

Collection Highlights

A Transcription of Narration by Buddy Sullivan

Charlie Wilson's Basket

"The Gullah Geechee culture of coastal Georgia and St. Simons is an integral part of St. Simons and Glynn County. The artifact shown here is a basket made out of saw palm palmetto, out of the sabal palm, made by Charles Wilson of the Harrington Community on St. Simons Island. Basket weaving is a traditional craft by the Gullah Geechee, the Gullah of South Carolina and the Geechee of coastal Georgia. Charles Wilson was well known for his basket making skills in the early 1900s. He was very meticulous in his work and this particular basket is one of the greatest examples of the basket weaver's art. Much of the research and knowledge about basket weaving and the Geechee culture of St. Simons and Glynn County was the result of a work by local historian Margaret Davis Cate, who did the research in the 1940s and 1950s and published her findings as well as a unique series of photographs of the Geechee culture of this local area. And it was a very important introduction and preservation of our local culture that has lived all through the years right to the present day."

Regatta Trophy

"Pilot boats guided the ships into St. Simons Sound to load lumber at the St. Simons mills. This was one of the major economic activities for Brunswick and St. Simons in the years after the Civil War. The artifact shown here is the trophy awarded to a pilot boat from St. Simons Island to Captain Duncan Wright. In the late 1800s there were pilot boat regattas held near Tybee Island near Savannah in which the fastest pilot boats on the coast from Charleston down to Brunswick would compete for cash prizes as well as the trophies. This is the trophy awarded to Captain Wright in 1891 as his pilot boat, the Gracie, a 99 footer from St. Simons and Brunswick, won the regatta at Tybee Island. The pilot boats were very instrumental in guiding the ships into the harbor over the St. Simons bar to keep them from running onto the shoals and breakers coming into the harbor, particularly in areas of low tide and sandbars. And so they did serve a very important service at all the sea ports of coastal Georgia and Carolina. Pilot boats still perform a valuable service for all the cargo ships that come into the Brunswick sea port each and every day."

USS *Constitution*

"One of the most famous warships in American history came straight from St. Simons, or at least the oak timber for it did. The USS *Constitution*, better known as "Old Ironsides," was built out of live oak cut from St. Simons Island in 1794-95. The sternpost for the ship actually came from Cannon's Point on the north end of the island, but most of the oak for the ship was cut on the south end and then shipped from Gascoigne Bluff up to Boston where the ship was built. The *Constitution* was launched in 1797 and became the most famous of the 6 frigates in the early American Navy. The ship won a series of naval battles in the War of 1812 against British warships which set the American Navy on a course to becoming one of the greatest of the time. The *Constitution* in its rebuilt fashion came to St. Simons in 1931 and people on the island and around Brunswick got to see the ship in its living mode built of the live oak from their locale. This was one of the most famous ship visits ever to come to the Brunswick area."

Eugenia Price's Typewriter

"Eugenia Price was one of the best known novelists of the 20th century, particularly in the coastal Georgia area. "I long to depart this earth banging away on my old manual typewriter," Eugenia Price once said before her death in 1996. Shown here is the Olympia typewriter that Price used for many, many years to write her novels. She was best known for her series of novels relating to St. Simons Island history. These historical novels, based on meticulous research, told the story of real people and real events as they pertain to St. Simons, Brunswick, and the local coastal area. She wrote these novels when she moved to St. Simons in 1965, right up to her death in 1996. She wrote six novels set on St. Simons, as well as four others as part of her Savannah quartet. And these novels became national treasures and are still prized items in their first editions and remain in print and remain very popular with the reading public."