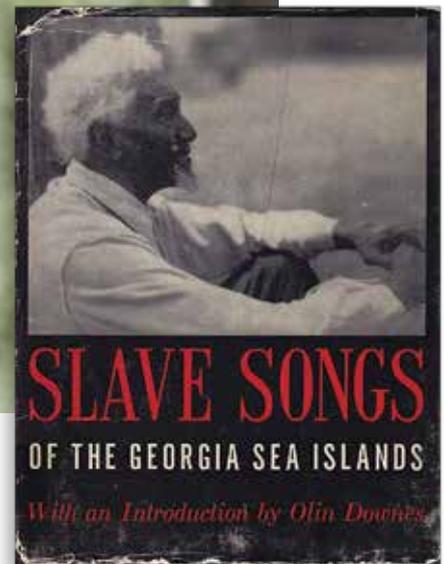




## Julia Armstrong: A Link to Traditional Sea Island Songs



**A**s we celebrate Black History Month this February, we reflect on one of the nation's landmark collections of African American songs and the St. Simons Island native who inspired the publication – Julia Proctor Armstrong.

*Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands*, compiled by Lydia Parrish, was published in 1942. Parrish was a resident of New Hampshire and the wife of noted artist Maxfield Parrish. Around 1910, to escape the cold weather, Parrish began spending winters on St. Simons, where she met Julia Armstrong. While working as the Parrish's cook, Armstrong introduced Parrish to singers of traditional

Gullah-Geechee songs, handed down from the enslaved workers of Coastal Georgia's 19th century cotton and rice plantations. Inspired by the music, and with Armstrong's help, Parrish identified, collected and researched these songs over the next twenty-five years, culminating in the publication of *Slave Songs*.

Julia Armstrong's contribution to the preservation of traditional songs was also recognized by renowned African American linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner. He recorded her performance of a song with African roots during his trip to Coastal Georgia in the 1930s. A pioneering linguist, Dr. Turner traced and documented the African sources of the Gullah-Geechee language and songs.

This month's image of Julia Armstrong is from a hand-colored glass lantern slide in the Society's Margaret Davis Cate Collection. Also shown is the original dust jacket of *Slave Songs*, which features a photograph of Liverpool Hazzard, who began life as a slave on the Butler Island Plantation near Darien.

Our monthly images on this page are from the vast archives of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society. The Society's mission includes the "administration, restoration and maintenance of historic facilities and resources ... preserved as a living part of the historical and cultural foundations of our coastal community." Society facilities include the St. Simons Lighthouse and Museum, the A.W. Jones Heritage Center, and the Maritime Center (formerly the U.S. Coast Guard Station). To learn more about the Society, its diverse programs, and the benefits of Society membership, please call (912) 638.4666, or visit [www.saintsimonslighthouse.org](http://www.saintsimonslighthouse.org).