

# Old school houses pieces of Daufuskie history

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The Billie Burn Museum and the Jane Hamilton School on Daufuskie Island is open from 1 to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and for special appointments.

Details: Nancy Ludtke, 843-686-2210

The one-room schoolhouse on Daufuskie Island had basically become history up until several months ago. Now, it's being used to preserve history.

The Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation recently received an award from the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission honoring its revitalization of the Jane Hamilton School and establishment of the Gullah Learning Center inside.

The schoolhouse is only about 500 square feet, but it's legacy is one of a culture that sometimes gets overlooked, like the building once was.

"We wanted to do something that would educate people about Gullah history," said Nancy Ludtke, secretary of the historical foundation.

Jane Hamilton was a native islander who donated the land for a school in the 1940s. Until then, black children on the opposite end of the island would have to walk to get to the Mary Fields School during the era of segregation. The building housed children for about 10 years, until busing arrived on the island. Shortly after, Hamilton moved in. After she died, the building was used on and off as a library and most recently as storage for the nearby Daufuskie Island Elementary School.

The foundation had its eye on the property for a while, Ludtke said. It raised \$42,000 for the refurbishment about a year ago, leasing it from the Beaufort County School District. Opened in October, the Gullah Learning Center includes six informational panels and photographs from a time past on the island. The building also houses a library of Daufuskie history.

The Jane Hamilton School is down the road from the foundation-operated Billie Burn Museum, named after a longtime resident and historian. The museum focuses on Daufuskie history, while the school is more specific to Gullah. The 210 member foundation operates the historical centers with about 36 volunteers.

The foundation's next fundraising effort is for an islandwide historical trail named after its first president, Rob Kennedy. Kennedy compiled historical information about island sites that would be featured in a self-guided tour to go along with the trail. The foundation plans to raise \$15,000 for the project and have it completed within a year.

"The whole point is to know the history of the island," Ludtke said.