

# THE GAR HALL ORACLE

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**Edward Wallace Camp No. 21  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War of Beaufort  
Department of Georgia & South Carolina**

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**“Beautiful Beaufort by the Sea  
Twenty-six Miles from Yemassee”**

## **About the Cover**

The Grand Army of the Republic Hall was constructed by the Afro-American troops (USCTs) in 1896 so that they could have a meeting place. The hall has been used over the past years as a meeting place for the USCTs, a church, a dance studio, a day care center and as a place for community meetings.

The City of Yemassee is the place where numerous Afro-American men and women have arrived on a train or departed on a train in route to the site of their military training.

The GAR Hall Oracle is the official newsletter of the SUVCW of Beaufort, Edward Wallace, Camp #21.

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### **The Commander's Corner**

There is a saying that says “Good things come to those who wait”. It doesn’t matter whether the waiting is on a voluntary basis or simply because waiting is the only option that you have. The end result is one and the same.

The restorations on our GAR Hall, which actually began in November 2021, were finally completed in June 2022. Judging from the response of those who have had an opportunity to visit the restored hall, “we have a good thing”.

Getting to where we are was not easy. We first had to secure the necessary funding and we are thankful that Beaufort County Council provided the needed funds through an ATAX grant of \$115,000 dollars. The construction was accomplished through and by “Neil’s Construction Company”. We are thankful to him for his dedication to the project and for a job well done.

We are thankful to and for former Mayor Billy Keyserling and his organization for all that they did to help us reach our goal. We are also thankful for the prayers of all the members of the Sons and Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War as well as the members of the Woman’s Relief Corps.

But now it is time to go to work. We must all come together and do all that we can to, as soon as possible, put the hall back into use as a part of the “historical story” of Beaufort County.

I believe that it is safe to say that “we are on our way”. On June 25, 2022 we celebrated the “Ribbon Cutting” and the “2022 Juneteenth” Celebrations. The “Ribbon Cutting Ceremony” was led by former Mayor Billy Keyserling and the “Keynote Speaker” for the “Juneteenth Celebration” was Mr. James Yancey, Jr.

Once again, Brother Tyrone Jackson served as moderator for the “Juneteenth Celebration”. He did not disappoint us and did an excellent job as always.

Mr. Yancey gave an excellent exposition with emphasis on the Emancipation Proclamation. Several people have said that they learned a lot from what he had to say.

We were excited that two of our brothers of Camp #10 of Columbia, South Carolina, in the persons of brothers Matthew Youmans and Lawrence Moss, attended and participated in the celebrations.

An effort is being put forth to increase the membership in both the Sons and Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War of Beaufort. I am pleased to say that over the past three months the Sons’ membership has increased by five and the Daughters’ membership by two. Let us all come together with the help of the Lord and continue being a beacon in our community.

### Camp #21's Calendar

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Independence Day	July 4 <sup>th</sup>
Citizenship Day	Sept 17 <sup>th</sup>
POW/MIA Day	Sept 21st

## The Grand Army Hall Restoration

Last year, Edward Wallace Camp 21 in Beaufort SC received a substantial grant to repair the only surviving GAR Hall in South Carolina. Settling foundations had caused the building placing its structure at risk and actually damaging the interior plasterwork.

Camp Commander Dr. Elijah Washington reports that repair work has now been completed and the Camp has been given permission by the city of Beaufort to reoccupy the building. The foundation has been repaired and stabilized and the interior has been extensively restored.

In addition to using the building as its meeting place, Camp 21 uses the building for the Museum of Afro-American Military Heritage.



The damage is evident in this photo.



Side view showing the extent of the work.



Detail of the work to level the building.  
Note the screw jack.



Repairs in the crawl space



Rebuilding a foundation pier.

Edward Wallace Camp #21



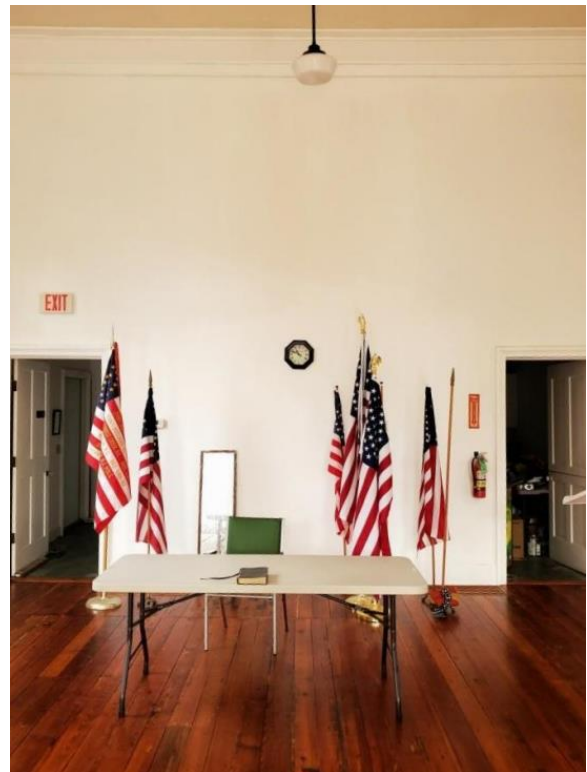
The restored accessibility ramp.



The refinished floor.



The main entrance to the historic GAR Hall is looking great!



Ready for Camp meetings!



## Juneteenth Celebration

By Tony Kukulich

(source: <https://yourislandnews.com/grand-armys-hall-grander/>)



Billy Keyserling, former mayor of Beaufort, led a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Grand Army of the Republic Hall in Beaufort on Saturday, June 25. Hosted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, the ceremony celebrated major repair work to the 126-year-old building completed with money from the county's ATAX fund. Photo by Tony Kukulich/The Island News.

It may seem unusual to host a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a building that is 126 years old, but former City of Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling was on hand at the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Hall this past weekend to do just that.

The ceremony marked the completion of structural repairs to the building, which was built in 1896 and is located at 706 New Castle Ave.

Beaufort County Council ATAX funds contributed \$115,000 toward this project.

“Preservation of our Grand Army Hall, and the work being done by the Rev. Dr. Elijah Washington and his team to protect it, has never been more important,” said City of Beaufort Councilmember Mitch Mitchell, who attended the event. “The Grand Army Hall shares the history and contribution of Black Americans to our own emancipation and our continued struggle to be accepted as equal.”

The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War hosted a crowd of approximately 50 who gathered on a seasonably hot and sticky Saturday morning for the ceremony, which included a keynote address by James Yancy. Yancy spoke about the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth, which was recently celebrated as a federal holiday for the first time.

While Beaufort County provided funding for the project, it was the Second Founding of America, a not-for-profit philanthropic partner of the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park and the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network, that did the legwork to secure the grant from the county. The hall project is the first of four Reconstruction Era initiatives that the group is spearheading.



James Yancy speaks about the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth after Billy Keyserling, former mayor of Beaufort, led a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Grand Army of the Republic Hall in Beaufort on Saturday, June 25. Hosted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, the ceremony celebrated major repair work to the 126-year-old building completed with money from the county's ATAX fund. Photo by Tony Kukulich/The Island News.

“Reconstruction is such an important piece of history because it’s really the only time this country has ever really approached the promises of equality and justice,” Keyserling said.

The quality of the maintenance work done to date on the hall made it a good candidate for preservation work. Another factor moved it to the top of the foundation’s list.

“Because all of the work done was out of sight, it was all structural, it wasn’t visual, we didn’t have to go through the historic review process,” Keyserling said. “Staff could approve it because we weren’t making any changes to the building. The other projects will be making changes, and we are going through historic review on those. That’s why it was picked. They’ve done a great job and the simplicity of the review process.”

The county's grant was used to repair the underlying structure and floor system of the GAR Hall, a project that took about four months to complete. Keyserling said the original plan was to pull up the hall's flooring, complete the repairs and replace the flooring. However, a floorboard split when the first nail was pulled, and the team realized that going further would result in the floor's destruction. The plan was altered and the team instead dug into the foundation to complete the repairs.

"I'm hoping we've got enough money to go back and finish stormwater mitigation, because that's what causes these problems," Keyserling added.

The Deacon's Study House, which is part of the Brick Baptist Church on St, Helena Island, is another of the foundation's projects. Plans call for the building to be moved back to its original location and adapted for use as an interpretive center. A grant from the county will pay for that work as well. A federal grant will help pay for the restoration of a freedman's cottage located at 1313 Congress Street.

"In our capacity as a philanthropic partner with the National Parks Service, we are basically helping them add places and stories that can be part of their interpretation," Keyserling said. "Where we put money to improve something, they will end up with an agreement that the Parks Service will have certain access to bring the public into see it. We hope to do that all over Beaufort County and really, all over the state. Hopefully we'll help them grow a network of sites all over the country."

The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was a fraternal organization founded in 1866. It was composed of Union veterans of the Civil War. The organization was segregated and included separate chapters for Black and White veterans.

A Black GAR post was formed in Beaufort in 1888. Called David Hunter Post Number 9, this post included many veterans who were formerly enslaved on nearby Sea Island cotton plantations. Robert Smalls was counted among the members of Post Number 9 and served as the post commander for time.

As veterans of the Civil War died off, the GAR was dissolved and ownership of the Grand Army of the Republic Hall was transferred to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War in 1939.

Over the years, the hall has been used as a meeting place, a dance studio, a daycare center and a church. In 1940, Zora Neale Hurston, a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance, used the hall as a studio for her documentary, "The Commandment Keeper Church."

With the completion of repair work, public access to the GAR Hall is expected to increase.

"Grand Army Hall will eventually have an agreement with the (National) Parks Service like we do with the Robert Smalls House, like they do at Brick Church and like they will at Penn Center," Keyserling explained. "The use agreement will say, 'You own it. You take care of it. We get to use it, but we help you maintain it, and we help you develop the interpretation of it.'"

## Memorial Day Celebration Is Back!

Camp #21, SUVCW of Beaufort once again sponsored the 2022 Memorial Day Celebration in the City of Beaufort.

The parade followed the traditional parade route around the City of Beaufort. The Memorial Day Ceremony was held as usual at the Beaufort National Cemetery at 1601 Boundary Street in the City of Beaufort.

The keynote speaker for the ceremony was Commander LaDonna M. Simpson, USN, Commanding Officer, USS Carter Hall.

The Parris Island Marine Band performed exceptionally well in both the parade and the ceremony. There were about five to six hundred spectators in attendance at the ceremony and many more were present along the parade route throughout the parade route.

The event was a great success.



“Miss Rose” carries Kepi Cap of her fallen soldier from the Union 20<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

Edward Wallace Camp #21



Montfordpoint Marines



82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division



Keynote Speaker alongside Commander Washington

## We Support the Tree Project



Civil War history continues to unfold around us as Beaufort County was very much involved in the Civil War. Efforts are now being made to protect a tree that the Afro-American troops gathered under during the Civil War of 1861 – 1865.

As sons and Daughters of the Union Veterans of the Civil War of Beaufort, we have signed on in support of the protection and preservation of the tree in question. The tree is located in the area of the present Federal Court House here in Beaufort.

The Beaufort County Historical Society has taken the lead in this effort. They have already approved the placement of a “historical marker” at the site. They are now spearheading an effort to add a “pocket park” with a bench at the site as well.



Apparently, there are several photos of this tree among the collection of Civil War photos. These photos show black soldiers marching under the tree.

The idea is that the tree can be used as an educational tool for young people. This tree of Knowledge can be an instrument to teach school children in Beaufort the connection between their beautiful home town and this Nation's history.

This would be another step to make sure that the Civil War story of black regiments of Union soldiers will be told.

**Yet Another First!!**  
**By Brother Tyrone Jackson**



U.S. Marine Corps Lt. General Michael Langley has been nominated by President Joe Biden for the Fourth Star and to lead the U.S. Africa Command.

Lt. General Langley graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington. He was commissioned in 1985. He is a career artillery officer who has deployed both to Afghanistan and Somalia.

He previously served as 2nd Marine Expeditionary Forces deputy commander general and as the commander general 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Expeditionary Brigade. He also previously led Marine Forces Europe and Africa and served as deputy commander general of Fleet Marine Force Atlantic.

If Lt. General Langley is confirmed by the Senate, he would be the first Afro-American Marine promoted to four stars. There have been a total of seven Afro-American marines who have reached the ranking of lieutenant general.

Let's all cheer for Lt. General Langley.

## About the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War of Beaufort

The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War of Beaufort is a 501©4 with the mission of supporting the SUVCW National Organization with emphasis on perpetuating the history and memory of the Afro-American men and women who fought for their freedom during the Civil War, 1861 – 1865.



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### Officers of Edward Wallace Camp No. 21

Camp Commander – Bro. Elijah Washington  
Senior Vice Commander – Bro. Sam T. Spain  
Secretary – Bro. James A. Morrall  
Treasurer – Bro. Paul H. Graham