

Q & A from Kimberly Hamlin Plenary on June 16, 2020

1. Thank you for your wonderful plenary. My question is this - do you have a copy of the entire letter from the Mississippi congressman (Sorry I didn't note his name) to HHG regarding black voter suppression tactics being used at that time in the south and if so would you share it?

KH: yes, I have all of their correspondence. It is from the John Sharp Williams Collection, Library of Congress. This particular letter is in box 33. JSW to HHG, Jan. 21, 1918.

2. Did you find any references to Helen Hamilton Gardener in any archives or newspapers in localities from HHG's "previous life" as Alice Chenoweth? Did any of them seem to "know" that HHG was the same as the disgraced Alice Chenoweth?

KH: yes, the digitized local OH newspapers have lots of reference to Alice Chenoweth (sometimes spelled Chenowith). Later, around 1890, HHG explains that she was Alice Chenoweth (and draws heavily on her "Chenoweth of Virginia" clout) but she never mentions the affair. She says she changed her name to not draw attention to her Chenoweth heritage, which really makes no sense. No one ever wrote in print that HHG was the Alice Chenoweth who had been disgraced back in Sandusky. She remained friends with people in Sandusky, and later in her life the Sandusky Daily Register profiled her and mentioned how she had once lived in Sandusky but said nothing about the affair that had led to her ouster.

3. Often when working with students on research projects, they underestimate the time it takes to visit archives (in person or digital) and go through the materials. Your research process is a great example for them. For their reference, how long did the research process take you? Do you start writing while conducting your archival work?

KH: I wrote some about HHG in my first book, but if you don't count that research, I researched this book in fits and starts from 2014-2017 (while teaching, serving as director of the American Studies program, etc). Then I went on research leave 2017-2018 and researched full time. I wrote a little while researched but mostly researched first, compiled my research, poured over it, and then started writing.

4. Thank you for a great presentation on a very interesting woman! Also thank you SOA for hosting this!

KH: my pleasure! I love SOA. Thank you all for having me!