

COASTAL HERITAGE

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Breaking
THE CHAINS
**THE END OF THE TRANSATLANTIC
SLAVE TRADE**

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This year, 2008, marks two centuries since the United States began its ban on the importation of slaves. This manacle is part of the Walter Pantovic Slavery Collection at the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. PHOTO/WADE SPEES



INTO THE LIGHT.

Michael Allen, an education specialist with the National Park Service, has been instrumental in raising public awareness of the lowcountry's role in the slave trade.

**PHOTO/WADE SPEES/
THE POST AND COURIER**



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HISTORY LESSON.
*Nichole Green is the director/curator of the recently reopened Old Slave Mart Museum in Charleston, one of a growing number of museums around the country focused on African American history. PHOTO/WADE SPEES/
THE POST AND COURIER*

The lowcountry commemorates the years 1807 and 1808 when Britain and the United States banned transatlantic slave trafficking.

Breaking **THE CHAINS**

**THE END OF THE TRANSATLANTIC
SLAVE TRADE**

by John H. Tibbetts

In the mid-eighteenth century, virtually anyone in New York or Charleston or London would have thought you'd lost your mind if you'd called for the abolition of slavery or the slave trade. Only a handful of philosophers and intellectuals consistently argued against slavery.

In 1763, Adam Smith, author of the classic *Wealth of Nations*, observed, "Slavery . . . has hardly any possibility of being abolished." Slavery "has been universall in the beginnings of society, and the love of dominion and authority over others will probably make it perpetuall."

The British weren't the first Europeans to trade slaves, but they dominated slave trafficking for more than 150 years. From the 1640s to 1807, the slave trade was central to Britain's transatlantic trade and colonial wealth, helping to create an empire that largely dominated Atlantic seaways.

Charleston was a crucial port in this transatlantic commerce—an entry point for slave traffickers in North America and a loading station for rice, indigo, and other goods bound for Europe.

Aside from Britain, several other Western European maritime powers—France, Holland, Spain, Denmark, and Portugal—were either major slave traders or profited from the trade as exploiters of captive Africans living in the Americas.



TRADE ROUTE. A display at the Old Slave Mart Museum in Charleston describes the transatlantic slave trade, which linked Africa, Europe, and the Americas. PHOTO/WADE SPEES/THE POST AND COURIER

By the mid-1860s, however, the Atlantic World—the Americas, West Africa, and Western Europe—had undergone a seismic cultural and economic shift. The formerly slave-based American South was in ruins after the Civil War. European empires and every nation in the Americas had abandoned African slavery, with the exception of Spain’s colonies, where it was banned in 1886, and Brazil, which outlawed it in 1888.

How did the institution of the African slave trade, which had seemed permanently embedded in Western European and New World economies, disappear in just one century?

The answer can be found in the crucial period between 1787 and 1807. During those two decades, British and American abolitionists, inspired in part by the ideals of the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions, created the world’s first human-rights movement and conceived the first international public-education

campaign run by citizen volunteers.

At first, in the late 1780s, tiny abolitionist groups spearheaded by Quakers were started in London and Manchester and also in Philadelphia and New York. British and American abolitionists crisscrossed the Atlantic to confer on strategy, trading ideas and developing expertise in raising funds, gathering evidence against the slave trade, and marshalling arguments that could win over public opinion. These groups multiplied into thousands of abolitionist societies in Britain and later in America.

Historians today regard abolitionism, says Tom Heeneey, a College of Charleston communications professor, as “the most important and the largest social movement in the history of the West.”

Now the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British and American slave trades brings another opportunity to look anew at lowcountry and African-American history, the influence of Charleston in maritime trade, and the

continuing power of citizen movements.

In 1807, the British Parliament passed a bill banning the British slave trade between Africa and the Americas, which became effective on May 1 of that year.

Also in 1807, President Thomas Jefferson signed into law a measure that abolished importation of slaves into the United States, effective January 1, 1808, though illegal smuggling continued.

The laws of 1807 were a major turning point in the history of the Atlantic World and crucial first steps in the abolitionist movement’s century-long effort to stop the ownership of human beings.

Britain’s ban, in particular, was unprecedented. Britain was the leading slaving nation when it outlawed the Atlantic trade. A powerful empire accepted leadership in addressing a historical wrong—slavery—and took significant economic losses as a result.

In March 2007, dozens of British government agencies, art and history museums, the BBC, and other major institutions acknowledged the 200th anniversary of the bill’s passage.

In 2008, the commemoration is coming to South Carolina. The College of Charleston’s Lowcountry and the Atlantic World Program, under direction of Simon Lewis, is sponsoring a March 2008 conference, “Ending the Atlantic

BRANDED. In a Charleston Museum display, slave badges, used to identify names and jobs, evoke slavery’s dehumanization.

PHOTO/WADE SPEES



Slave Trade: A Bicentenary Inquiry,” in collaboration with community organizations, historic sites, and museums. Numerous special events will honor the anniversary in the lowcountry, which is taking national leadership on this topic.

The lowcountry has special importance in African-American history. Many slaves entering this continent arrived first on Sullivan’s Island to be quarantined before being sold in Charleston. Moreover, scholars agree that many descendants of slaves in coastal South Carolina preserved more of their African cultural history longer than any other large group of blacks in the United States.

This year’s commemoration acknowledges not only the struggle to abolish the British and American transatlantic slave trades but also the long, bloody fight against the “peculiar institution” itself. This is a time, moreover, to think about how the past is excavated and explained—how the stories we have chosen to tell about the past have changed over time, and are changing still.

SUGAR, THE NEW GOLD

Americans tend to think of slavery only in terms of our own national history, particularly the conflict between North and South in the Civil War. Yet just four percent of all slaves shipped across the Atlantic arrived in North America.

“Slaves were shipped by the thousands to North America but by the millions to the Caribbean,” says Joseph Opala, a historian at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

The Caribbean was hungry for slaves because Europe was hungry for the products of Caribbean agriculture, particularly sugar. The most successful British planters there gained immense fortunes, using slaves to cultivate sugar cane, mill it, and ship sugar and sugar-based products—rum and molasses—to markets in Europe.

Some two-thirds of all Africans brought to the New World were purchased to labor on sugar plantations

South Carolina’s SLAVE TRADE

Not long after the American War of Independence, lowcountry rice planters, aggressively pro-slavery, decided that the new nation’s transatlantic slave trade must stop eventually.

In the 1780s and 1790s, southern slaveholders had selfish reasons for criticizing the transatlantic slave trade. They could increase the value of their own slaves by preventing further imports of Africans. Also, southern planters wanted to keep out Caribbean slaves who might have been infected by notions of revolt; the West Indian sugar islands were frequently rocked by slave rebellions.

Perhaps most important, American slaveholders already had enough African labor. Slave women along the Atlantic seaboard bore far more surviving children on average than did enslaved Africans anywhere else in the New World.

Slavery had become unpopular during the Revolutionary War period partly because it was seen as an institution inherited from Britain. Many slaveholders thought that slavery would die out over time, but they wanted to control the pace of its extinction.

So influential southerners sought a grace period before a new national government could act against the foreign slave trade.

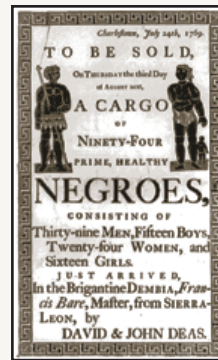
During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, northern and southern states reached a compromise, agreeing that the federal government would have to wait 20 years—until 1808—before it could ban slave imports.

Yet individual state governments would be allowed to ban slave trading from abroad. By 1798, a decade after the Constitutional Convention, all of the Atlantic seaboard states, including South Carolina, had banned slave imports. Several states in the North, moreover, abolished slavery or passed gradual emancipation laws by that time.

In the first years of the 1800s, however, a new technology changed how South Carolina planters thought about slave imports. A cotton boom had arrived in upland areas, where Eli Whitney’s

cotton gin was processing short-staple cotton. Planters now needed influxes of new slaves.

South Carolina shocked the nation in 1803 by reopening its foreign slave trade.



GRAPHIC/LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS

Over the next five years—until the federal government closed foreign trade for good in 1808—some 40,000 African slaves were brought into South Carolina. Upland southern planters used this expanded slave labor to grow staple crops, particularly cotton, for the global marketplace. Slave-grown cotton was rapidly becoming the new king of cash crops in the South.

Moreover, the United States, in 1803, had acquired the

Louisiana Territory, which opened vast new territories for settlement and agriculture. Southern planters were increasingly leaving exhausted agricultural lands on the eastern seaboard and looking to the west for opportunities. They wanted more slave labor, but President Thomas Jefferson’s measure in 1807 outlawed transatlantic trafficking in Africans.

Lacking influxes of imported Africans to sell legally, southern investors, bankers, agents, and traders created profitable domestic slave markets that continued until the Civil War. The domestic slave trade was especially vigorous between the U.S. eastern seaboard and new lands farther west where a new generation of planters sought more Africans for cotton production.

In 1860, one district of Charleston—now called the French Quarter—had 40 separate businesses where slaves were sold, though the most notorious of all was Ryan’s Mart, says Nichole Green, director/curator of the Old Slave Mart Museum, which opened in October 2007. The museum is located in the one remaining building of what was once Ryan’s Mart, a block-long slave-auction complex. “The abolition of the transatlantic slave trade was a main factor in the growth of the domestic trade,” she says. “A million Africans were sold in the domestic slave trade—a tragic, unintended consequence of the outlawing of the transatlantic trade.”

1562

First English slaving expedition to West Africa.

in the West Indies or Brazil. David Brion Davis, a Yale University historian and the pre-eminent author on the subject of transatlantic slavery, observes that sugar “became the principal incentive for transporting millions of Africans to the New World.”

A sugar plantation was a notoriously dangerous place for slaves, among the deadliest in the Americas. Africans were worked beyond exhaustion in the hot sun or in the cauldrons of the sugar-processing mills. A sugar planter knew he could make excellent money if an African survived five years after arrival. It was cheaper to drive a slave to an early grave and buy another man or woman off a ship from Africa than to raise a slave from infancy. Much of the work on a West Indian sugar plantation was unskilled, and planters figured that a slave could be easily replaced.

1640s

English dominate Atlantic slaving, replacing Portuguese as most prolific slave trader.

The Portuguese established the first successful sugar plantations in Brazil in the 1530s. Then the Dutch, English, and French followed their example in the Caribbean, where sugar islands became immensely important colonial assets. In some respects, the plantations of the West Indies were like today’s oil fields in the Middle East—hotly contested resources central to the interests of great powers.

It was during the 1640s that Britain established its first Caribbean sugar plantation in Barbados. During the same decade, not coincidentally, Britain became the most powerful slave-trading nation in the Atlantic Basin.

Barbadian planters soon realized that a sugar-cane field was potentially as valuable as a gold or silver mine. Slave-grown sugar became far and away the most lucrative cash crop exported to European markets. The wealthiest sugar

1787

Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade founded in London.

planters—many of whom were absentee landowners residing in Europe—lived in the style of kings.

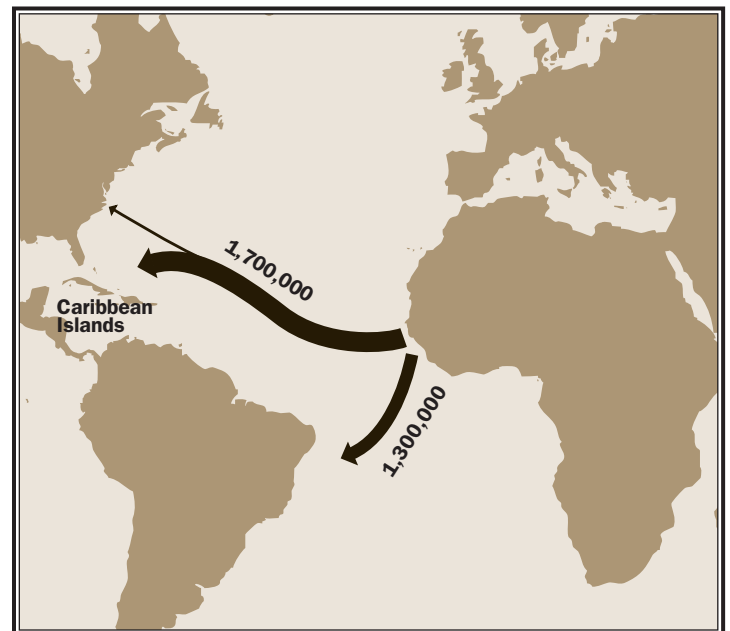
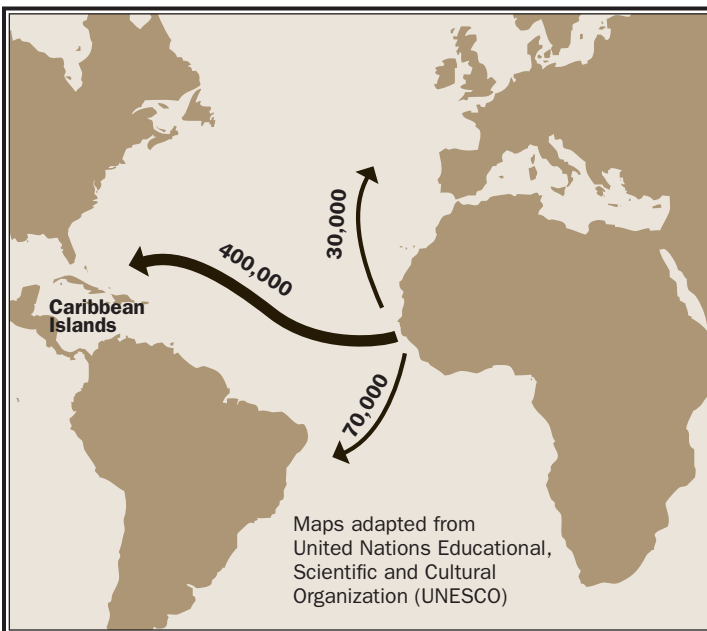
Barbados, moreover, set the mold for English slave-based plantation agriculture throughout the Caribbean. In the 1670s, Barbados became the model for the new Carolina colony, the only North American colony designed from its earliest settlement to rely on slave labor.

For centuries, natural resources in the New World tropics were exploited primarily with the use of African slave labor. The slave trade, which linked Africa, Europe, and the Americas, was the beating heart of much of the New World economy.

Virtually every large-scale enterprise in European colonies within hot-weather regions of the Americas relied on slave labor, including sugar cultivation in Brazil and later in the Caribbean Islands, cocoa operations in what became

1791

St. Domingue (Haiti) slave revolt begins.



DEPORTATION FLOWS, 15TH - 16TH CENTURY. Portugal began importing slaves from sub-Saharan Africa in the 1440s to work on sugar plantations on islands off West Africa.

DEPORTATION FLOWS, 17TH CENTURY. By the 1640s, Britain dominated transatlantic slavery, carrying Africans to Caribbean sugar plantations.

1807, 1808

Britain and United States pass laws abolishing transatlantic slaving.

Venezuela, rice plantations in coastal South Carolina and Georgia, gold mines in Brazil, and cotton plantations throughout the American South.

Still, sugar was king during the era of British slaving. No agricultural enterprise could come close to minting money like owning shares in a successful West Indian sugar plantation. The wealth pouring out of the sugar islands supported a British armada of slave ships, merchant ships, and warships, helping to ensure the empire's maritime dominance.

British transatlantic commerce in sugar and slaves created jobs in the home country for shipbuilders, iron manufacturers, sail makers, rope makers, gun makers, distillers, weavers, and many other tradesmen. The profits nourished bankers, merchants, and insurers. (All slave ships were fully insured against loss.) In all, many

1838

Slaves in British Caribbean become free.

thousands of British families relied on the slave and sugar trades for their livelihood.

For an ambitious Englishman with the right connections and considerable financial backing, the Caribbean was a place to get even richer. Raking in profits, successful sugar planters embraced the high life, indulging in gaudy attire, extravagant homes, and copious bottles of port. Historian Richard S. Dunn observes that the Caribbean elite became known for "overdressing, overeating, and overdrinking."

Defending slavery in 1746, the English economist Malachy Postlethwayt wrote, "The Negroe-Trade and the natural Consequences resulting from it may be justly esteemed an inexhaustible Fund of Wealth and Naval Power to this Nation."

1863; 1865

President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation; Civil War ends.

So how could a tiny band of abolitionists possibly win a fight against the juggernaut of transatlantic slavery?

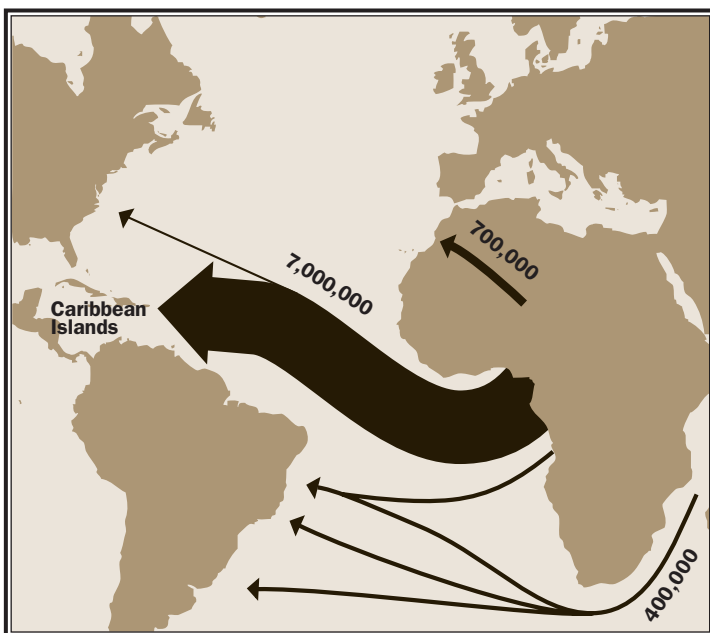
IMMENSE PROFITS

The Middle Passage—the slaves' voyage from Africa to the Americas—was one of the cruelest elements of a ghastly transatlantic enterprise. On average, about 15 percent of slaves died during a ship's crossing. Death rates approached one-third in some instances. Slaves committed suicide and perished in numerous revolts. Africans, in leg irons, suffocated below deck in rancid conditions.

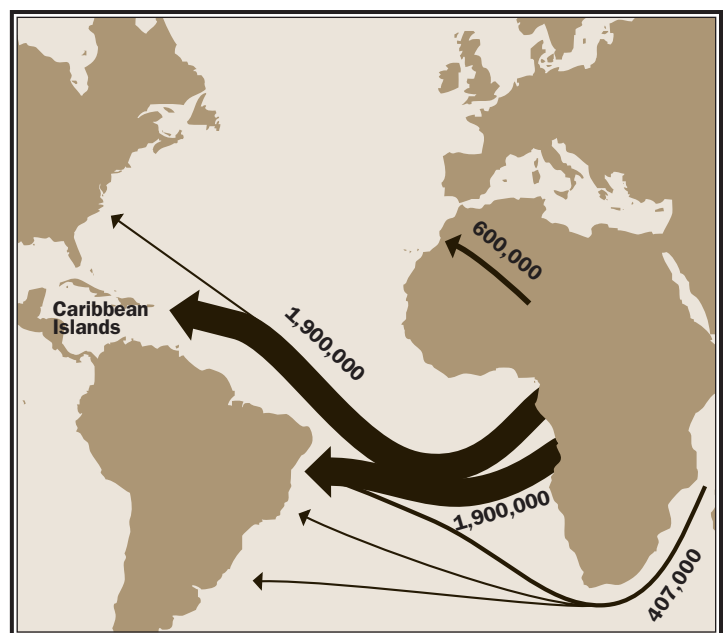
Dysentery, called the "bloody flux," was epidemic, as were other maladies. A ship's surgeon wrote, "The deck (of their rooms) was so covered with blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux, that it

1888

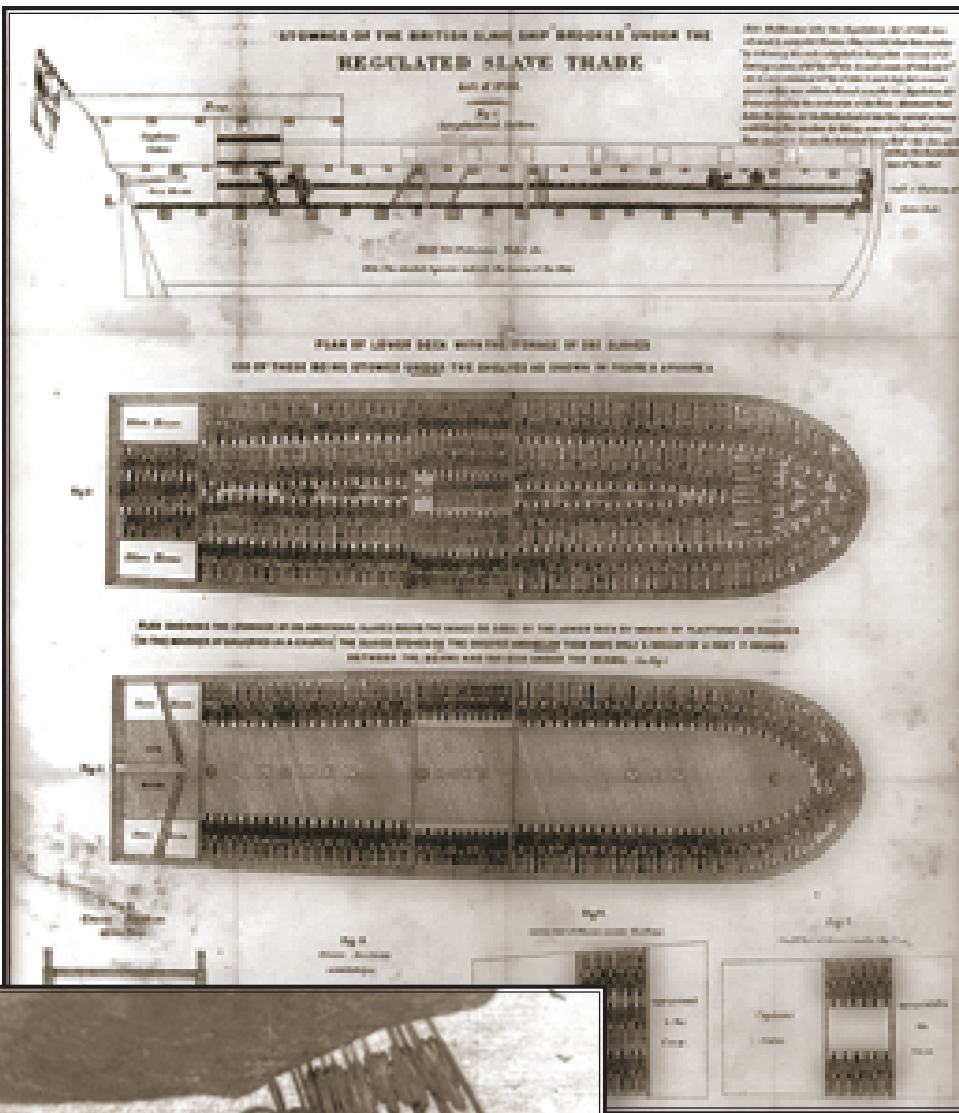
Slavery abolished in Brazil, the last nation in Europe or the Americas to ban it.



DEPORTATION FLOWS, 18TH CENTURY. This was the century when transatlantic slaving reached its grisly heights. The commerce in slaves and sugar brought vast wealth and power to the British Empire.



DEPORTATION FLOWS, 19TH CENTURY. Britain and the United States banned their transatlantic slaving in 1807 and 1808, respectively, but other nations continued the practice until later in the century.



GRISLY VOYAGE.

As part of an effort to sway public opinion, British abolitionists distributed this etching (top) showing deck plans and cross-sections of the slave ship “Brookes,” graphically proving the trade’s brutality. A wood engraving (lower left) shows slaves on a captured bark “Wildfire,” brought by officials into Key West on April 30, 1860. An advertisement (right), probably from the 1780s, announced the sale of slaves at Ashley Ferry outside of Charleston. GRAPHICS/ LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

resembled a slaughterhouse.”

Arriving in the New World, most slaves became captives in “factories in the field.” These were large-scale agribusinesses, ruthlessly regimented, usually relying on gangs of slaves to produce cash crops with methods that foreshadowed assembly lines and other modern industrial techniques.

In the West Indies, small numbers of white planters, supported by local militias, brutally held sway over large populations of Africans. News of slave rebellions in the West Indies would terrify whites throughout the sugar islands and the American South. But, until the 1790s, when Haitian slaves beat back invading European armies, these rebellions were always suppressed.

In all, scholars agree, a profitable British or French sugar plantation was a super-efficient enterprise and one of the cruelest exploitations of human beings in world history.

As the Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul, born and raised in Trinidad, observes: “The competing empires of Europe had beaten fierce on the islands . . . turned (them) into sugar islands, places of the lash, where fortunes could be made, sugar the new gold.”

Still, sugar was just the first in a series of lucrative slave-produced stimulants grown in the tropics and initially produced for luxury markets, stimulants that eventually became popular consumer goods for ordinary workers as well.

Slave-grown sugar, coffee, cocoa,



and tobacco stoked the energies of eighteenth-century Europe. In London, smoke-filled coffeehouses were gathering places for politicians, merchants, poets, and Grub Street writers who swallowed cup after cup of sugar-sweetened, caffeinated drinks, read a flood of cheaply produced pamphlets and newspapers, and vigorously debated issues of the day—issues that one day would include slavery and the slave trade.

A RELIGIOUS CAUSE AND A REVOLUTION

Most of the early white abolitionists were Quakers or other religious dissenters. They were Christians, but few belonged to established churches. Most were looked upon as outsiders, eccentric, even radical in their day. The Quakers, somber and severe in their wide-brimmed, high-crowned black hats, couldn't have been more different in appearance and conduct from the gaudily dressed, pleasure-loving sugar planters.

By the 1760s, some Pennsylvania Quakers were already anti-slavery advocates in the colonies. Quakers embraced the principle that the "Inner Light" of God's revelation shone on everyone, European and African, free and enslaved.

Meanwhile, many American colonials were becoming increasingly angry with the heavy-handed representatives of the British crown. Americans began to speak of the "slavery" of British rule, calling for fellow colonists to fight for individual freedom and natural rights—what we now call human rights—themes that later became central to the Declaration of Independence.

There were contradictions and complexities, of course, within American revolutionary ideals. One principle dear to colonial rebels was that every person held certain natural rights—such as "liberty" and "equality"—that could not be ignored or taken away. According to that principle, it was against nature itself to degrade human beings into chattel property, abolitionists argued. Therefore slavery was fundamentally incompatible with the ideals of the American rebellion.

British abolitionists heard these arguments against slavery and took heart.

Slaves in the American colonies heard them, too. In 1775, a South Carolina slave had the "audacity," according to his master, to say that "he will be free, that he will serve no Man, and that he will be conquered or governed by no Man."

Slaveholders, however, argued that their own natural rights allowed—even encouraged—them to keep slaves as property. That is, a slaveholder's freedom was contingent upon his ability to hold Africans in bondage. To many slaveholders, the ideals of the American Revolution were bound up with the manacle and whip.

Over the next century, different ideas about what freedom really meant would widen into an unbridgeable gulf in America between southern slaveholders and those who opposed slavery, leading to the Civil War.

A NEW SOCIETY

During the American War of Independence, the navies of the British and the upstart colonials battled to control Atlantic and Caribbean shipping lanes. Sea trade, including transatlantic commerce in slaves, dropped off. Following the war's conclusion in 1782, however, British ships poured into the West African coast to purchase slaves for New World markets.

This new slaving boom greatly alarmed abolitionists. In May 1787, 12 men gathered in London to create a unique organization against the trade.

For centuries, artisans and merchants had established guilds and other groups to protect their own economic interests. But this London organization was something new. It was created not to help its own membership, business associates, or close neighbors but to aid a foreign people living thousands of miles away. In their first meeting, the 12 men in London decided to call their group the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

Of the 12 men, nine were Quakers. Two more were non-Anglican religious

dissidents who continued to work against slavery for the next 20 years: Granville Sharp, who helped Africans fight the legal basis of slavery, and Thomas Clarkson, who collected evidence about the brutality of the slave trade. The twelfth man was William Wilberforce, an Anglican and aristocrat who eventually introduced legislation in Parliament to outlaw the transatlantic slave trade.

Fighting the institution of slavery throughout the British colonies would be futile, the 12 abolitionists reluctantly decided. Sugar planters, the shipping industry, bankers, and other economic interests were too powerful to defeat on that score. So the new organization decided to focus at first on fighting only the British slave trade.

If the slave trade could be abolished, then the institution would dry up over time, the abolitionists decided. Almost everywhere that African slavery existed in the Americas, death rates among slaves were extraordinarily high and birth rates catastrophically low. To replace Africans who died, the slave trade was needed to provide fresh victims.

The only exception to this rule was North America, where populations of slaves continued to grow in former colonies. Slaves in North America had relatively healthy birth rates. Many U.S. slaveholders in the years following the War of Independence didn't need influxes of kidnapped Africans.

British abolitionists, however, believed that destroying the slave trade would destroy slavery itself. So the newly formed society of abolitionists decided to shine a bright light on the slave trade's horrors and push Parliament to stop it.

THE POWER OF THE PRINTING PRESS

Perhaps the abolitionists' most powerful weapon was the printed word. Abolitionists published a torrent of books, sermons, pamphlets, tracts, newspaper editorials, and journal

articles against slavery and the slave trade. They commissioned poets who wrote verse that condemned the trade.

More than half of all people in England at the end of the 1700s were literate, while many of their parents and grandparents were not. Britain had more than a thousand book stores, untold bookstalls on sidewalks, and more than a hundred libraries in London alone. Many Britons of all classes embraced Enlightenment virtues of free expression and what some observers have called the “democratization of knowledge” promoted by the printing press, the rising rates of literacy, and gathering places that allowed for free expression of ideas.

“Coffeehouses were important meeting spaces,” says Tom Heeney of the College of Charleston. “People could have face-to-face conversation, relatively undisturbed by religious or civic authorities. There would be newspapers and pamphlets available, which would go through lots of hands.”

In a 2005 book, historian Adam Hochschild describes how British abolitionists established a public-education effort that was unprecedented in scale and effectiveness, explaining to Britons why the slave trade was barbaric and evil.

Abolitionist authors rode the countryside on speaking tours, hawking their critiques from town to town. In 1789, a former slave named Olaudah Equiano self-published a two-volume book about his experiences, and it became a bestseller. Equiano, who used his trading skills to purchase his freedom, was an ideal hero for the cause of abolition. He was exceptionally resourceful but also lucky to have escaped West Indian bondage.

For the next five years, he traveled the British Isles on what Hochschild calls the “first great political book tour,” drumming up support for abolition of the slave trade in every corner of the country.

Abolitionists also found innovative ways to raise funds. A British abolitionist group created a newsletter—publishing five hundred to a thousand copies—and hand-delivered it to



RIGHT TO FREEDOM. A woodcut of a male slave in chains appeared in the 1837 publication of John Greenleaf Whittier's anti-slavery poem, "Our Countrymen in Chains." GRAPHIC/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

every donor in Greater London, asking for another contribution as least as large as the past. It was, Hochschild points out, probably the world's first direct-mail fundraising letter.

To dispatch their allies around the British Isles, abolitionists took advantage of the country's sophisticated transportation network. Britain had recently poured great sums into improvements of toll roads—called turnpikes—and this investment transformed the speed of stagecoach travel. The British turnpikes were the interstate superhighways of their day. Anti-slavery societies, springing up in every large town in Britain, coordinated their dissent, organizing effective boycotts of slave-grown sugar and petitioning Parliament to pass laws against the slave trade.

For generations afterward, volunteer advocacy groups have imitated abolitionist techniques. In the late nineteenth century, for instance, conservation groups such as the Audubon Society focused public attention on a crisis—overhunting of wild birds for the hat trade—and called

for boycotts of certain bird feathers, published articles in newspapers and magazines, and pushed for legislation against overhunting. Today, advocacy groups still use many of the tools and strategies invented by abolitionists.

THE BATTLE IS JOINED AGAINST SLAVE TRADE

Quakers and their allies were organized and committed enemies of slavery. Pro-slavery advocates fought back just as hard, creating their own campaigns to discredit abolitionists. But a slave rebellion lasting some 13 years opened many Britons' eyes to the nature of Caribbean bondage.

In 1791, slaves revolted against their owners on the French section of the island of St. Dominigue. The British dispatched soldiers to quell the uprising and to seize control of the rich sugar-growing colony, but after a bloody war they were driven out. Then the French returned to St. Dominigue under Napoleon and sustained tens of thousands of casualties.

The British and French were the superpowers of their day, but the combination of fierce guerilla war waged by former slaves and epidemics of malaria and yellow fever decimated the European forces.

By 1804, slave rebels were in control, declaring themselves free and calling the new country "Haiti." Napoleon's treasury was so depleted by the Haitian conflict that he was forced to sell the vast Louisiana Territory to the United States.

The Haitian revolution electrified societies throughout the Atlantic world. British officers, returning home, told of the depravity of West Indian bondage, the slaves' fighting skills, and the impossibility of defeating large numbers of Africans fighting for their freedom. Many British leaders began facing up to the reality of slavery.

Three uprisings—the American Revolution, the French Revolution, which began in 1789, and the Haitian Revolution—created an explosive political climate in Western Europe.

Some establishment leaders realized that dramatic change was necessary to avoid further revolution and chaos.

It was in this atmosphere in 1807 that William Wilberforce, a conservative figure with powerful political allies, pushed a bill through both Houses of Parliament that outlawed the British transatlantic slave trade. In the United States, President Jefferson's measure to end this country's transatlantic slave trade was accepted with scant protest, given its foundation in a provision of the U.S. Constitution.

By diplomatic and military means, Britain sought to put an end to slaving by other European powers. British ships began patrolling for slave vessels off the coasts of West Africa and the West Indies in 1808, and in 1819, Britain established a special Royal Navy squadron to enforce treaties that outlawed the slave trade.

A generation passed before the British, in the 1830s, freed all slaves in their colonies and compensated slaveholders. One more generation passed before the United States ended bondage with President Lincoln's Emancipation Declaration in 1863 and the end of the Civil War in 1865. And, finally, a further generation went by before Brazil, the last holdout, banned slavery in 1888.

Almost exactly one century after the 12 abolitionists gathered in London in 1787, African bondage in the New World was finished. Slavery's death knell arrived only after concerted efforts by successive generations of activists. But Britain's initial breakthrough, in 1807, was particularly important because it showed that the British people could be moved by decency and compassion for people they did not know.

In 1869, a British historian described the national crusade against slavery as "among the three or four perfectly virtuous acts recorded in the history of nations."

Other historians, though, haven't been so convinced of Britain's virtue. In 1944, historian Eric Williams, a black Trinidadian, argued that the British slave

trade was already dying economically when it was outlawed and that the empire had actually given up little of value.

That argument seems unconvincing today. In a series of books since the late 1970s, historian Seymour Drescher has shown that the British acted against their own economic self-interest in stopping the slave trade. Britain lost 1.8 percent of its annual national income through more than a 50-year period, according to a 1987 book by Drescher.

The Caribbean economy, for example, collapsed without African slave labor. Free black laborers refused to work under the cruel conditions of sugar plantations. The region didn't revive until the tourism boom of the late twentieth century. The same is true of the South Carolina lowcountry after emancipation. Many rice plantations were abandoned, and freedmen instead created their own subsistence farms.

The reality is that the British slave trade remained a productive part of the empire's economy until it was outlawed. British investments in slave ships that hauled Africans to the Americas were

financially high-risk but high-reward. Frequent catastrophes occurred: ships went down at sea, slaves died aboard ships in huge numbers, and wars disrupted the coming and going of British vessels. Nevertheless, the British slave trade, historians now agree, was as lucrative as ever when it was outlawed by Parliament.

In 1807, British slavers were still taking profits, and slaveholders in the Caribbean were still buying captives for the chanel houses of sugar plantations. It seems clear that Britain outlawed the slave trade not because slaving was dying out but because the British people realized, finally, that it was reprehensible.

David Brion Davis calls the abolitionist century from the 1780s to the 1880s "a moral achievement that may have no parallel." The two years of 1807 and 1808 were a crucial turning point in that achievement.

That 200 years ago a maritime empire would outlaw its transatlantic trade in human beings—at significant cost in capital and power—should be an inspiration to today's great powers facing moral, economic, and environmental problems of global consequence. ♡

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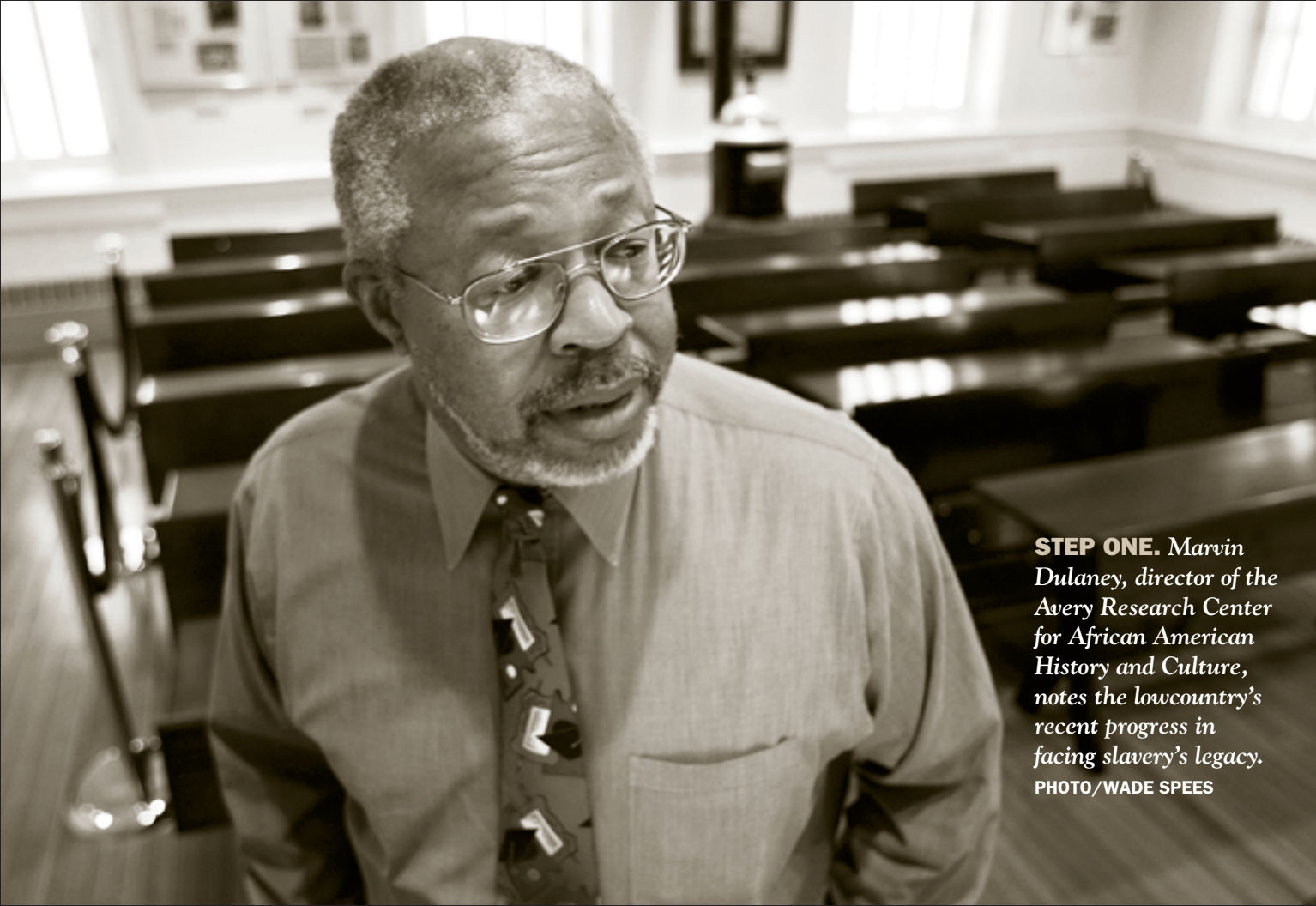
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STEP ONE. *Marvin Dulaney, director of the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, notes the lowcountry's recent progress in facing slavery's legacy.*

PHOTO/WADE SPEES

Memory ON THE MOVE

THE NEW LOWCOUNTRY HISTORY

Fifteen years ago, the word “slave” was taboo during tours of many historic plantations and mansions throughout the lowcountry. Among well-polished anecdotes about English candlesticks, French porcelain, and rococo parlor chairs, tour guides would delicately mention the so-called “servants” who had worked in plantation fields and grand homes before the Civil War.

“There was some discomfort and fear in talking about the African-American experience and particularly slavery,” says Marvin Dulaney, a College of Charleston historian and director of the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. “Yet slavery was the major game in town, and to ignore it is to ignore most of the

history of this area.”

Then, with remarkable swiftness, attitudes changed in what Dulaney calls the “mainstream historical community,” which started to address, in a frank way, the lives of African Americans in colonial and antebellum South Carolina. Discussing slavery and slaves suddenly was no longer beyond the pale.

In the late 1990s, at Dulaney’s urging, Drayton Hall and Middleton Place, two nationally known lowcountry plantations, created new exhibits and other programming about African-American history, showing how slaves lived and worked there, contributing to the region’s unique culture and economy.

“Drayton Hall and Middleton Place have done fantastic jobs of changing

their approach to interpretation,” says Dulaney.

“There has been an about-face in our interpretation,” says Tracey Todd, vice-president of museums at Middleton Place. “We’ve gone from focusing on the Middleton family to focusing on the people who worked here and their lives on the plantation.”

Other lowcountry historic sites have followed suit. “Memory is on the move,” says Simon Lewis, who teaches African literature at the College of Charleston.

Meanwhile, planning continues for the International African American Museum to be located in downtown Charleston. The Old Slave Mart Museum opened in downtown Charleston in October 2007. And the

Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture is expected to open on Washington's Mall in 2015.

The recent changes in historical interpretation, however, couldn't have occurred without scholarly advances dating back a half-century. Before the 1950s, African slavery was little discussed in North American colonial history. Scholars, instead, focused on how Europeans settled the country and how colonists eventually freed themselves from British fetters.

Then, during the 1940s and 1950s and gaining momentum during the civil-rights movement of the 1960s, American scholars began to understand the degree to which African slavery had been central to the European development of the Western Hemisphere. Virtually no region in North America and South America where Europeans had settled was left untouched by slavery until the mid-nineteenth century. Slavery affected economic life in colonies from French Quebec in the north to Spanish Chile in the south.

The descendants of Africans in the New World, historians also learned, managed to hold on to many aspects of their culture over centuries. Moreover, blacks in certain regions of the Americas—including the South Carolina lowcountry—created creole societies, forged in the furnace of slavery, from African and European traditions and practices.

Historians also began to realize the depth of cultural hybridizations and historical tragedies among Western European slaving nations, West Africa, the Caribbean, and the eastern seaboard countries of the Americas. And so historians began calling this immense region by a new name: the "Atlantic World."

Initially, historians published their findings in specialized books and articles for an academic audience. In the late 1980s, however, researchers and journalists began synthesizing this knowledge for lay readers and describing, with a new directness and force, the realities of Atlantic slavery and the

strong cultural connections between West Africa and many lowcountry blacks.

In South Carolina, a group of scholars and community leaders have worked for two decades to raise awareness of lowcountry African-American history.

In the late 1980s, Joseph Opala, now a historian at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, organized a series of meetings between the Gullah/Geechee people and those of Sierra Leone on the "Rice Coast" of West Africa.

Lowcountry planters had specifically sought slaves from West Africa who already knew how to grow rice. The Gullah/Geechee people are the descendants of those West African slaves brought here to work on colonial and antebellum rice plantations. In coastal Carolina, they are known as Gullah, but in Georgia and northern Florida they are called Geechee.

After emancipation, the Gullah people saved money to buy small land parcels on the plantations where they had been held in bondage. For generations, they continued to live in quiet rural enclaves as farmers and fishermen.

Some of their descendants still live on those same parcels along the coast in places like St. Helena Island, Wadmalaw Island, and the Phillips community in Charleston County. Today, the Gullah people are trying to sustain their creole culture—food, religion, crafts, stories, songs, and language—in the face of rapid coastal development.

Cultural exchanges with Sierra Leone made many lowcountry Gullah people look at themselves differently, says Marquetta Goodwine, a resident of St. Helena Island who is known as Queen Quet. "The president of Sierra Leone came here, and people said, 'He speaks like us, he eats the same food we do.' People who had denied they were of African descent saw their own reflection."

Of Gullah descent, Michael Allen, an education specialist with the National Park Service's Charles

Pinckney National Historic Site, recalls several later projects that further lay the groundwork for greater public understanding of Gullah history.

A historical marker was installed on Sullivan's Island, where thousands of African slaves had arrived in America and were held in quarantine before being sold. Edward Ball's book, *Slaves in the Family*, was a national bestseller, describing the previously hidden family connections among lowcountry whites and blacks. Community and conservation organizations, meanwhile, advocated for protection of local African-American culture. University scholars worked with "public historians" such as Michael Allen to tell the story of America at historic sites and other venues.

"All of these were incubators," Allen says, "for the Gullah/Geechee project"—a National Park Service effort that has changed how coastal South Carolinians view themselves and their history.

In 2000, at the request of U.S. Representative James E. Clyburn of South Carolina, the National Park Service began a five-year study of the potential for historical tourism, economic development, and educational projects on Gullah/Geechee history and culture in the coastal lowlands from North Carolina to northern Florida.

The park service launched its study by holding seven public meetings in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Local people got up to tell their own stories.

"We heard from those who were directly affected by the history of this area, who wanted to preserve African-American culture and heritage," says Dulaney. "Some people who run the plantations also came to the meetings, and they heard about the neglect of Gullah/Geechee culture by mainstream organizations, and that had an impact."

As a result of its study, the National Park Service plans to create three interpretive sites about the Gullah/Geechee people to be located along the Highway 17 corridor in South Carolina and Georgia. ♡

NEWS & NOTES

South Carolina students selected for Knauss fellowships

Five South Carolina graduate students have each been awarded a John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship for 2008. This number of Knauss fellows is a record for South Carolina colleges and universities.

Courtney Arthur received a B.S. in biology from the College of William & Mary and recently completed her M.S. degree in marine biology at the College of Charleston. She will work in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Ocean Service (NOS) Office of Response and Restoration.

Jessica Berrio graduated with a B.S. in psychobiology from Southampton College of Long Island and recently completed a M.S. in environmental studies at the College of Charleston. She will serve as a fellow in the NOS office program of addressing climate change and planning for the future of coastal management.

Luis Frazao da Silva Leandro has a B.S. in biology from Iowa State University and completed a M.S. in marine biology from the College of Charleston. He will work in the NOAA Office of Legislative Affairs.

Amanda McCarty graduated with a B.S. in biology from Pacific Lutheran University and completed a M.S. in marine biology at the College of Charleston. She will serve her fellowship working for the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard.

Emily McDonald earned a B.S. in marine science from the University of South Carolina (USC) Honors College and completed a M.S. in environmental health sciences, also at USC. She will work in the NOAA Ocean Exploration and Research Program.

To further the education of tomorrow's leaders, the National Sea Grant Office sponsors the John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Program, bringing a select group of graduate students to the nation's capital, where they work in the federal government's legislative and executive branches.

The students learn about federal policy regarding marine and Great Lakes natural resources and lend their scientific expertise to federal agencies and congressional staff offices.

Each of the nation's 32 Sea Grant programs can nominate up to five students to the Knauss fellows program each year. Selections are then made competitively from among those nominations. ✓

Marine educator joins COSEE-SE

Elizabeth A. Vernon recently joined the Center for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence-Southeast (COSEE-SE) program as marine education specialist. She received her B.S. in biological sciences from Clemson University in 1999 and her Masters of Environmental Studies from the College of Charleston in 2007.

Based in the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium office, she will be working closely with her COSEE-SE counterparts in North Carolina and Georgia to coordinate professional-development opportunities that link marine science research organizations with educational institutions reflective of diverse communities. Upcoming professional-development opportunities that Elizabeth will be coordinating or assisting include the Coastal Legacy



ELIZABETH VERNON

Workshop, the Ocean Science Education Leadership Institute, Ocean Awareness Days, and others. She will also be working on

the development and dissemination of pertinent marine science education curricula, publications, and educational resources.

Prior to her employment with S.C. Sea Grant, Elizabeth has worked as a marine-science instructor and coordinator at the Newfound Harbor Marine Institute in Big Pine Key, Florida. For the past six years, Elizabeth served as education coordinator for the Marine Resources Division of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources where she developed and taught programs to formal and informal educators aboard the vessel, *Discovery*. ✓

New Web portal for coastal officials launched

The S.C. Coastal Information Network announces the launch of a new Web portal, www.sccoastalinfo.org. The user-friendly Web site is a one-stop information resource for workshops, presentations, and specialized training opportunities available to coastal decision-makers, community planners, and local officials. The calendar-based portal allows users to search for events by date, topic,

NEWS & NOTES

location, and target audience. The Web site also lists community events in coastal South Carolina and has downloadable educational resources that can be searched by keyword or category. Categories of events include beach management, resource conservation, climate change, and coastal development. The Web site will continue to be enhanced to meet the needs of coastal decision-makers.

The S.C. Coastal Information Network was formed in 2006 to enhance coordination of coastal community outreach efforts in South Carolina. The Network consists of outreach personnel from state and federal agencies, universities, councils of governments, and sustainable development organizations. Partners include the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) – SCDHEC Office of Ocean and Coastal

Resource Management and SCDHEC Bureau of Water, S.C. Department of Natural Resources – ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve and North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments, Urban Land Institute of South Carolina, S.C. Department of Archives and History, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) – NOAA Coastal Services Center and NOAA Hollings Marine Laboratory.

For more information about the S.C. Coastal Information Network or the Web portal, contact Samantha Bruce, S.C. Sea Grant Extension Program, at samantha.bruce@sceagrant.org or (843) 953-2078. ♡

Consortium strategic plan available on Web

The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium has identified a plan of action for the next four years to address critical coastal and marine resource issues facing South Carolina. These goals and objectives will serve as a guide for the activities that the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium will undertake.

Consortium leadership and staff studied strategic-planning efforts of other Sea Grant programs to determine how best to restructure and receive input for writing the new plan. The Consortium used an online survey to request input on the strategic goals and objectives as well as on the most pressing issues facing South Carolina. In addition, the survey offered respondents opportunities to provide the Consortium with additional priorities and where information was lacking for a given topic.


The Consortium, moreover, engaged its Program Advisory Board (PAB) for input on the priorities of the agency. The PAB is composed of 30 members representing a variety of stakeholders, including state and federal agencies, business and industry, community leaders, and the external scientific community.

As a result of the planning process, four programmatic areas have been identified by the Consortium: (1) Humans and the Coastal Landscape, (2) Humans and the Risks of Coastal Natural Hazards, (3) Coastal-Dependent Economy, and (4) Scientific Literacy and Workforce Development.

The survey results and the strategic plan are available at www.sceagrant.org/Content/?cid=250. ♡

South Carolina Coastal Information Network

Providing educational and training opportunities for coastal community officials



Welcome to the South Carolina Coastal Information Network Homepage

The Network emerged as a result of a number of coastal outreach institutions and constituencies working in partnership to enhance coordination of the coastal community outreach efforts in South Carolina. This Web site has been established for the purpose of maximizing the efficient delivery of quality training and educational material to coastal decision-makers, community planners, local officials, and the public. The site provides a calendar of outreach events, links to collaborating partners, and links to event publications for further information. To find out more about the South Carolina Coastal Information Network, contact [Samantha Bruce](mailto:Samantha.Bruce) or [April Turner](mailto:April.Turner) (843) 953-2078.

- » Homepage
- Search Events
- Partners and Links
- Resources
- ✉ Email Us

THE CALENDAR » CURRENT EVENTS...

search coastal related events

Participate in Coastal Events

» Events by Type...

- Conference (2 events)
- Meeting (3 events)
- Seminar (12 events)
- Training Course (33 events)
- Workshop (29 events)

» Events by Location...

- County: Beaufort (6 events)
- County: Berkeley (0 events)
- County: Charleston (5 events)
- County: Georgetown (6 events)
- County: Horry (8 events)
- County: Jasper (0 events)
- Region: R2 (17 events)
- Region: Lowcountry (15 events)
- Region: Waccamaw (3 events)
- Statewide: Coast (16 events)
- Statewide: Statewide (1 events)

» Some Past Events (8)...

- American Planning Association Web Conference: Complete Streets [1/30/2008]
- Advanced Microsoft Access Training [1/28/2008]
- Getting to Know Wetlands and the Rules that Govern Them [1/17/2008]
- Municipal Association of South Carolina Planning and Zoning Education [12/6/2007]
- Municipal Association of South Carolina Planning and Zoning Education [11/16/2007]
- Municipal Association of South Carolina Planning and Zoning Continuing Education [10/12/2007]
- more...

- American Planning Association Web Conference: Mastering Density
Conferences provide long-distance training to planners, planning officials... [2/13/2008]
- The Future of Our Drinking Water
One of a set of seminars discussing local... [2/13/2008]
- Master Wildlifer II
Master Wildlifer II is designed for landowners, land... [2/19/2008]
- The Future of Our Drinking Water
One of a set of seminars discussing local... [2/19/2008]
- Southeast Regional Diamondback Terrapin Workshop
A one-day workshop highlighting the status of diamondback... [2/27/2008]
- American Planning Association Web Conference: Design Guidelines for Small Towns and Rural Communities
Conferences provide long-distance training to planners, planning officials... [3/5/2008]
- more...

EBBS & FLOWS

Ending the International Slave Trade: A Bicentenary Inquiry

Charleston, S.C.
March 26–29, 2008

To mark the bicentennial of the abolition of the international slave trade in the United States and the British Empire, the Program in the Carolina Lowcountry and Atlantic World at the College of Charleston will hold a conference focusing on the trade, and its effects on the lowcountry and the American South as a whole.

For more information, call Simon Lewis at (843) 953-1920.

Solutions to Coastal Disasters 2008

Oahu, HI
April 13–16, 2008

This is a must-attend conference for coastal planners, managers, social scientists, engineers, geologists, economists, property owners, elected officials, and others interested in the coast. Solutions to Coastal Disasters 2008 will encourage greater examination of the ecosystem dynamics, vulnerabilities, and ways to incorporate social and ecological solutions into the discussion of coastal disasters.

Visit the conference Web site at content.asce.org/conferences/cd2008.

Gullah/Geechee Nation International Music and Movement Festival

Charleston, S.C.
August 22–24, 2008

This festival seeks to celebrate and reconnect the African Diasporic links of the Gullah/Geechee Nation. The artists and presenters of the festival are natives of the Gullah/Geechee Nation and African countries. 2008 will be the culmination of a series of events hosted by the Gullah/Geechee Nation to commemorate the 200th year since the abolition of the British slave trade. For more information, call (843) 838-1171 or visit members.aol.com/ampturnitup/GGNIAMMF06.html.

Subscriptions are free upon request by contacting: Annette.Dunmeyer@scseagrant.org

ATTENTION SCHOOL TEACHERS! The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium has designed supplemental classroom resources for this and past issues of *Coastal Heritage* magazine. *Coastal Heritage Curriculum Connection*, written for both middle- and high-school students, is aligned with the South Carolina state standards for the appropriate grade levels. Includes standards-based inquiry questions to lead students through explorations of the topic discussed. *Curriculum Connection* is available on-line at www.scseagrant.org/education.


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