

My Georgia Historical Society

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It is entirely possible that if you hang with me long enough, you will be heartily sick of hearing about Savannah. Yes, I am hopelessly addicted to the Georgia coast, and steadfastly obsessed with the town James Oglethorpe planted in 1733.

Savannah is – special. As I said to my friend Bobbi, “you don’t have to be “out there” to feel at home in your skin in Savannah, but it helps.” Many historic towns are said to have “atmosphere,” or “ambiance,” or “charm,” but Savannah goes way beyond those things. Savannah hums to herself, and sometimes if you listen you can hear the words. You can’t always make them out, but you can hear them. Sometimes you can hear Savannah laughing, and sometimes you can hear her sigh.

Okay, so I’m “out there.” As a rule I am a GRITS (Girl Raised In The South) with a hangover from Sunday School and an inherent understanding of how to properly fry a chicken and make sweet tea. I did not grow up believing in ghosts and I don’t believe in them now. Nevertheless, in Savannah you find yourself altering many things you thought you believed – or didn’t.

Savannah and St Augustine ignited my interest in dead people. You see, I have a terrible habit of finding the most fascinating people and wanting to get to know them better – after they are dead. I love getting to know these people, but it presents a problem for me because it’s a mighty tough task to get to know someone after they are dead. I mean, with the decomp and silence and all. Yet I carry on because I have this endless, insatiable curiosity.

In spring of 2009, I saw an email in my inbox called “See You In Class” from the Georgia Historical Society. Lo and behold, the GHS offered a series of summer classes dedicated to research and preservation of genealogy, family documents, oral history... as well as walking tours of noteworthy subjects in Savannah. I was so there.

On July 13, GHS held its Introduction To Genealogical Research class. Now, while I am certainly interested in researching the two lines of my own family that go back to Savannah during her birth, I also wanted to learn the resources and protocols of this marvelous library. So off I went to Hodgson Hall on Whitaker Street to explore this delightful place.

If you love history, live in the area (and by “in the area” I mean on the planet) and have not visited Hodgson Hall, I urge you to do so. The hall was built in 1875 for the express purpose of housing the Georgia Historical Society which by that time was thirty-six years old already. So the building has never been anything but a research library. And what a library it is! It is pure enchantment to simply walk along and look at the titles on the shelves. Being a little ADD myself, it’s easy to forget why I am there in the first place when I see such delightful titles as I pass the shelves in search of a specific book. I have learned to just keep my head down and go straight to the book I need, otherwise it’s too easy to lose myself as I give in to the temptation to pull wonderful volumes and forget why I am there in the first place.

I have attended several other really great classes at GHS since then, and next week will be there for two classes: Oral History, Getting Started and Oral History, It's Recorded, Now What? These will be wonderful classes, I am sure.

Across from Hodgson Hall is the beautiful Forsyth Park, with its neat walkways, abundant wildlife, splendid fountain and weathered wooden benches that beg a tired visitor to sit a spell and just take in the magic. It's a great place to stroll and think about what you've learned at the magnificent Hodgson Hall. The fountain's comforting splashing punctuates the birdsong and the ancient live oaks with their dripping Spanish moss provide lovely shade – and if you listen, maybe a sweet song or two.