

Church celebrates 150th anniversary of slave raid led by Harriet Tubman

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By ALLISON STICE — astice@islandpacket.com



Rep. Kenneth Hodges presents a certificate of a house resolution from the South Carolina House of Representatives thanking guest speaker and Harriet Tubman scholar Kate Clifford Lawson for her work Sunday night during the 150th anniversary commemoration ceremony of the Combahee River Raid at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Beaufort.

Sarah Welliver — Sarah Welliver [Buy Photo](#)

On June 2, 1863, using her knowledge as a Union Army scout and spy, Harriet Tubman led a raid up the Combahee River, freeing nearly 800 slaves.

One hundred and fifty years later, a crowd gathered to commemorate the event in the place where historians believe the Tubman lodged and addressed the newly freed men and women: Beaufort's Tabernacle Baptist Church.

This time, Dr. Kate Clifford Larson, author of "Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero," addressed the audience in the pews.

Larson described how Tubman arrived in Beaufort in the spring of 1862, working as a spy and scout and setting up businesses so other freedmen could earn an income. Tubman, with the help of other scouts familiar with the area, was also gathering information about the location of slaves and supplies.

As proof, Larson held up a check Tubman received from the government for her scouting work, provided by another guest speaker, Asa Gordon, secretary general of the Sons and Daughters of the U.S. Colored Troops.

1863. Department of the South Hd. Qrs. in the field
Sally Island Fla. Jan. 7th 1863
Lieut. Col. Jas. A. Munet. Marshal Genl.
The Major Genl. commanding directs that you pay to the bearer, Mrs. Harriet Tubman (Colored) One hundred dollars \$100. (Acres Service Money) taking a receipt for the same
Very Respectfully
Your Obedt. Servant
Edw. Smith.
Asst. Adj. Genl.

On the evening of June 1, 1863, three steam-driven gunboats carrying 300 black soldiers left Port Royal under the cover of darkness. With Tubman's guidance, Col. James Montgomery and his small force made their way to the plantations where Tubman and her scouts had identified Confederate warehouses and stockpiles of rice and cotton.

The next morning, the troops laid waste to several plantations and fields with fire and flooding, and confiscated thousands of dollars in food and livestock.

More than 750 slaves fled to the Union boats. An article published in the Boston Commonwealth printed in the church's program described the raid as a "bold and effective blow, destroying millions of dollars worth of commissary stores, cotton and lordly dwellings and striking terror to the heart of rebeldom." Montgomery and his men suffered no losses. or even a scratch, according to the article.

Larson, a leading Tubman scholar, described how Tubman had been born into slavery in Maryland and lived with disabilities her entire life from beatings at the hands of overseers.

She was illiterate, and stood only 5 feet tall, but worked her entire life to help others gain freedom after making her own escape, Larson said.

"She wanted to be part of the war effort," Larson said. "So she came here and got to work."

Rev. Kenneth Hodges, pastor at Tabernacle Baptist Church, said it is "only fitting" that the church celebrate the raid as it continues to mark its own 150th anniversary.

Hodges, who is also a Democratic state representative from Colleton County, said celebrations of the church's milestone so far this year have included a ceremony in January marking the 150th anniversary of the end of slavery and a traveling exhibit honoring Civil War hero and U.S. Congressman Robert Smalls.



Rep. Kenneth Hodges presents an American flag and South Carolina state flag from the South Carolina State House to Asa Gordon, Secretary General of the Sons and Daughters of the U.S. Colored Troops Sunday night during the 150th anniversary commemoration ceremony of the Combahee River Raid at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Beaufort. SARAH WELLIVER — Sarah Welliver



Sunday, June 2nd, 2013, 2pm, Sesquicentennial Commemorative ceremony of Harriet Tubman's abolitionist raid on the Combahee at the Harriet Tubman bridge, (Rt.17, Combahee Crossing):

The African-American Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation Award of the "Spirit of Freedom Commemorative Medal of Honor Medallion" to DISTRICT 121 & Faith Tabernacle Baptist was presented to Rep. Kenneth F. Hodges, South Carolina State Representative / Rev. Kenneth F. Hodges, Pastor by Asa Gordon, secretary general of the Sons and Daughters of the U.S. Colored Troops.



African-American
CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL
FREEDOM FOUNDATION



Spirit of Freedom Commemorative Medal of Honor Medallion

AWARDED TO DISTRICT 121



Presented to: **REP. KENNETH F. HODGES.**
State Representative
JUNE 2nd, 2013



For outstanding service beyond the call of duty to educate and facilitate public awareness of the African American Civil War Experience.

Asa Gordon
Founding Director
AACWMFF

African-American
CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL
FREEDOM FOUNDATION



Spirit of Freedom Commemorative Medal of Honor Medallion

AWARDED TO FAITH TABERNACLE BAPTIST



Presented to: **REV. KENNETH F. HODGES.**
PASTOR
JUNE 2nd, 2013



For outstanding service beyond the call of duty to educate and facilitate public awareness of the African American Civil War Experience.

Asa Gordon
Founding Director
AACWMFF



A collage featuring a bronze statue of African American Civil War soldiers on the left. On the right is a promotional poster for the "150 African-American CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL" by the "FREEDOM FOUNDATION". The poster includes the text "sesquicentennial", "★★★ Sons & Daughters", and "United States Colored Troops". At the bottom of the collage are the URLs "http://www.afroamcivilwar.org" and "http://www.sducst.org".

Civil War-era black troops fought three-pronged war

Published: May 31, 2013

By BRIAN HEFFERNAN — bheffernan@islandpacket.com



Civil War scholar and reenactor Asa Gordon talks about Harriet Tubman's role as the creator and leader of the 1863 Combahee River Raid Friday afternoon during a lecture on the legacy of U.S. black troops who served in the Civil War at Cherry Hill School on Hilton Head Island.

Sarah Welliver — Sarah Welliver [Buy Photo](#)

The Civil War was fought between two sides, but for the black freedmen and escaped slaves who enlisted as U.S. Colored Troops, the war had three fronts.

The first two battles -- for liberty from slavery in the South and for equal rights within the Union Army -- were won years ago.

The third -- for education -- is still being waged. It's a campaign in which Asa Gordon, Secretary General of the Sons and Daughters of the U.S. Colored Troops, is a soldier.

Gordon spoke Friday at the Cherry Hill School, an original building in what was once the town of Mitchelville. Union Gen. Ormsby Mitchel set land aside for the settlement after driving Confederate forces off the island in 1861. The community, which eventually grew to more than 1,500 residents, formed in 1862, a year before the Emancipation Proclamation.

The Mitchelville Preservation Project and the Hilton Head Island Land Trust sponsored Gordon's talk.

Gordon said the continuing fight for education began as an individual struggle among the troops to become literate. Education was believed at the time to offer freedom and a path to prosperity and it was fiercely sought after by the soldiers, Gordon said.

That fight has since morphed into a battle for a public re-education about the role of the black troops in the war effort, he said.

The soldiers' role and character has been distorted by history books and the 1989 film "Glory," Gordon told a standingroom-only audience. The troops, some of whom served on Hilton Head and played a role in protecting the island, were often depicted as lazy and uninterested in educating themselves. They were sometimes shown as poor soldiers.

"Present-day prejudices were projected on another time," Gordon told the audience. "Part of the education is to understand how we have been miseducated."

Following the talk, Gordon led a walk along Beach City Road to the site of Fort Howell, where a remembrance was held for the black troops who built the fort.



CIVIL WAR REMEMBRANCE

Black troops fought three-pronged war

By BRIAN HEFFERNAN —
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TROOPS

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The Hilton Head High School JROTC participated in a flaglowering ceremony at dusk.

