



**Hilton Head Island**  
Bluffton and the Lowcountry

"The Lowcountry Spirit" (mixed media on wood, 2010) by Amiri Farris

# From Story to HISTORY



## The Gullah Museum of Hilton Head Island shares a cultural legacy.

BY WAYNETTE GOODSON

**A**bout 13 years ago, Louise Miller Cohen began reading about her Gullah culture becoming extinct.

So she bravely began telling stories of her own Gullah roots, which run deep in the African ancestry of the Sea Islands.

But she didn't stop there. Cohen started teaching the Gullah language, sharing their knowledge of medicinal plants, and cooking Gullah cuisine. "Louise Cohen is considered a great and refreshing credit to the Gullah storytelling tradition as she responds to ongoing demands of newcomers to our region who desire to learn more about our state's cultural heritage," says Dr. Emory S. Campbell, author of *Gullah Cultural Legacies*.

Part of Cohen's vision is to see the land where she grew up turned into the Gullah Museum of Hilton Head Island with the mission of "restoring, preserving, and sharing the Gullah culture."

Purchased by her great-grandfather William

Simmons after the Civil War, the site contains the 1930 Little House (shown), which showcases daily Gullah life in the farming/bartering community of Squire Pope.

A Grand Army of the Republic sword found in the ceiling will be part of a future exhibit, as will three more homes, an open-air pavilion, an art gallery, and a garden. Patrons can also attend events such as A Night at the Juke Joint, an Annual Pie & Cake Baking Contest, and an evening banquet during Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. weekend.

And it all started with the power of one woman's storytelling. Today Cohen has received the prestigious Governor Award, and the museum has earned the Honor Award from the Palmetto Trust for their accomplishments in historic preservation in South Carolina.



Visit [gullahmuseumhhi.org](http://gullahmuseumhhi.org) for seasonal hours.

PHOTO BY THE GULLAH MUSEUM