products grown from the rich, fertile soil. Their expertise in the slave trade convinced them that wealthy manors similar to those in England could be established in North



Walter Mack, a St. Helena native and Penn Center deputy director, shows indigo plants to Vermont visitors Elise Guyette, Amy Cunningham, and Dot Gorenflo (l to r).

America. In 1861, Union troops captured St. Helena Island during the Civil War. As a consequence, nearly 10,000 enslaved Africans who worked on the plantations became the first to be emancipated.

The island is divided into 23 communities that are remnants of the 55 plantations that once defined the island. The communities are established as villages and are governed by land-use rules similar to those in West African villages that allow the distribution of family land by the family elder.

To travel throughout St. Helena Island today reveals a hidden paradise of semi-tropical fauna, flora, and temperature. There are majestic moss-draped live oaks and towering pines that seem to touch the sky. The indigenous

AFTER THE BRIDGE: A VISIT TO THE PENN CENTER AND ST. HELENA ISLAND

By Susan Bonthron

Fern Tavalin (former director of Flow of History) and Margaret MacLean (director of Vermont Rural Partnership) each had powerful experiences at the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, early in 2005. At their suggestion, a Flow of History group spent four days there in September to investigate the Penn Center as a Summer Institute site. We came back excited and inspired by this idea, which offers a wonderful opportunity to study our themes in another environment. The shape of our time there included exploring what it means to belong to a culture (Gullah) that had been effectively isolated for almost 150 years. The experience of that trip is the subject of this story. Details about this Summer Institute, July 15-22, 2006, are available at www.flowofhistory.org.

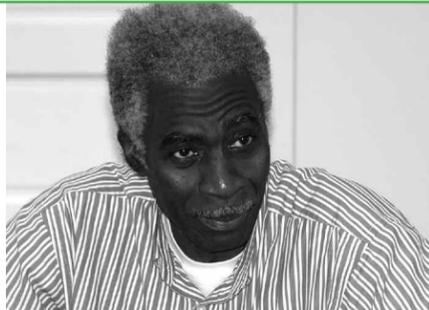
Crossing the bridge to the South Carolina Sea Island of St. Helena, the heat and humidity shimmer outside our air-conditioned car. It is a Saturday in late September. When we arrive at the Penn Center, insects drone in the huge live oaks whose powerful trunks seem to shelter and protect the low white buildings beneath them. Spanish moss drapes their great arms like clumps of untrimmed gray hair. The theme of protection—and lack of it—for the Sea Islands and their inhabitants is to haunt me during our visit.

Aunt Pearl Sue and the Gullah Kinfolk

Saturday afternoon we are warmly greeted by Deloris Pringle, president of the Penn Center's board of trustees, and invited to dine that evening with Margaret MacLean and Rural Partnership students from a variety of locations who had been visiting the Center that week. (Penn Center offers cultural and educational programs, lectures, and demonstrations as part of its mission "to preserve the history, culture, and environment of the Sea Islands.") We find our comfortably appointed rooms in the various restored houses on Penn's 50-acre campus and meet our Vermont friends for dinner. Meals characteristic of Sea Island cooking (think shrimp, gumbo, sweet potatoes, peas and rice, fried chicken, grits) are served three times a day in the dining hall, and we get our first welcome taste. Afterward, we are treated to an interactive performance by local entertainers, "Aunt Pearl Sue and the Gullah Kinfolk." It doesn't take long for full-throated singer and storyteller Aunt Pearl Sue to notice that the audience has somehow segregated itself by age and race. She makes sure we mix it up, and the evening is a joyful hand-clapping, foot-stomping occasion.

"God is Where There's Danger"

The next morning, after a self-guided tour of the Penn Center campus, we dress appropriately and attend services at the historic Brick Baptist Church (which once served for a brief time as the Penn School). White-gloved attendants help us find seats, and our presence is formally acknowledged by the



Dr. Emory Campbell, a native of neighboring Hilton Head Island, is emeritus director of the Penn Center and a scholar of Gullah culture.

minister and the congregation. During the course of the service, several adult men who have been sitting in the front row are welcomed back into the church's fold, to praise and "Amens!" from the congregation.

St. Helena's residents are religious and attend one of twenty-three churches on the island. We later learn from Emory Campbell (who served as executive director of the Penn Center for more than 20 years) that important West African religious traditions continue in Gullah culture today. For example, children reveal their dreams to parents until they can point their children to an appropriate spiritual leader, who then interprets their dreams and verifies that they are ready for baptism. A tradition of going into the forest to meditate three times a day is also traceable to African custom. "God is in the forest," Emory explains. "God is where there's danger." I am struck by this glimpse into why the spiritual protection of the church was and is so potent a force in the lives of Gullah people. The West African rainforest and the slave-based social order of the American South offered their separate and devastating dangers.

Touring the Island

After lunch, we break into groups and are treated to a fascinating tour of St. Helena Island. Our group's guide is Walter Mack, deputy director of the Penn Center and lifelong resident of St. Helena. Our first stop is at a park sandwiched between several other properties, over which there has been some dispute about ownership and use, according to Walter.

The "Port Royal Experiment"

Ensuing events and policies became known as the "Port Royal Experiment," which aimed at educating the slaves who were left behind so that they could fight in their own regiments and own and care for the land when the war ended. As part of this experiment, the Penn Center began as the first legal school for former African-American slaves. Northern strategists saw in the newly freed people of the Sea Islands an opportunity to field test ideas in education, citizenship, and land ownership and develop feasible plans for reconstructing the country. Laura Towne, a nurse, and Canadian school teacher Ellen Murray founded the school with support from the Freedmen's Society in Philadelphia.

To clothe its army and help pay for the war effort, the North still needed the vast cotton harvests of the plantations now in their control on St. Helena. The government paid the former slaves to harvest the cotton, and they in turn saved their money to buy land at \$1.25 per acre. (In 1956, it cost \$1.25 to cross the toll bridge to nearby Hilton Head island.) "People came from miles around—on rafts and bateaux—to win their freedom and 'catch the learning' in order to buy land," Emory told us.

The Tour Continues

We pass fenced fields, clusters of wooden frame houses with neighboring cemeteries, and finally stop to visit a large plantation house surrounded by ancient live oaks. Walter explains that of the fifty-five plantations that once defined the island, twenty-three communities remain today. He himself grew up on what was once the Phipps plantation. Each community comprises a kinship group largely descended from the same slaves who worked the plantations. These communities are governed with traditions that reflect their West African roots. For example, land is collectively owned by the extended family, and distributed at the sole discretion of the village elder—a tradition that has served to protect St. Helena from the encroachment of developers, who would need to trace and then convince every

continued on page 6

ing Peace Corps volunteers in agricultural skills. King was tragically killed before he had a chance to enjoy the tranquility of the Retreat House. Sitting here under the live oaks, gazing out at the marsh grass and sunlit water, I am struck by both the ongoing participation in our historical legacy this place has engendered and by its extraordinary beauty.

Along with Hoppin' John and tales of Bre'r Rabbit, Gullah culture and folkways continue to provide a wealth of knowledge about the delicate relationship between history, culture, and survival. Our visit here underscores the inseparability of Gullah folkways from land use, spirituality from social cohesion, historical experience from present-day practices. At the same time, I am aware of the vulnerability of this culture, which is now feel-

ing the effects of steady encroachment by mainstream American commerce and development. The work of the Penn Center in both sharing and protecting the Gullah cultural legacy makes it a fertile—and vital—learning ground for all who are interested in exploring a deeply significant piece of American history.

References:

Emory S. Campbell, *Gullah Cultural Legacies: A Synopsis of Gullah Traditions, Customary Beliefs, Art Forms and Speech on Hilton Head Island and Vicinal Sea Islands in South Carolina and Georgia* (Gullah Heritage Consulting Services, 2005).

Alice McShane, ed., "In Their Words: Reading, Writing, and War: A Vermonter's Experience in the Port Royal Experiment, 1863-1871," *Vermont History* 67 (Summer / Fall 1999): 101-14.

www.northbysouth.kenyon.edu/1998/edu/charleston/penncenter.htm

www.penncenter.com

Boardwalks like these dot the St. Helena salt marshes.



"We Glad Fa See Oonah," continued from page 1

birds, plants, and animals exist in harmony with the people. On many of the other Sea Islands that have been dominated by development, these birds, plants, and animals have disappeared.

St. Helena residents enjoy some of the most bountiful saltwater creeks and rivers, which have always enriched their meals with fish, crabs, shrimp, and oysters. The seafood is collected by cast nets and the fisherman travel the waterways in "bateaux" like those found in West Africa.

The Island supports 23 churches and the residents are very religious. The hand clapping, foot tapping, and semi shouting conducted in the churches are haunting and soothing. Church activities, burial practices, and "seeking religion" are all derived from West African traditions. Three "Praise Houses"—small wooden buildings once used for prayer meetings—remain standing on the island.

As with other Sea Islands, our hidden paradise has been discovered. This once isolated and mosquito-infested backwater is now being targeted by developers and land speculators. The residents continue to fight to maintain our unique communities by passing on knowledge and history to our children. In addition, we battle to maintain the cultural, land-use, and environmental characteristics of our island, which are vital to our unique Gullah culture and heritage.

SEEKING FIVE TEACHERS FOR PRIMARY SOURCE ACTION RESEARCH

What's Involved:

Flow of History seeks five educators to serve as lead teachers and mentors to those who are just learning how to use local primary sources in the study of American history. This opportunity will support collaborative learning and advanced professional development for teacher mentors who will field test and continue the development of existing Flow of History materials. Educators will also design and deliver workshops in the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years.

Step One – Field testing existing work

\$500 stipend for participation plus \$250 for classroom supplies

Field test and refine History Harvest (see www.historyharvest.org), a method for accessing, interpreting, and sharing local artifacts and documents. Fern Tavalin and Sarah Rooker will guide the team, lending expertise in action research and interpretation of primary source materials. A draft handbook will be provided. Teachers will read the handbook and come together for a discussion about what works and what needs improvement. Each teacher will select one area, related to the needs of his/her students, to field test.

After an initial in-person meeting, follow-up discussions about how the field tests are progressing will be held online. A second in-person meeting will be held at the end of the trial period to discuss the outcomes of the field tests. Teachers will make further suggestions for improving the History Harvest strategy.

Step Two – Continued professional growth

\$500 stipend support plus up to \$500 for transportation and fees

Individually, teachers will identify next steps for continued professional growth. This could mean traveling to a regional/national archive or site of historic interest, to summer institutes, or any other activity necessary for the identified "next step" in professional growth.

Step Three – Guided mentoring of other teachers

This step begins with a summer retreat to plan workshops for Fall 2006 and Spring 2007. Beginning with introductory sessions, teacher mentors who are interested will give workshops as indicated by need and interest. \$250 per workshop.

Contact Sarah Rooker, sarah.rooker@valley.net, if you are interested in participating.

THE CIVIL WAR: AT HOME AND ON THE BATTLEFIELD



A free workshop series about using primary sources in the classroom

This workshop series will enable you to gain knowledge of the primary sources available, both locally and online; learn about the Civil War; and make connections between local stories and the national experience.

Part 1: Lecture

The Civil War at Home and on the Battlefield

by Civil War historian, Howard Coffin

Date: February 2, 2006 ■ 7-8 p.m.
Bellows Falls Waypoint Visitors' Center

Part 2: Workshop Intensive

Introduction to Primary Sources

Led by Sarah Rooker, Director, the Flow of History, and Amy Cunningham, Educator, Vermont Historical Society

Participants will have the opportunity to explore the types of Civil War primary sources found in their communities and online with hands-on investigations at a town office, library, and the "Vermont in the Civil War" database.

Date: February 7, 2006 ■ 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Bellows Falls Waypoint Visitors' Center

Part 3: Collaborative Inquiry

Investigating the Past

Led by Sarah Rooker, Director, the Flow of History, and Amy Cunningham, Educator, Vermont Historical Society

Two afternoons of collaborative inquiry for teachers to discuss and share their investigations of local Civil War stories. The first session focuses on historical context and interpretation. The second session focuses on historical critique and classroom applications.

Dates: March 14; April 4, 2006 ■ 3:30-5:30 p.m.
Bellows Falls Waypoint Visitors' Center

After the Bridge, continued from page 2

member of a huge extended family to sell off a piece of land. Each community retains an exact knowledge of their kinship relations, and intermarriage between members of the same kinship group is not encouraged. "We had to go out of the community to find a girlfriend," smiled Walter.

Before the Bridge

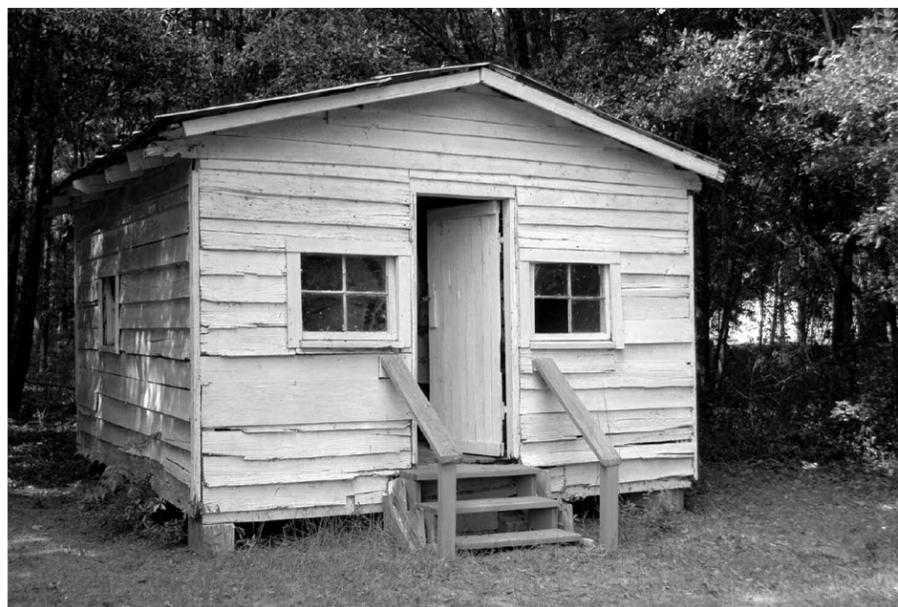
The Sea Island climate was ideally suited to the production of rice, and initially the importation of slaves from the rice-growing coast of West Africa was intended to take advantage of their experience with rice and their adaptability to the ferocious climate. The Sea Islands thus differed from other slave-owning colonies in that groups of slaves from areas of the African coast with shared language and culture were allowed to stay together here—one of the reasons why the Gullah culture remains largely intact today. As we are later to learn from Emory Campbell, the other compelling reason for the preservation of Gullah culture is the absence of bridges, which meant the island people remained largely isolated until the late 1950s. For Sea Islanders, history is marked by periods known as "Before the bridge" and "After the bridge" connecting them to the mainland.

Our tour includes a visit to a small wooden house whose interior has been restored to its original use as a "Praise House." Here the former slaves conducted prayer meetings and other activities away from the watchful eyes of plantation overseers. Later on, religious meetings were conducted there three times a week (Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday). The back row was reserved for people who had been

sanctioned by the meeting for breaking Christian law—thought by some to be a far more potent deterrent than more "legal" forms of justice. Its dimly lit interior is imbued with humble grace.

Another highlight of St. Helena is the beautiful salt marsh that surrounds the island. "This is the ocean's nursery," explains Walter, "breeding ground and home for baby fish, shrimp, and crabs." Property divisions in the island villages always include a piece of coastal marsh to provide access to the seafood that is such an important staple of the local diet. Walter points to a long wooden dock intruding into the marsh. He explains that the dock is owned by someone from off-island who doesn't understand the importance of keeping the coast free of impediments to cast-net fishing. From its inception, an ongoing focus of the Penn Center has been to educate the community about issues of land use and sustainable economic development—as important today as during Reconstruction. Aside from protecting the marsh from encroaching off-islanders, another pressing issue is keeping the marsh clean and free of effluents in order to preserve its ecological richness and diversity, which are intimately connected to the Gullah way of life.

Late that afternoon, I find a place to sit and paint watercolors on the porch of the waterfront "Retreat House," originally built for Martin Luther King, Jr., who came to Penn Center regularly during the 1960s to meet with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Penn Center was also used during this period as a training facility for civil rights workers, and during the 1970s and 1980s, for train-



Praise Houses were central to slave life on St. Helena. The seating in this one enabled worshippers to keep an eye out the windows for unwanted intrusions.

MY SEARCH FOR LOUDEN LANGLEY (1838-1881)

African-American Farmer, Soldier, Teacher, Tax Auditor, and Politician

By Elise A. Guyette

In January 1864, Louden Langley from Hinesburgh, Vermont, mustered into the famous all-Black Massachusetts 54th Regiment, perhaps with his brothers, Lewis and Newell, who also fought for the Mass 54th. He left behind his wife, Jane, still grieving from the loss of their first-born baby boy. In June he transferred to the 33rd U.S. Colored Troops, originally the all-Black 1st South Carolina Volunteer Infantry Regiment. In November 1864 he was promoted to sergeant-major, the highest rank that an African American could attain at that time. In September 1865 his brother, Lewis, died on Hilton Head Island and was buried at the National Cemetery in Beaufort, S.C.. The 33rd USCT mustered out in January 1866. Records show that Louden was buried at the National Cemetery in Beaufort in 1881. In September 2005, I began a search to discover what happened to Louden, Jane, and their child after Louden mustered out. What follows is the results of that search.



Headstone of Louden Langley, African-American farmer from Hinesburgh, Vermont, who came to South Carolina to fight in the Civil War and eventually died there.

September 27, 2005

As I walked up one of the paths fanning out from the Beaufort National Cemetery headquarters on Boundary Street, I found my heart beating a little faster, my historian's objectivity beginning to melt away. After researching the Langleys, the Clarks, and other Black farmers from an antebellum, northern Vermont neighborhood for a dozen years, I was finally going to "meet" the only one whose words I had ever read. Louden was the writer; he liked to send letters to the editors of newspapers, such as the *Green Mountain Freeman* and the *Burlington Free Press*. From these letters, I knew he was an ardent abolitionist and a fighter for social justice, having pleaded for the end of slavery and equal pay for soldiers, Black and White.

I was musing about how I would feel when I finally stood at Louden's grave when a sandspur jumped out of the grass and attached itself to my bare skin—darn, I shouldn't have worn sandals—but it was hot and muggy, and this Vermonter wanted to be as cool as possible. I wondered if Louden had been annoyed by these pesky plants when he arrived in South Carolina.

As I was walking beneath the hazy live oaks covered with moss, wondering how far it was to section 62, a man driving a groundskeeping cart stopped to ask if I needed help. He turned out to be Otis Daies, and he drove me as close as we could get to the grave. Then he escorted me through the grass and sandspurs to Louden's grave. He looked at the stone with me for a moment...L. S. Langley, it read. Otis asked me what the S stood for. I didn't know. No one

had ever asked me that—he was really interested. The groundskeepers knew little about these people whose graves they tended, but Otis, a former army man, was curious. I told him what I knew. "He must have been a very noble man to subject himself to life down here," he said. "He must have been very humble." Hmm...yes, I thought, my objectivity melting more...he must have been quite a guy.

After Otis left, I felt the grass in front of the grave marker and my breath caught. So, we meet at last. I wondered what his life had been like in this place so different from Vermont in many ways. What might I find in these 2 days in Beaufort before heading back north? I took pictures and wrote in my journal. Finally it was time to head back to my B&B, and I felt like I should leave something. I found a flowering tree near the back wall and broke a flower off, hoping no one was watching. After wrapping it with moss, I placed it at Louden's marker.

As I was leaving, Otis came back and drove me to the entrance. He was so happy, he said, that he had stopped to help. Now he knows something

What stories we could learn about Reconstruction, about Vermont-South Carolina connections, and about this one family's role in our nation's history!

about one of the men buried here. In my imagination, he now takes a little extra care around #8647.

I walked back toward the Rhett House B&B, a wonderful old mansion where secessionists had sometimes met, and enslaved Blacks lived in the underbelly of the house when not serving the Whites. The reason it hadn't been destroyed by Sherman's March was because Union soldiers occupied Beaufort at the time, and White officers had taken over the house...now full with White tourists being served breakfast on the portico by Black waitresses.

September 28, 2005

The next day I took a Rhett House bike to the District Courthouse hoping that Louden S. Langley would be in the land records for Beaufort County. Mary Lamie, registrar of deeds, helped me find the old indexes and search for records on the computer. I was excited to find L.S. Langley's name multiple times. As it turns out, he was the county tax auditor, so many of the land dealings concerned his taking land for non-payment of taxes. Then he sold parcels to Jane M. Langley, his wife, to Maria J. Langley, his little daughter, and to Giffard Langley, his small son. The land spread from Beaufort to Bluffton to Sheldon. Hmm...maybe not so noble after all!

I rode my bike to the Arsenal Museum and visited the offices of Historic Beaufort. Maxine Lutz was very interested in Louden's story. She told me that South Carolina was considered a paradise for African Americans during Reconstruction—almost

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South Carolina was considered a paradise for African Americans during Reconstruction—almost all the leadership was Black and they enjoyed power for the first time.

all the leadership was Black and they enjoyed power for the first time. I wondered if Louden and Jane thought it was a “paradise.” Jane had been a city girl from Burlington; Louden was a farm boy from a hardscrabble hill farm in Hinesburgh. They had left their families behind in Vermont—never to return. They must have found quite a niche in this hauntingly beautiful marshland by the sea.

Next I visited the South Carolina Room at the public library. I met Grace Cordial and told her of my search for a man named Louden Langley. She looked at me quizzically and said, “Wasn’t he a school commissioner?” Stunned, I watched as she dug out a folder with a 1998 newspaper article on him. What a memory! What a treasure she must be for researchers! It was a *Beaufort Gazette* article by Gerhard Spieler in which he called Louden “London Shubael Langley.” The S. stands for Shubael! His grandfather, long dead and buried in the Lincoln Hill cemetery in 1842, was Shubael Clark, the patriarch of the Black farming community in Hinesburgh. His grandmother’s name was Violet, a slave name. I didn’t think I’d be finding that one passed down.

Spieler related that London Langley was appointed a commissioner of Beaufort’s first school board in 1868, two years after mustering out of the 33rd USCT and teaching for the Freedmen’s Bureau. The president of that board was Robert Smalls, former slave and a hero of the Civil War, who captured a Confederate ship and delivered it to Union forces in Beaufort. With the prize money



This is not Vermonter Louden Langley, but rather his close associate and next-door neighbor Robert Smalls, who was perhaps the most important African-American leader in Reconstruction-era South Carolina.

from this ship, Smalls bought the house and land in Beaufort where he had been born and enslaved; it stayed in his family until 1940. Spieler said that London Langley bought the house next door.

Smalls and Langley had something else in common: They were members of the five-person delegation from Beaufort County to the 1868 Constitutional Convention in Charleston. Secondary sources that Grace Cordial found for me stated that London fought hard for desegregated, educational equality to be a part of the new consti-

tution. This is the type of education he had enjoyed in Vermont and, I thought, he probably wanted to transplant this northern tradition to the soil of South Carolina. He lost that fight.

By 1880, African-American politicians had lost their hold on power as Reconstruction ideals faded and the ideology of the Old South again gained the upper hand. London’s last job, asserts Spieler, was as an assistant lighthouse keeper. The next year Louden Shubael Langley died at the age of 42. I don’t know the cause of death, and the death records are in Columbia, S.C. The certificate, however, would not mention what I was thinking: A broken heart as a contributing factor.

September 29, 2005

This was my last day before heading home to Vermont. I rented a car and drove to Hilton Head to visit the Heritage Library. Bill Rogers at the Beaufort Library had tipped me off to this treasure trove. As I left the town of Beaufort and the St. Helena Island area I saw the lovely marshes and the relaxed, low-country lifestyle morph into five lanes of traffic and the hurry-scurry of a tourist territory. Finally finding my way to the library, I latched onto librarian Ben Russell, who helped me find my way through the old-fashioned stacks and the new-fangled technology. Ben fished out microfilm on the Freeman’s Bank—Louden had three accounts but no list of deposits. Maybe all his money was in land. Nothing else new—I found him in the census reports and corroborated Spieler’s

information concerning his occupations.

Louden’s trail turning cold, I turned to the women—always a harder group to follow. In a general database, ancestry.com, I found “Alma” Langley’s death record from 1850 in Chittenden County, Vermont. Louden’s mother was Almira Clark Langley. I know she died between 1845-50 but was never sure of the exact year or the cause. Now I have a direction in which to look to confirm that Alma was actually Almira.

I began to trace Jane Maria Langley to see if she returned to Vermont or stayed in Beaufort after her husband died. According to the census data, she was still living in the town in 1900 with her daughter, Maria Jane, and her husband and children; but she was

absent from the 1910 census. To find out more about her death and interment, I need to go to Columbia. Many records not kept at the local level are there. There must be more about her locally, I thought, perhaps in church records. The church was the center of African-American life and activism...but my time was running out. I am beginning to envision another trip to the Deep South in search of these Vermonters who chose to leave the place of their birth and live in a Confederate state during a very tumultuous time in our country’s past. What stories we could learn about Reconstruction, about Vermont-South Carolina connections, and about this one family’s role in our nation’s history!



The First African Baptist Church in Beaufort established January 1, 1865, is presently being restored.



One of the first U.S. National Cemeteries, established in Beaufort, S.C., in 1863.

Footnotes:

¹ Aka London, Landon, and Lodon.

² All the graves of soldiers from the Massachusetts 54th are marked as being from Massachusetts. The cemetery’s maps say that no Vermont soldiers are buried there.

³ Beaufort is pronounced byoo’ fert ... like in byoo’ tee ful.

⁴ She also found digital copies of historical maps showing Perryclear and Brickyard plantations and printed them for me. These places are prominent in the letters of Martha Johnson of Peacham, Vermont, who taught for the Freedmen’s Bureau in the Beaufort area at the same time as Louden; I found pictures of the phosphate plant to which Martha alluded in the resources at the library.

⁵ He is also the one who found Martha Johnson’s obituary for me.

⁶ This website costs about \$200 to join for one year. With my \$5 entry fee to the Heritage Library, I could use the databases to which they subscribed. Ancestry.com’s primary sources are stored in Provo, Utah.

A Brief Timeline of African-American History from Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance

1865

Ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolishing slavery throughout the US; Freedmen’s Bureau established (terminated in 1867).

1866

The Ku Klux Klan is founded in Tennessee; first “Black Codes” enacted by Southern states to control African Americans.

1868

Ratification of the 14th Amendment, conferring citizenship on all persons born or naturalized in the US and establishing equal protection and due process before the law.

1869

White supremacist “redeemer” governments reestablished in Virginia and Tennessee; rest of the Southern states follow by 1876.

1870

Ratification of the 15th Amendment, prohibiting the denial of suffrage on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

1875

Civil Rights Act outlaws racial discrimination in theaters, hotels, railroads, and other public places; declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1883.

1877

Political compromise gives the presidential election to Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, in exchange for withdrawal of federal troops from the South, marking the end of Reconstruction.

1881

Tuskegee Institute founded by Booker T. Washington.

1890

Mississippi rewrites its constitution to disenfranchise African Americans; rest of the Southern states follow suit by 1910; “Jim Crow” segregation laws begin to be enacted.

1892

Height of lynching: 230 deaths (161 black, 69 white); Ida B. Wells begins her crusade against lynching.

1895

Booker T. Washington’s “Atlanta Exposition Address” emphasizes his accommodationist philosophy.

1896

Plessy v. Ferguson: Supreme Court establishes the doctrine of “separate but equal.”

1903

W.E.B. Du Bois publishes *The Souls of Black Folk*,

challenging Washington and arguing for full civil and political rights.

1909

The National Negro Committee (later the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) holds its first meeting in New York City.

1914-1920

The Great Migration: Approximately 500,000 African Americans migrate from the rural South to northern cities. New York’s black population increases by 60,000 (66%), Chicago’s by 65,000 (150%), Detroit’s by 35,000 (600%).

1915

Ku Klux Klan reborn at Stone Mountain, Georgia, inspired by D.W. Griffith’s movie *Birth of a Nation*; under the slogan “Native, White, Protestant Supremacy” its membership peaks at 3 million in 1924.

1917

East St. Louis riot: white mob attacks black community, kills more than 200 people, nearly 6,000 African Americans driven from their homes.

1917-1918, World War One

African Americans serve exclusively in segregated units; most work as stevedores, common laborers, or servants and drivers for white officers.

1919

Chicago race riot begins at the beach, continues for 2 weeks, white gangs burn hundreds of African Americans out of their homes, 23 blacks and 15 whites die and more than 500 people are injured.

1922

Duke Ellington moves to New York City after founding his first band in 1919, begins a 5-year tenure at the famed Cotton Club.

1925

The New Negro, an anthology of writing and art edited by Alain Locke, announces the Harlem Renaissance to the rest of the world.

1926

Langston Hughes publishes *Weary Blues*, incorporating the jazz idiom into poetry.

Sources:

Freedmen and Southern Society Project: www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/

Harlem 1900-1940: An African-American Community: www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/

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