The Documentation of Lawson's Pond Plantation and the Craftsmanship Employed in Upper St. John's Parish, Berkeley County, South Carolina

Jeremy Eugene Bradham

Clemson University

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/historic_pres

Part of the Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons

Recommended Citation
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/historic_pres/13

This Terminal Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Non-thesis final projects at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Science in Historic Preservation Terminal Projects by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
THE DOCUMENTATION OF LAWSON'S POND PLANTATION AND THE
CRAFTSMANSHIP EMPLOYED IN UPPER ST. JOHN'S PARISH,
BERKELEY COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

A Professional Project
Presented to
the Graduate Schools of
Clemson University
and
the College of Charleston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Historic Preservation

by
Jeremy Eugene Bradham
May 2009

Accepted by:
Jonathan H. Poston, Committee Chair
Ashley Robbins Wilson
Ralph C. Muldrow
Robert D. Russell, Jr., Ph.D.
ABSTRACT

The state of South Carolina has a rich heritage and history that has received a large amount of scholarly attention in recent years, yet there are still aspects of the state’s history that are relatively obscure, having passed away with the earlier generations, leaving questions with only a few answers. One such region lies to the northwest of Charleston, South Carolina in Upper St. John’s Parish in Berkeley County. Today, much of the land that once served as thriving cotton fields are covered by the waters of Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie. The structures built by these early nineteenth century planters possessed a unique form of architectural style and detail that developed and became characteristic of the plantations built between the Cooper and Santee Rivers. One such plantation, Lawson’s Pond, is one of the last remaining examples of this early form of architectural style containing decorative gouge work that was likely crafted by the hands of skilled slaves within the region.

This work examines the history of the region of St. John’s Berkeley within the context in which these structures were built, offering an overview of the carpentry trade with specific attention to gouge work and the tools and skills involved. Once a basic understanding of the subject matter has been obtained, the focus can then be shifted to the structures themselves in reference to particular elements and details found at each location in order to understand the movement of craftsman within the region. The goal of this project was to gain knowledge of this region’s history through the documentation of Lawson’s Pond, placing it within the context of its contemporaries, and using this information to offer a glimpse into a significant portion of South Carolina’s past.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, this project would not have been possible without the help and direction of David Hoffman and Mrs. Eliza Spiers Couturier. Endless hours were spent in the presence of both of these individuals, whom I have had the fortune of learning from over the past year. David provided me with the unique opportunity to participate in such an endeavor, and I thank Mrs. Couturier for generously opening up her home on numerous occasions and sharing her family’s wonderful history with me. I am forever grateful for the time that both individuals have invested in my life.

I wish to thank my professors Jonathon Poston and Ashley Robbins Wilson for continued encouragement and support throughout the course of this project as it developed. I would also like to thank Carol Hughes for opening her home and sharing with me portions of White Hall that have remained in her family over the years. The same can be said for Robert Leath and those at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Old Salem, NC for their aid in my research. The assistance these individuals provided is invaluable.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, who has offered unrelenting encouragement throughout the course of this project. They have continued to support me over the years and have challenged me to take on any task put before me. Thank you to everyone who had a hand in this project, whether through research or words of encouragement. Your efforts made this work possible, and I am indebted to each and every one of you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HISTORY OF ST. JOHN’S PARISH</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Generation of Planter</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santee Canal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of Cotton</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santee Cooper Hydroelectric and Navigation Project</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ARCHITECTURAL PLAN OF THE REGION</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. LAWSON’S POND</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural Description</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. GOUGE WORK</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry Trade</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rocks</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophir</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loch Dhu</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueford</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawson’s Pond</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>White Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Somerset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>OTHER EXAMPLES OF GOUGE WORK IN THE SOUTH CAROLINA LOWCOUNTRY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>PHOTOGRAPHS OF LAWSON’S POND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>PLANTATION PLATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>MEASURED DRAWINGS OF LAWSON’S POND</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES | 149
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Modern-day map of South Carolina</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map of Berkeley and Parts of Charleston and Dorchester Counties, SC</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Map Showing the Santee-Cooper Project South of Santee River, Showing the Plantations Proposed to be Flooded in the Santee Reservoir and Pinopolis Reservoir</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Plat of Lawson’s Pond</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Remnants of the Old Santee Canal</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Santee Canal Connecting the Santee and Cooper Rivers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Porcher Embankment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cotton Distribution in South Carolina</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Santee Cooper Project</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Santee Cooper Project</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Structure being dismantled for the Santee Cooper Project</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chimney of dismantled structure in the Santee River Basin</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Abandoned structure in the Santee River Basin</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Cleared Timber in the Santee River Basin</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Belvidere, Between 1795 and 1803</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Belvidere Plan</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Eutaw, 1808</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Eutaw Plan</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Rocks, 1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The Rocks Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Loch Dhu, Between 1812-1816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Loch Dhu Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Springfield, 1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Springfield Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ophir, 1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Ophir Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Somerset, 1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Somerset Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>White Hall, Between 1822 and 1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>White Hall Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Lawson’s Pond, Infrared aerial photograph showing parallel lines in the pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Lawson’s Pond, Between 1818 and 1823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Lawson’s Pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Plat of Lawson’s Pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Plat of Lawson’s Pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Examples of gouges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Examples of gouges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Early nineteenth century carpenter’s tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Early nineteenth century carpenter's tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Plantation Map of St. John's and St. Stephen's Parishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>The Rocks, Southeast Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>The Rocks, Overmantel in Southeast Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Loch Dhu, Between 1812-1816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Ophir, Southeast Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Loch Dhu, Mantle in Southwest Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Loch Dhu, Southwest Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Springfield Front Porch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Springfield, Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Springfield, Mantel in Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Springfield, Cornice in Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Blueford, Mantel in Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Blueford, Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Lawson's Pond Front Porch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Lawson's Pond, Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Lawson's Pond, Window Entablature and Cornice in Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Lawson's Pond, Exterior Front Doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Lawson's Pond, Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Lawson's Pond, Front Door in Drawing Room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Lawson’s Pond, Entablature in Stair Landing</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Lawson’s Pond, Entablature in Stair Landing</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Lawson’s Pond, Entablature in Stair Landing and Cornice in Hallway</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>White Hall, Dining Room</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>White Hall, Mantel in Dining Room</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>White Hall, Mantel</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>White Hall, Front Door</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>White Hall, Drawing Room</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>White Hall, Drawing Room</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>White Hall, Drawing Room</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>White Hall, Mantel in Drawing Room</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>White Hall, Cornice in Drawing Room</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Somerset, Mantel</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Marshlands, 1810, Charleston Neck, Charleston, South Carolina</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>301 East Bay Street, Charleston, South Carolina</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>301 East Bay Street, Charleston, South Carolina, Front Door</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>301 East Bay Street, Charleston, South Carolina, Front Door</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>301 East Bay Street, Charleston, South Carolina, Detail of Front Door</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Following the avenue of pine trees up a long and narrow dirt road, one approaches the old plantation, faded and weathered with time. Lawson's Pond stands as one of the last remaining examples of plantation houses that once dotted the countryside in the region of St. John's Parish in Berkeley County, just a little more than sixty miles northwest of Charleston, South Carolina. The building itself is architecturally significant, as it typifies the regional plan that developed by the early nineteenth century and contains elements of gouge work that are unique to its somewhat isolated region.

The families who built these plantations formed communities and built summer villages, most of which have vanished with little evidence left behind. A brief survey was conducted on a select few buildings of the region in 1939 when the Santee-Cooper Project proposed flooding the majority of land. The buildings still remaining at that time were all but entirely destroyed from the record, with only a select few photographs and manuscripts as evidence of their existence. These photographs, compared with the evidence found at Lawson's Pond, paint a picture of a region and culture that otherwise would have been a passing memory in the minds of the descendents. It is in these architectural details, specifically through the forms of gouge work implemented in this region, that a study of the skilled artisans employed in the early nineteenth century can be executed. It is therefore essential to document the architecture of Lawson's Pond and treat the structure as if it too would be destroyed in the near future, and in the process, offer insight into the local form of gouge work found in many of these early structures.
The region under examination must be understood within an historical context before attempting to examine a particular period in time within the region's lengthy history. Who built these plantations in St. John's Parish and how did they first arrive there? Why did they build their houses in the style and manner in which they did? What do the architectural details of these early structures reveal about the builders and owners, and can connections be made between structures built within one particular period in time? These questions have remained relatively unanswered for years, almost as if the answers themselves lay at the bottom of the lakes, long forgotten by the descendants of the planters that built these grand structures. It is the purpose of this work to examine, in detail, the architecture of these structures, with specific respect to the unique form of gouge work found within the region. Lawson's Pond serves as an extraordinary artifact in situ, by which nearby structures that no longer remain may be analyzed and judged accordingly.
Figure 1. Modern-day map of South Carolina (www.geology.com)
Figure 2. Map of Berkeley and Parts of Charleston and Dorchester Counties, SC (Compiled by J. P. Gaillard, 1900-1962)

1) Charleston  2) St. John's Berkeley Parish  
3) St. Stephen's Berkeley Parish
Figure 3. Map Showing the Santee-Cooper Project South of Santee River, Showing the Plantations Proposed to be Flooded in the Santee Reservoir and Pinopolis Reservoir (Compiled by J. P. Gaillard, 5/1/1942)

1) Belvidere  2) Eutaw  3) The Rocks  4) Loch Dhu  
5) Springfield  6) Ophir  7) Somerset  8) White Hall  
9) Lawson's Pond
CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF ST. JOHN’S PARISH

The area known today as St. John’s Parish in Berkeley County, South Carolina was formed by an act passed by the Carolina General Assembly on September 30, 1706, dividing the province of Carolina into parishes. Earlier, in 1682, the Lords Proprietors had divided the province into three counties named Berkly, Craven, and Colleton, with a fourth, Granville, added in 1685.1 The Church Act of 1706 divided Berkeley County into six parishes, with St. John consisting of the land on the western branch of the Cooper River. The area was also referred to as St. John’s Parish in Craven County, due to its close proximity to the boundary line. St. John’s was the largest of the ten original parishes in Carolina, spanning forty to fifty miles from one end to the other, and was eventually subdivided into lower, middle, and upper St. John’s. This area was settled by many English and French Huguenot families, first settling in Charleston and moving northward toward the Santee River and establishing settlements around there. According to H. R. Dwight in his *High Lights of Berkeley County*, by the year 1707, there were 610 whites in the parish of St. John’s Berkeley.2

The presence of a significant number of French Huguenot families can be attributed to events occurring in France during the same period. The Edict of Nantes, issued in 1598 by Henry IV, provided religious toleration and extended rights to Calvinist Protestants known as Huguenots. Less than a century later in 1685, under the reign of

---

1 There were different variations in the spelling of Berkeley County in the eighteenth century
Louis XIV, the edict was revoked, making Protestantism illegal, and forcing the Huguenots to either convert to Catholicism or flee the country. Many left for England and the American colonies, with a large number concentrated in Charleston and the surrounding areas in the following years.

One of these Huguenot families that settled in this section of Berkeley County was the Porcher family, a name that appears frequently by the early nineteenth century. A list from 1696 was discovered in some old papers belonging to Henry De St. Julien of St. John’s Berkeley, likely serving as an application for naturalization. On this list is found the name of Isaac Porcher of St. Severe, a province of Berry, France. Isaac and his wife Claude de Cherigny left France before the revocation and emigrated to Carolina, first traveling to England before coming across the Atlantic. ³ In 1696, Isaac obtained a land grant of 150 acres in St. James Parish near Goose Creek, and he became a successful planter, stock raiser, and political leader. Isaac’s son Peter moved from St. James to St. John’s, and his son Philip Porcher (1731-1801) became a successful planter, paying taxes on more than $585,000 worth of assets. ⁴ Philip was also responsible for constructing a house at 19 Archdale Street in Charleston in the year 1756, made from the black cypress timbers found on his plantation known as Old Field. He was active in establishing St. Stephen’s Parish, which was taken from St. James Santee by an act of the South Carolina General Assembly in 1754. The three sons of Philip, Samuel, Peter, and Philip Jr., all became successful planters in the region of St. Stephen’s.

⁴ Ibid, 81.
A New Generation of Planter

Plantations at this time were producing rice and indigo, but the American Revolution changed the fortunes of the planters of St. John’s Berkeley, and ultimately changed the future of the area. When the first United States census was taken in 1790, it revealed that there were 2,191 whites, 125 free Negroes, and 16,759 slaves in the parishes of Berkeley County, totaling 19,075. The war had severely crippled the planters, with many plantations having been burned at the hands of the British, halting even the production of basic provisions. Samuel Dubose, in his Reminiscences of St. Stephen’s Parish, stated the following: “Ruin stared many in the face. Besides, with the exception of rice the country had no staple crop; for since the bounty, which as colonists they had enjoyed on the export of indigo and naval stores, had been discontinued, these products ceased to have any value, and negroes fell in price.”5 Dubose further noted the case of Milford Plantation, owned by Samuel Cordes, which was abandoned as worthless in the years following the war. Rice, while productive in other areas after the war, was a difficult venture, as freshets continuously destroyed rice crops in the area around the Santee River. Higher lands away from the swamps provided an outlet and became the desire of planters after the Revolution. In his Address to the Black Oak Agricultural Society in 1858, Dubose noted the following:

The disastrous ten years which preceded the introduction of cotton as a market crop involved him [Peter Gaillard], as it did others, in debt and distress. His record book, kept with minute accuracy, states the fact, that in one of those years the entire crop saved from one of those freshets was a few baskets of unmatured

corn...A family, and upwards of one hundred slaves, had to be sustained without money; credit had to be obtained from the more fortunate who planted on the Wateree or Congaree.⁶

**Santee Canal**

The first decade after the war was defined by continual hardships for the struggling planter class along the Santee, but the construction of the Santee Canal began in 1792 and was completed in 1800, offering a transportation and trade route to transfer goods to and from Charleston. There had been a desire for some time to have a direct route by water from Charleston to Columbia, the newly established capital of South Carolina. This new massive project provided an opportunity for the planters to hire out their slaves for construction of the canal, which at times numbered more than one thousand workers. Lotteries were used to raise money for the project, which would connect the Santee and Cooper Rivers through a series of locks from Greenland Swamp on the Santee to Biggin Swamp on the Cooper, as seen in Robert Mills’ map in 1825 (Figure 6). The first of these lotteries was announced on April 10, 1795: “The Santee Canal will be of eminent advantage to the planters, merchants and mechanics, and to the inhabitant of both the upper and low country...those who cultivate the inland parts of the state will receive higher prices than they ever hitherto had, for the fruits of their industry.”⁷ The canal, consisting of thirteen locks constructed of stone and brick, was twenty-two miles long, thirty-five feet wide at water level, and a minimum of four feet deep (Figure 5). It was divided into three sections, the first ascending thirty-four feet for

---


two and a half miles, the second being level for five miles, and the third descending sixty-nine feet in fourteen and a half miles. Toll receivers were located at Lock No. 2 near the Santee River and Lock No. 10 near the Cooper River, which would bring a substantial amount of revenue into the state and pay for the $750,000 project. The new canal bolstered prosperity around the Santee and began to change the fortunes of the planters, who became part of a new generation of planters that sought fortune in the production of cotton.

Figure 5. Remnants of the Old Santee Canal (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 6. Santee Canal Connecting the Santee and Cooper Rivers (Robert Mills)
The process of hiring out slaves for the Santee Canal project allowed the planters to experiment with cotton, as they were relieved of the care of their slaves during the contract period. Referred to as Santee long cotton, the region of St. John's and St. Stephen's Parishes became a fertile area for its cultivation. While grown inland, the long staple cotton closely resembled the successful Sea Island cotton produced on the barrier islands of the South Carolina and Georgia coast. The geography of the region ultimately led to the success of such an endeavor, more than thirty miles from any coastline. Henry William Ravenel of Pooshee Plantation in St. Stephen's Parish stated the following in 1843:

The region of the Santee Long Cotton commences at the head of the tide-water on Cooper River, extends across the country to the Santee River, and above, as high as Vance's Ferry [in today's Orangeburg Country]. Within these limits are embraced the head-waters of the Cooper River, which extend to within a few miles of the Santee, intersecting the country in different directions, and forming along their courses large swamps, formerly cultivated in rice, but abandoned after the introduction of cotton, for the more profitable cultivation of the highland. In the neighborhood of these streams are some of the best cotton lands. In their virgin state, they contain a growth of oak, dogwood, etc. generally intermixed with the short-leaf pine, indicating the proximity of lime-stone to the surface. They are well adapted to the cultivation of the black-seed cotton, and comprise the principle portion of the Santee cotton-lands.

In 1858, Samuel Dubose stated, “Quantity and not quality was the aim in view; consequently, heavier yields were obtained from our lands.” As seen with the account of Captain James Sinkler of Belvidere, the focus was to obtain the highest yield per acre, and scientific experimentation became common among the planters. According to

---

8 Maxwell Clayton Orvin, *Historic Berkeley County, South Carolina, 1671-1900* (M. C. Orvin, 1973), 149.
10 Ibid.
Richard Dwight Porcher, “Experiments were conducted in which marl or plaster of Paris were applied to fields; other fields were used as control and no marl or plaster of Paris was added. Production results from the two areas were carefully recorded by the [Black Oak Agricultural] society and made available to planters in the area.”

Professor Frederick A. Porcher in 1852 asserted that long staple cotton was first cultivated in St. John’s Berkeley County in 1793 by General William Moultrie on his Northampton Plantation, but it appears that his experiments on 150 acres only ended in failure. The following year, Captain Peter Gaillard attempted to plant cotton on his recently purchased plantation, The Rocks. Gaillard found the soil to be congenial to the cultivation of long-staple cotton. Samuel Dubose asserts that Gaillard’s first attempt of planting more than one-hundred acres ended in failure, but the ensuing years proved quite successful. The crop of 1799 and 1800 extricated him from debt, and more than twenty years later, Gaillard was able to divide his lands and slaves among eight children. Captain James Sinkler of Belvidere Plantation planted three-hundred acres, reaping two-hundred and sixteen pounds per acre, more than double that of the previous decades when the process had been slow and uncertain. The aid of the cotton gin, invented by Eli Whitney in 1794, removed any doubts about the future and success of cotton in the South Carolina Lowcountry, and no other agricultural crop would rise to the level of its success.

A worthy endeavor that demonstrates the ingenuity, wealth, and success of these planters was the construction of an embankment on the south side of the Santee River by Major Samuel Porcher of Mexico Plantation. As noted earlier, freshets from the Santee continually flooded agricultural fields, often rendering them useless. In 1817, Major Porcher began construction of an embankment that would ultimately spread four and a quarter miles, being between thirty and fifty feet wide at the base and nine to thirteen feet in height (Figure 7). This ambitious undertaking allowed the fields of Major Porcher to be cultivated free of flooding and was considered one of the greatest private enterprises in the south at that time.

Cotton thus became the staple crop of the region by the year 1800, forging a new generation of planter who began moving from St. Stephen’s to St. John’s Parish in the early years of the nineteenth century (Figure 8). Frederick Porcher noted the following:

Before the introduction of the cotton culture, the lands of (St. John’s) Parish were held in very little esteem. Mr. Philip Porcher had four sons, to whom he left plantations, and he was accustomed to lament the lot of him who had only a place in St. John’s. That was the only son who was not compelled to quit his patrimony. The three others, who were left to the inheritance of the Santee lands, were all obliged to abandon them, and seek in St. John’s the means of making cotton. 14

Ironically, the wealth obtained on St. John’s plantations far surpassed those of their fathers in St. Stephen’s. The planters of the eighteenth century began buying large tracts of land and establishing plantations to the west in St. John’s Berkeley, willing these estates to their children. Most of these families were connected through marriage, with such names including Gaillard, Palmer, Porcher, Sinkler, and Cain.

Successful plantations and health concerns together led to the development of a series of summer communities around St. John’s Parish. It was a common practice of the eighteenth century for Lowcountry planters to have homes in Charleston during the winter months, but the distance of nearly sixty miles from the city led to the development of pineland villages in and around these parishes by the names of Pinopolis and Pineville. Intermittent fevers, more than likely yellow fever, appear to have occurred annually during the autumn months, and were frequently fatal, particularly in St. Stephen’s Parish and the lands south of the Santee. Professor Porcher stated in 1852, “Nature had kindly furnished an asylum wherein the ague-stricken patient might breathe in safely, recover from his malady, and enjoy the blessing of health, both of mind and of body. This asylum is the pine land. Here is enjoyed an exemption from intermittent fevers.”15 Porcher further noted that it was the search for better health that led to the settlement of Pineville. Captain Sinkler of Belvidere Plantation took note of this and built a home in the pine land in June of 1793 and moved his family and slaves there for the summer months. It was later observed in November that he and his family were in good health on their return to Belvidere. Professor Porcher stated, “It had been observed that those persons who lived in the pine lands were usually exempt from those distressing autumnal intermittent fevers,” and in 1794, John Palmer, Peter Gaillard, John Cordes, Samuel Porcher, Peter Porcher, and Philip Porcher all built houses in close proximity to one another in the pine land, thus establishing the village of Pineville, the oldest settlement of its kind in the

---

south. This settlement became the summer residence of the planters of St. Stephen’s and St. John’s Parishes, isolated with its significant distance from Charleston. This isolation led to the development and flourishing of a localized craft employed in a large number of these plantations, which will receive further review shortly.

Figure 7. Porcher Embankment (United States Department of Interior, Geological Survey, Chicora Quadrangle, 1921)

16 Ibid, 117.
Figure 8. Cotton Distribution in South Carolina (Richard Dwight Porcher and Sarah Fick)
Santee Cooper Hydroelectric and Navigation Project

The completion of the railroad between Charleston and Columbia in 1840 coupled with severe droughts in the 1820s and 1830s ultimately led to the Santee canal’s abandonment in 1850 when its charter was revoked. The desire to link the two parts of the state through a waterway system was renewed a century later in the late 1920s through a businessman, T. C. Williams of Columbia. As owner of the Columbia Railway and Navigation Company, he envisioned carving out two massive lakes and using a system of navigation locks to encourage passage between Charleston and Columbia by water once again, but the Great Depression halted any progress. In 1933, the South Carolina legislature proposed that the project be federally funded, stating that it would bring electricity to the rural areas of the state, which were some of the last in the entire United States to receive electricity. Although there were differences of opinion and lawsuits were filed to try and halt the project, the South Carolina legislature authorized the project in 1934 with the creation of the South Carolina Public Service Authority, which came to be known as Santee Cooper. The Santee Cooper Hydroelectric and Navigation Project began in April of 1939 and continued for twenty-seven months.

It was the largest land-clearing project in United States history, covering more than 177,000 acres of swamp and timberland (Figure 9). Entire communities had to be relocated, graves reinterred, and houses disassembled and sold in pieces to prepare the area for impoundment. (Figure 12). The United States Department of the Interior sent architect Thomas T. Waterman to conduct an architectural assessment of the proposed region that would be affected by the flooding. He stated in his concluding remarks, “It is
naturally a matter of regret that the inundation of the two areas should cause the loss of so many early buildings. It is fortunate, on the other hand, that the structures, with few exceptions, are not of major historical or architectural importance." The two buildings specifically mentioned that were worthy of preservation over all others in the region were Hanover Plantation and The Rocks, both of which were relocated from their original site. Hanover was disassembled and reassembled at Clemson University and the Rocks Plantation was moved less than one mile away, only to be lost to a fire in the early 1990s.

The project provided jobs for workers, brought electricity to the Lowcountry, and continues today to serve as a recreational destination for the state’s citizens. Lake Marion contains 116,600 acres and Lake Moultrie 60,400 acres, each connected by a seven-mile diversion canal. When the initial project had been debated, a Greenville journalist by the name of Harry Ashmore wrote the following:

"Today thousands of acres of the South Carolina Lowcountry, once fertile fields and the foundations of fortunes and culture, lie idle and forgotten save perhaps by a few sportsmen, by waterfowl and swamp game... The march of progress and civilization has left in its wake decaying mansions, specters now of a more glorious day, silent and vacant in their watch over the lands where once their masters reaped crops of large returns of indigo and rice."

---


Figure 9. Santee Cooper Project (Poe Family Papers)

Figure 10. Santee Cooper Project (Poe Family Papers)
Figure 11. Structure being dismantled for the Santee Cooper Project (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 12. Chimney of dismantled structure in the Santee River Basin (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 13. Abandoned structure in the Santee River Basin (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 14. Cleared Timber in the Santee River Basin (Photo: Library of Congress)
CHAPTER THREE

ARCHITECTURAL PLAN OF THE REGION

By the twentieth century, there were no remaining structures in the region of St. John’s Berkeley that predated the American Revolution, with the exception of Hanover, built in 1716. Architectural historian Mills Lane noted the following concerning the architecture found in St. John’s Parish: “In isolated communities, everyone with money and a taste for fine building knew and copied the homes of their relatives and neighbors.”19 A regionalized architectural form, as well as a presence of intricate ornamental detail, set these buildings apart from others in the South Carolina Lowcountry. In his report on the architecture of the region in 1939, architect Thomas Waterman discussed the difficulties with the earlier plan of the region, noting that it warped the fenestration, throwing the pair of doors off-center, and the staircase was only accessible through one of the front rooms.20 This was corrected in later plans by having a pair of equal-size drawing rooms in the front with a door between each room and a pair of doors, one from each room, leading to the front porch, in what Waterman classified as the “Santee Group” of plantation houses. This new plan used large wide porches for adapting to the humid climate, which may have led to the doubling of the doors, as porches had only previously been used as a shelter to the entrance door. Waterman further noted that the formality of the hall, as seen in plantation houses and those in Charleston of the eighteenth century, all but diminished. The plan provided cross

---

20 Waterman, 12.
ventilation and preserved the privacy of the front rooms with the use of the stair hall as a separate unit entered through a rear door. The development of this new plan coincided with the arrival of architectural details in the form of carved wood. The context in which these plantations are placed must be understood in order to begin to examine the execution of their craftsmanship in a more intimate and in-depth manner.

The earliest plantation house built by this new generation of cotton planter was Belvidere, built by Captain James Sinkler between 1795 and 1803 near Eutaw Springs (Figure 15). Waterman, after conducting an architectural analysis of the building, concluded that it was built in 1795, but Anne Sinkler Fishburne, whose family resided at Belvidere, asserted that it was constructed in 1803.\textsuperscript{21} Captain Sinkler, as previously mentioned, was one of the first planters to successfully plant cotton in the region and was one of the founders of the village of Pineville. Acknowledgement of this plan is essential in understanding later houses within this area. The structure consisted of wood framing on an open-brick foundation, two-stories high, with a gabled roof. The plan was asymmetric with unequal rooms in front and a central hallway, flanked by two rooms in the rear of the house. The house was simple in ornamentation, but contained double doors with a wide front porch, which became a common feature in many houses of the region.

Another plantation within the Santee type architectural plan was Eutaw, built by the son of James Sinkler, William, in 1808 (Figure 17). Waterman declared that Eutaw was the “alpha and omega” of the architecture of the region, by betraying “traditional features such as the asymmetric plan and the utilization of roof space for bedrooms, with

\textsuperscript{21} Anne Sinkler Fishburne, \textit{Belvidere} (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1949), 23.
The piazza was raised on an open arcade, a feature initially unique to the region, but common in later houses. The piazza, combined with a low-spreading roof, was reminiscent of a Carolina-Caribbean style building, and included two flanking rooms on each side of the house, often seen in later additions to houses of the region. The structure itself contains little to no ornamentation compared to surrounding structures.

Captain Peter Gaillard, noted previously for his efforts on establishing cotton as a profitable crop in the region, built his plantation house in 1805, naming it The Rocks (Figure 19). Professor Porcher stated the following regarding The Rocks: "This house was a model of excellence, neatness, and comfort...the Rocks became a standard by which all other homesteads were judged. It was possible to equal the Rocks, but to surpass it was impossible." Gaillard's plantation journal reports that building was commenced in 1803 and completed in 1805, which establishes a general time frame for the construction of buildings of a similar scale and plan within the region. Waterman asserted that the Rocks was architecturally the finest in the Santee group and was a "culmination of the architectural development of the region." The house was two full stories high, included a hipped roof, and sat on a high brick basement. The woodwork, while simple compared to other plantations, was fine and elegant, especially in the mantels. Gaillard's plantation journal reveals that the mantels were ordered from the

---

22 Waterman, 13.
24 Gaillard Family, Gaillard Family Papers, 1758-1901, Available at the South Carolina Historical Society.
25 Waterman, 17.
north, suggesting Rhode Island as their possible source. The woodwork, while still relatively simple, gives this plantation distinction from its predecessors.

Loch Dhu, built between 1812 and 1816 by Robert Kirk, possessed fairly simple but decorative trim (Figure 21). The drawing rooms of the house contained "gouged and carved festoons and sunbursts in the friezes of the mantelss and main cornices," but were more conservative and restrained than other houses in the region.²⁶

Springfield plantation was built in 1818 by Joseph Palmer and is regarded as having some of the finest woodwork in the Lowcountry (Figure 23). According to Joseph Palmer's account book, work on the house commenced on October 20, 1817 and was completed June 17, 1818. It consisted of the same symmetrical plan on a high brick basement, but with a gable roof. The lower windows contained "decorative frames of pilaster strips and entablatures," which will be visited at later time.²⁷ Waterman stated, "The woodwork of the interior possesses elaborately gouged, reeded, and bored ornament reaching its climax in two huge frontispiece mantels," with a combination of fluting, sunbursts of varying sizes, dentils, and rope mouldings.²⁸ While the finest example of gouge work and wood carving in the area, strikingly similar elements can be found in a select few other plantations of the area and will be discussed in a later chapter.

There are two plantations in the Pinopolis vicinity to the southeast of the region previously under discussion that employ the same floor plan as those previously discussed. Ophir Plantation (Figure 25) was built around 1810 by Colonel Thomas

²⁶ Waterman, 21.
²⁷ Ibid.
²⁸ Ibid, 22.
Porcher and Somerset Plantation (Figure 27) in 1827 by William Cain. Both houses were two stories high, built over a high brick basement and possessed a gable roof. The interior of Ophir contained elaborately carved woodwork, with the mantels possessing the best examples of gouged and carved work in the Pinopolis region. Waterman noted, "The mantel cornices have the same dentils as seen at Springfield, but there are erect oval sunbursts in the pilaster blocks and horizontal sunbursts in the key block, with quarter sunbursts filling each corner of the panels. The intervening spaces of the friezes are filled with double festoons of triple garlands of gouging." Waterman further concluded, "though some of the elements of the design may seem maladroit, they are the result of native solutions for native problems."

Colonel Thomas Porcher of Ophir Plantation built White Hall between 1822 and 1824 for his son Thomas (Figure 29). Thomas Waterman placed this plantation within the Pinopolis region style of architecture, which displays a two-room deep plan with a central hallway. This structure, although near Pinopolis, contained architectural details in the same fashion as those previously listed. The woodwork was of "considerable elaboration and, while employing many of the motives of Springfield, is in better taste and more restrained." The drawing room, like that of Ophir, possessed some of the "finest carved woodwork of the region, and is undoubtedly by the same craftsman."

29 Waterman, 24-25.
Figure 15. Belvidere, Between 1795 and 1803 (Photo: Douglas W. Bostick)

Figure 16. Belvidere Plan (Thomas Waterman, Library of Congress)
Figure 17. Eutaw, 1808 (Photo: Berkeley County Historical Society)

Figure 18. Eutaw Plan (Thomas Waterman, Library of Congress)
Figure 19. The Rocks, 1805 (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 20. The Rocks Plan (Thomas Waterman, Library of Congress)
Figure 21. Loch Dhu, Between 1812-1816 (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 22. Loch Dhu Plan (Thomas Waterman, Library of Congress)
Figure 23. Springfield, 1818 (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 24. Springfield Plan (Thomas Waterman, Library of Congress)
Figure 25. Ophir, 1810 (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 26. Ophir Plan (Thomas Waterman, Library of Congress)
Figure 27. Somerset, 1827 (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 28. Somerset Plan (Thomas Waterman, Library of Congress)
Figure 29. White Hall, Between 1822 and 1824 (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 30. White Hall Plan (Thomas Waterman, Library of Congress)
CHAPTER FOUR

LAWSON’S POND

History

Philip Porcher II (1762-1817), a wealthy planter of St. Stephen’s Parish, maintained his residence at his plantation known as Old Field, inherited from his father Philip Porcher (1731-1801). Like most planters of the period, he began purchasing tracts of land to the west in St. John’s Parish. One tract, known as Lawson’s Pond, was purchased in the early nineteenth century when cotton became a profitable venture for the planters in the region. When Philip died in 1818, an inventory was taken of his property at Old Field, totaling $76,403 in assets. An inventory was also taken at his plantation Lawson’s Pond, revealing that this was a working plantation at the time of Philip’s death. A large number of slaves and livestock are listed in the inventory, bringing the value of the plantation to $42,908. Philip’s will reveals that he gave his St. Stephen’s lands to his other two sons, with Tibbecutlaw given to his son Philip, Old Field to Thomas Cordes, and Lawson’s Pond to Charles Cordes Porcher. Thomas Cordes also inherited his father’s house in Pineville as well as another plantation called Lane and Rocks in St. Stephen’s. The will states the following: “I give and devise unto my Son Charles Cordes Porcher his heirs and Assigns forever, all that my plantation or tract of land in Saint

33 Inventory and Appraisement of the Personal Estate of the late Philip Porcher Esq. taken at the Old Field Plantation in St. Stephen’s Parish, May 6, 1818, Available at the South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.

34 Inventory and Appraisement of the Personal Estate of the late Philip Porcher Esquire of St. Stephen’s taken at the Plantation Lawson’s Pond, May 5, 1818, Available at the South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.
John’s Parish, known by the name of Lawson’s Pond, containing One thousand and forty Acres, more or less, and which I purchased as late the property of William Find Esq.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Figure 31.} Lawson’s Pond, Infrared aerial photograph showing parallel lines in the pond, likely a result from rice or indigo cultivation prior to cotton (Photo Courtesy of Eliza Spiers Couturier)

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Will of Phillip Porcher}, 1818, Charleston Wills, Available at the South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.
Although it was a working plantation prior to 1818, there was no house located at Lawson’s Pond while owned by Philip Porcher, and it appears that the current structure on site was built between 1818 and 1823, when Charles Cordes Porcher married Rebecca Charlotte Marion, the daughter of Francis Dwight Marion of nearby Mount Pleasant Plantation. The house, while possessing ornate decoration in the form of gouge work and chip carving, was never finished, and the back rooms were left completely bare without plaster or moldings. Rebecca died after only four years of marriage in 1827, and their only child, Francis Marion Porcher, died in infancy. An atlas of the state of South Carolina developed by Robert Mills in 1825 displays Lawson’s Pond as a prominent feature of the Charleston district, distinguished as a large pond on the southwest side of the Congaree River Road, the old Cherokee Path, where it intersects with Nelson’s Ferry Road. The next fifty years provide little insight into the life of Charles Porcher and his years at Lawson’s Pond, as he appears to have left no record of his activities. There are two deeds in which Charles purchased tracts of land in the earlier years of his ownership of the estate. The first, in 1830, involved the purchase of 101 acres in St. John’s Parish from Sarah Sanders and John Purkey. Another large tract was purchased in 1839 from Caleb Williams, consisting of 675 acres of pine land in St. John’s Parish, which would indicate that Charles Porcher was a successful planter able to purchase large tracts of land for agricultural pursuits and investments. The agricultural census of 1860 reveals that the plantation had produced 150 bales of cotton at 400 pounds each on 1,000 acres of

37 Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyence, Book E, Page 369.
38 Ibid, 381.
improved farmland and maintained 110 slaves.\textsuperscript{39} There are no records of service during
the American Civil War for Charles Cordes Porcher, as he would have been sixty years at
the outbreak of the war, and he had no wife or children to look after the plantation in his
absence. It is quite possible that he contributed most of his cotton crop to the Confederate
cause, as was common among many of the planters of the region.

The Civil War and its aftermath devastated the region financially, as slaves were
freed without compensation, and entire fortunes were lost in one fell swoop. Most former
planters were forced to rent their land to former slaves under a system of sharecropping
to keep the estates running, but it ultimately led to the development of substantial debts.
Charles Cordes Porcher died intestate on December 20, 1877 with no heirs, and the estate
was settled under the care of Dr. Joseph Palmer, the son of Joseph Palmer, builder of
nearby Springfield Plantation. Dr. Palmer, serving as administrator of the estate,
inventoryed Porcher’s possessions, assessed his finances, and settled his debts. The only
known inventory of the property and furnishings of Lawson’s Pond was taken in March
of 1879 by Dr. Palmer.\textsuperscript{40} Legal papers found in the Palmer Family Papers reveal that Dr.
Palmer sold the personal property of Charles Porcher in 1879, as “the estate was indebted
to Philip Sidney Kirk, Trustee for funds held under the terms of the marriage settlement
of Peter J. Couturier and Elizabeth Sumter McKelvey.”\textsuperscript{41} J. Russell Cross recalled some
particular items that were sold in the estate sale in March of 1879: “Samuel Oliver

\textsuperscript{39} Eighth Agricultural Census, 1860, St. John’s Berkeley Parish, Charleston County, 345, Available at the
South Carolina Room, Charleston County Library.
\textsuperscript{40} Palmer Family Papers, “Personal Property of the Late C. C. Porcher,” Available at the South Caroliniana
Library, Columbia, SC.
\textsuperscript{41} J. Russell Cross, Historic Ramblin’s Through Berkeley County (Columbia, SC: R. L. Bryan Company),
81.
Russell of Black Creek Church purchased the handsome dining room furniture, a massive secretary with brass claw feet, and a wrought iron floor candelabra. John J. Cross purchased a Federal period shelf clock with three gold leaf split columns, above each other on each side and a gold leaf eagle at the top of the clock, a maple wardrobe, and a chest of drawers about five feet in height and made of inch thick mahogany boards. 42

After the debts of Charles Porcher were settled, it appears that Philip Sidney Kirk, acting as Trustee of the estate, and Peter James Couturier received the property sometime around 1880. In a deed dated April 5, 1897, it was disclosed that all terms of the McKelvey-Couturier Trust had been fulfilled, and with the death of her husband Peter in 1890, Lawson's Pond became the property of Elizabeth Sumter Couturier. The Couturier home at Moss Pond had burned sometime before 1880, as the brick from the ruined building was used by Adam Cross to build the chimneys at Moss Grove plantation house in that year, which would therefore coincide with the time it is believed that the Couturiers moved to Lawson's Pond. 43 The early ownership of the house by the Couturier family involved the earthquake of 1886 that devastated a large portion of nearby downtown Charleston. There was some damage to the northern chimney, which was subsequently repaired and can be seen from the attic space. Eliza Spiers Couturier, the current owner of Lawson's Pond, recalled a story that has been passed down for generations within the Couturier family concerning the events of the earthquake and is recorded as follows:

42 Ibid, 80.
It had been an unusually hot day in August of 1886. The Couturier family, who lived at Lawson’s Pond, had just finished their evening meal and were heading for the long front porch that stretched across the front of the house and along one side. Here they might get some relief from the oppressive heat. Suddenly, there was a strange shaking feeling. Chairs began to rock. Dishes rattled. The floor felt as if it were moving.

Peter Couturier yelled, “Earthquake! Get out of the house.” Peter and the children raced out of the house, down the steps and on into the yard so as to be out of the way of any falling objects. They turned around to see what was happening to the house and realized that Elizabeth Couturier was not with them. Peter yelled to his wife, “Liz, get out of the house. Hurry! The whole place may fall in.”

In a few seconds Elizabeth came running down the steps with her apron pulled up like a sack and loaded with something.

“Oh Peter,” she said. “I had to get the silver. If we all get swallowed up at least we will have the silver.”

The family was huddled all together wondering what would happen next when they heard two loud musket blasts. “Boom. Boom.” What was that? They figured out it was coming from the cook’s house which was just behind the main house. Peter yelled, “Adam, what are you shooting at?”

Adam answered, “Marse Peter, somebody trying to shake down the chimney.”

Adam had shot up into the chimney trying to get the varmint out of the chimney. 44

J. Russell Cross recalled a story told by his father, J. Pressley Cross, who was born in 1877. He had remembered that as a young boy, his grandfather John James Cross took him to a fair held at Lawson’s Pond by the Black Oak Agricultural Society. Cross states, “He was particularly impressed by the large pits in which whole oxen were being barbequed. This home had ample grounds to take care of the crowds that attended these fairs.” 45

As a working plantation, the property of Lawson’s Pond contained numerous outbuildings and dependencies that are no longer present today. A plat surveyed in 1922 by J. P. Gaillard indicates the locations of the buildings, with a kitchen situated to the

44 Eliza Spiers Couturier, Personal Interview with Jeremy Bradham, 2/7/2009.
west of the house and a row of houses to the southeast, more than likely the remnants of the nineteenth century slave quarters that would have housed more than the one hundred slaves on the plantation (Figure 35). The building remained out of the range of the Santee Cooper Project and is now one of the last remaining examples of this architecture in St. John’s Parish. The structure was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 17, 1977 and remains in the Couturier family, occupied by Eliza Spiers Couturier, the wife of Elias Francis Couturier, the grandson of Peter James Couturier.
Figure 32. Lawson’s Pond, Between 1818 and 1823 (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 33. Lawson’s Pond (Photo: Author)
Figure 34. Plat of Lawson’s Pond (Surveyed by J. P. Gaillard, 1922)

Figure 35. Plat of Lawson’s Pond (Surveyed by J. P. Gaillard, 1922)
Architectural Description

Thomas Waterman wrote of Lawson’s Pond in 1939, “The only house in the area which approaches the Rocks in architectural importance is Lawson[’s] Pond.” With The Rocks destroyed by fire in the early 1990s, Lawson’s Pond has assumed the role of the most architecturally important structure in the region. It has remained in a relatively unrestored condition, located on a knoll to the east of a large pond known as Lawson’s Pond, from which the plantation received its name. The house is a two-story clapboard structure situated on a seven-feet high basement, representative of the regional style previously discussed with surrounding plantations (Appendix A). The area below the southwest corner of the house was believed to have been inhabited and used by the blacksmith on the plantation and was still in use through the middle of the twentieth century. The chimney contains a firebox and flue, allowing the area to serve as a working space for plantation activities. The outer brick basement columns contain two different forms of brick, with the remaining courses above the first twelve consisting of a much lighter salmon-colored brick compared to the darker brick found below and throughout the rest of the columns and chimneys. Historically, bricks were made at kilns on other plantations and brought to the site for construction of the structure. It is likely that these bricks were brought from different locations, but it presents one of many mysteries of the house.

Built of cypress, the wood-framed structure faces east and features two matching front doors on the east façade and a one-story porch that wraps along the east and south

---

46 Waterman, 19.
47 Eliza Spiers Couturier, Interview with Jeremy Bradham, 2/7/2009.
facades. The front doors are framed by fluted pilasters and contain elaborate ornament and detailed gouge work in the form of Greek key and sunburst motifs within the entablature and gothic arches within the cymatium of the cornice. To the left and right of the pair of doors are evenly spaced windows in the form of 9/9 with paneled shutters, two windows on each side. The second story features windows centered over those below with a central sidelighted window in the form of 12/9 flanked by a single 4/3 on each side.

The north and south facades contain four windows on each floor in the form of 9/9, with the exception of the far right space on the first floor of the south façade, which features a door that opens to the front dining room. The addition of this extra door that opens to the porch on the south façade is unique to this house compared to others of the same plan. It may have been used for entertainment purposes, as the door can be opened to the wide porch to allow for an open space. Above the door is a large rectangular plain board that appears to have been placed there for the purpose of containing a decorative entablature like those found at Springfield, but it was never installed. Slender Doric columns made of cypress support the porch. The west façade features a central door that opens to a small rear portico, above which is located a sidelighted window in the form of 12/9, mirroring the one located on the south façade.

The cornice running around the exterior of the house consists of a wide band of gouge work that is repeated along the cornice of the porch, closely resembling a dentil entablature. A pair of tall interior chimneys protrudes through the high hipped roof.
covered in tin, featuring corbelled caps with bands of white stucco below, a common feature found in most contemporary houses of the region.

The floor plan consists of four rooms on each of the two floors, with two larger rooms on the first floor in the front each entered by a separate front door, and two smaller rooms in the back separated by a central stair hall. The second floor contains a central hallway that separates the rooms into pairs, with the two rooms in the back being left unfinished and unplastered. The only modern fabric within the house is the addition of a kitchen in the northwest room on the first floor and a bathroom directly above that on the second floor.

The interior of the first floor contains extensive elaborate decorative trim throughout, with each room having varying degrees and combinations of elements from one another. The front drawing room in the northeast corner is the most elaborate of all the rooms in the house, using a variation of gouged, reeded, and bored ornament (Appendix C). The marbleized mantel has pilasters containing a honeycomb pattern in gouge work, with a cornice containing dentils and a gouged rope mould above. The cornice of this room matches that of the mantel, containing a gouged honeycomb pattern, gouged rope mould, and bracketed dentils. The frieze below contains alternating circular, oval, and quarter sunbursts. The windows and doors contain pilasters and entablatures matching those of the cornice above, with enriched gouged work in the architrave and frieze. These interior elements match those of the exterior front doors, with variations on the pilasters and cymatium. The wainscoting is paneled and grained with applied moldings, containing alternating vertical gouges and star motifs within the dado cap.
The dining room on the southeast corner of the house is less elaborate in detail, containing a similar cornice to that found in the drawing room, with reeding and diamond carved elements located in the frieze. The mantel in this room contains the only composition elements in the house in the forms of vases, festoons, and griffins. The stair hall possesses further detailed gouge work in the form of circular, oval, and quarter sunbursts with alternating gouge work in the form of swags and circular sunbursts below in the frieze of each of the landings. The cornice of the hall contains the same elements as those found on the landings, with the addition of a gouged rope mould, bracketed dentils, and a repeat of gothic arches in the cymatium also found on the exterior of the front doors. The stairs contain a painted detail that follows the form of carved Greek wave or running dogs found on the interior of each stair. Paneled wainscoting continues throughout the rest of the house, with gouged details found in the dado cap on the first floor and plain dado caps on the second floor. The remaining rooms are much simpler in architectural detail, with the back rooms on the second floor lacking plaster and any detail.

The elaborate detail displayed in the front two rooms of the first floor compared with the unfinished rooms presents questions that have remained unanswered to this day. One of the possible explanations could be that Charles Porcher simply ran out of money. This is supported by the fact that the window openings of the back rooms on the second floor did not contain sashes until the twentieth century, but instead used interior shutters to shield out the elements. Elias Francis Couturier used the southwest room on the second floor as his bedroom in the early twentieth century and recalled that there were no sashes
present at that time. Mantel pieces, door mouldings and wainscot mouldings are absent as well from these rooms. The northwest room on the second floor is the most incomplete of the two, with half of it having been converted into a bathroom in the twentieth century and the other half in the northwest corner possessing exposed studs and an open ceiling above. From here can be seen the framing of the roof, which is constructed with a variation of the king post system, with supporting trusses supporting the roof from the two vertical beams that support the hip of the roof. The incomplete room also contains all of the original hardware and various architectural elements of the house that have collected over the years. Original paneled shutters, iron strap hinges, door locks with sliding bolts, rim locks, and corresponding keys remain, in part, in situ, with the original hardware that has been replaced stored in the upstairs rooms. In general, the building has remained in its original form, surviving war, depression, and natural disasters.

48 Eliza Spiers Couturier, Interview with Jeremy Bradham, 2/7/2009.
CHAPTER FIVE

GOUGE WORK

The architecture of the plantation houses found in this region of the South Carolina Lowcountry is unique in and of itself, but it is the details and craftsmanship within these structures that offer a picture of a once thriving plantation community. More than sixty miles from Charleston, the area itself appears at first to be a community closed off from social influences, as noted earlier in the discussion of Pineville. The same families had continued to multiply, intermarry, and spread throughout the region. Traditions and culture became localized, so it is safe to assume that a tradition of craftsmanship would develop and expand within the community.

The plantation houses in the region south of the Santee River were generally constructed of local timber, which consisted of an abundance of cypress and yellow pine. These structures were practical, adapted to suit the climate, and offered native solutions to native problems in their design. Having the desire to build houses with architectural decoration, the planters realized that a soft wood would be needed in order to achieve carved decorative elements. The native yellow pine proved difficult to work with, so white pine was imported into the region from New England for the purpose of having a soft wood that could be hewn and receive decorative chip carving and gouge work. The importation of this wood coincides with an increase in architectural details that appear in houses from the turn of the nineteenth century and the following decades. The craftsmen employed in their construction will be examined in order to understand how the craft became localized and traveled from one location to another.
Carpentry Trade

The tasks of the carpenter included framing walls, building roof systems, constructing sashes, laying floors, chiseling mortise-and-tenon joints, carving moldings, hanging doors, and nailing weatherboard. Construction often required a series of carpenters working together to build a structure from the ground up. Labor involved both white and slave craftsmen, usually working alongside one another. Planters sought profitable employment of their slaves in other areas apart from field labor, and trained slave artisans held higher value and produced substantial income for their owners who hired them out to be apprenticed or work for other carpenters or planters. According to the 1848 census, there were particular skilled trades that slaves appeared to have dominated within Charleston. "Slaves constituted 45 percent of the work force...About 43 percent of Charleston's carpenters were slaves."\(^{49}\) Although this statistic is based on an urban examination of slavery, slaves on plantations were even more likely to have a skilled trade based on plantation records, and these skilled craftsmen were often valued based on their age and skill level. A contemporary inventory of the estate of John Gibbes in St. Bartholomew's Parish listed the following slaves as carpenters: "Jack (carpenter) $800 Caesar (carpenter old) $350 Will (carpenter old) $600 Gainey (valuable carpenter) $800 August (carpenter) $800 Toney (valuable carpenter) $1000 Renty (carpenter) $800 Antony (carpenter) $800 Boston (carpenter old) $300."\(^{50}\) This particular inventory lists nine carpenters residing on Gibbes' plantation, and a large percentage of inventories


at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts contain skilled carpenters compared to other slave craftsmen.

Surveying the vast majority of inventories around Charleston and the Lowcountry of South Carolina throughout the nineteenth century, it can be concluded that slave carpenters were in abundance in rural areas, where repairs and maintenance, as well as the construction of new buildings, were common. Slave carpenters provided cheap labor compared to white carpenters and even posed competition in both skill and pay to the latter. The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts lists more than one thousand carpenters, both free and enslaved, in Charleston between 1780 and 1830, with only a little more than a dozen in St. John’s and St. Stephen’s Parishes during the same time. Although these are not complete records, they offer a brief comparative summary of the carpenter work force in these two different areas. These practices and patterns will be examined shortly by discussing the work of these skilled craftsmen in order to gain a better understanding of the localized craft that emerged in St. John’s Parish.

Tools

Chisels and tools used for carving wood have remained relatively consistent in their form for thousands of years, and the ones used in the architectural details in the plantations in St. John’s Parish are no different from their predecessors. Henry C. Mercer, in his book concerning ancient carpenters’ tools, states that carpenters used the gouge more for decoration than for construction. He describes the gouge as “a hollow, flat-
backed, round-pointed, cylinder-bladed chisel, basilled on its convex side, used for rounding excavations.” He further states, “How interesting that familiar instrument becomes when we find that its channeled blade, which will furrow wood without side tearing it, has always made it indispensable…” Those gouges which were sharpened on the outside of the blade were used to make concave cuts, while those sharpened on the inside were used to make convex cuts, matching the curvature of the blade. If held vertically and turned on its axis, the result will be a hole, which appears in the architectural detail elements within the region under discussion. Charles F. Hummel’s work examining these tools notes that the gouge “is usually classified with the chisel and described as a tool for hollowing and rounding wood surfaces.” He asserts that the gouge was the first turning tool to reduce irregularities in the wood, demonstrating the versatility of a rather simple tool that can be utilized in a vast number of architectural details by the carpenter. Gouges came in a variety of shapes and sizes, with each being suited to a specific task.

Noting that these tools have changed very little over time, their manufacture and use continued through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in America. In an article concerning the acquisition and ownership of tools in eighteenth century Virginia, Jan K. Gilliam states, “Newspapers, probate inventories, store accounts, and merchandise order all demonstrate that a wide range of eighteenth-century Americans acquired tools. Tradesmen required a supply of tools to keep them in business, but everyone needed at

52 Henry C. Mercer, Ancient Carpenters’ Tools: Illustrated and Explained (Doylestown, PA: Bucks County Historical Society, 1951), 166.
least some tools in order to survive..."\(^{54}\) The same patterns were not solely limited to Virginia, so it is safe to assume that the same patterns can be attributed to South Carolina.

Often, inventories taken of the property of individuals who had passed away revealed a set of carpenter’s tools, as most households contained at least a basic set of tools for the purpose of completing routine maintenance, and these tools often passed from one generation to the next. The wills and inventories of the early nineteenth century in South Carolina reveal that both plantation owners and tradesmen owned varying sets of carpenter’s tools. Gilliam further states, “A tradesman with little money might make do with a few general-purpose tools and purchase others as the need arose, while those who could afford to do so might purchase entire sets at one time...Slaves generally were supplied with tools by their masters.”\(^ {55}\) In a note made by Gilliam concerning the latter statement, after surveying inventories and wills, it appears that “Some of the wealthy planters also imported tools in quantities larger than those needed for their own use. These surpluses were used to stock plantation ‘stores’ from which their less well-to-do neighbors could obtain needed implements.”\(^ {56}\)

Many tools were made both commercially or by the carpenter or his apprentice, often combining the two to form a basic carpenter’s kit. Tools could be purchased in nearby urban centers like Charleston, where there was an abundance of tool makers. Charleston, a port city, was also importing tools from England prior to the American Revolution, and it is likely that this practice continued on a smaller scale after the war.


\(^ {55}\) Ibid, 59.

\(^ {56}\) Ibid, 73.
Noting that these carpenters’ tools varied only slightly over time, another avenue to obtain tools was the purchase of secondhand tools upon the event of an estate sale. Regardless of the method in which tools were acquired, it appears that slaves often used the tools purchased by their masters in their pursuit of becoming an apprentice under a skilled craftsman, yet the tools themselves were ultimately the property of their master. This would explain the presence of nineteenth century tools in the twentieth century, having remained in the hands of the descendents of the builders of these plantations.

The following observations and conclusions are based on construction dates that are believed to be accurate, which only serve as a reference by which each structure can be analyzed. A chronological examination of the buildings containing similar elaborative details provides a time frame in which the craft became localized. An understanding of the carpentry trade, coupled with a study of the elements located in each structure, allows a perspective on their design to be gained in an effort to understand when, where, and perhaps why particular elements appear in different plantation houses in Upper St. John’s Parish over time.
Figure 36. Examples of Gouges (Photo: Author)

Figure 37. Examples of Gouges (Photo: Author)
Figure 38. Early nineteenth century carpenter's tools

Figure 39. Early nineteenth century carpenter's tools
Figure 38. Plantation Map of St. John’s and St. Stephen’s Parishes (Compiled by J. P. Gaillard, 5/1/1942)

The Rocks

Captain Peter Gaillard of The Rocks Plantation maintained a detailed plantation journal that described the materials, labor, and cost of the construction of the building every few days. According to his journal, construction began in 1803, and on September 1, Gaillard states that he began making brick. On October 12, Mr. Bowles, the carpenter, began to make sashes with the assistance of a boy, probably one of Gaillard’s slaves, to split the planks. The following month, on November 21, Mr. Walker the Carpenter began work. A worthy note is intermittent entries in the month of November that refer to bales of cotton being sent to the canal, which by this time was becoming a major artery for moving cotton to Charleston for sale. On December 26, Mr. Perry the Carpenter began work at The Rocks. The journal lists various white and slave craftsmen appearing and disappearing from time to time. There is one particular entry on March 2, 1804 that distinguishes the classes of craftsmen, as Gaillard sent a case of rum to the white carpenters and one demijohn of rum for the Negroes. In early April, the framing of the house was raised. There is then a discussion of architectural detail desired to be used in the house, and the following statement provides valuable insight into the ability of the carpenters working at the Rocks.

June 3 – Agreed this day with Mr. Walker to have my chimney pieces & Doors made at the North this summer, to be delivered in Charleston in Novr. Next, the doors to be double worked; two of the Chimney pieces to be done in a genteel but plain style, & 5 others being for the bed rooms, to be very plain. Vizt. 7 Chimney pieces and 23 Doors, the whole to be done in a workmanlike manner, he finding all materials and paying freight to Charleston, to be paid the Charleston price, to be valued by workmen of Judgement.57

57 Gaillard Family. Gaillard Family Papers, 1758-1901, Available at the South Carolina Historical Society.
The figure described as Mr. Walker fits the profile of two possible carpenters residing in Charleston during this time by the names of Robert Walker and Caleb Walker, with the latter the likely subject referred to in Gaillard’s journal. Caleb Walker is listed as a carpenter residing on Magazine Street in Charleston and was a member of the Charleston Carpenter’s Society. Although the first listing of his name in the city directory appears in 1806, there is an advertisement in the Charleston City Gazette of that same year concerning a runaway slave by the name of Sam Ball, who had been “hired for five years to Mr. C. Walker, as a carpenter.”

Therefore, Caleb Walker had been working as a carpenter as early as 1801, if not earlier, which would have placed him at The Rocks until 1805 upon the building’s completion, when he then returned to continue working as a carpenter in Charleston. This would also explain why Walker’s first appearance in Charleston on record is 1806, as he would have been previously employed by Gaillard at The Rocks. In the event of his death in 1819 on board a ship bound from Charleston to Boston, it was discovered that Mr. Walker was a native of Massachusetts. In an inventory of his property, three Negroes are listed, probably skilled carpenters, as well as a set of carpenter’s tools.

Craftsmen from New England were establishing themselves in Charleston during this time and bringing with them their skills and trades to various parts of the Lowcountry. After his examination of the structures in the region, Thomas Waterman states, “It is possible that the craftsmen employed in Upper Berkeley County came from Philadelphia, since there are many similarities to be seen in the type of

---

58 City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, Charleston, SC, 13 August 1806.
ornament and in the method employed in the two localities." In the case of the architectural decoration found at The Rocks, the origin was determined, but later houses present a series of questions of their own. It is apparent that Mr. Walker was a respected master carpenter capable of giving advice to Peter Gaillard, but it is peculiar that he suggests having the decorative work ordered from the North. Suggesting ornamental details to be imported leads to the conclusion that, in 1804, there was no local craftsman capable of carrying out such a task, it was cheaper than local labor, or that is was easier to have architectural details imported at that time (Figure 39).

---

60 Waterman, 25.
Figure 39. The Rocks, Southeast Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 40. The Rocks, Overmantel in Southeast Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Ophir

Ophir Plantation, built in 1810 by Colonel Thomas Porcher, contained some decorative gouged elements that appear to be some of the first of its kind in the region. Colonel Porcher, the son of Peter Porcher of Peru, was the brother of Major Samuel Porcher of Mexico Plantation. This will be revisited when discussing the detail found at Springfield. The ornament contains gouged sunbursts, quarter sunbursts, and double festoons, building on the more simple decoration found at The Rocks (Figure 41). The craftsmen involved in the building’s construction are unknown, but these elements begin to appear more frequently and in greater variation and detail in the following years.

Figure 41. Ophir, Mantel in Southeast Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 42. Ophir, Southeast Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Loch Dhu

Loch Dhu, built between 1812 and 1816 by Robert Kirk, contained relatively simple and reserved decoration compared to most other houses under examination, yet it contains similar elements that begin appearing in the region by the time of its completion. Simple gouged festoons and elliptical and quarter sunbursts appear a few years earlier at Ophir but continued to become more elaborate in structures after 1816 (Figure 43).

Figure 43. Loch Dhu, Mantel in Southwest Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 44. Loch Dhu, Southwest Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Springfield

Springfield Plantation, built by Joseph Palmer in 1818, chronologically appears next if the previously mentioned dates are entirely accurate, yet it boasts some of the most elaborate architectural details of the region and the entire Lowcountry. Joseph’s account book discusses the construction of the structure, those employed, and wages received for work. The holdings of Joseph Palmer at this time consist of the following:

4104 acres of land in St. John's Parish;

2900 acres of land in St. Stephen's Parish;

2438 acres of land in St. Mark's Parish, Sumter District; and 215 Negroes.  

Frederick A. Porcher wrote in his memoirs of the architectural detail found at Springfield, located only two miles from The Rocks, stating that it was “so elaborately worked that the chisel seemed to have cut into every square line of the wood. This was the design and the performance of a Yankee carpenter who astonished the people by his skill.” Palmer’s account book records the following of this “Yankee carpenter” that suddenly appears in the region: “Mr. Champlin commenced on Monday October the 20th, 1817, to build a dwelling house for me 46 feet by 40 feet with a wing at each end 22 x 16 feet at $60 Per Month. The framing of the house was begun Oct. 21 and finished the twentieth of November; finished raising November 26th.” Another entry at a later date reads as follows:

Mr. Francis Peyre’s Bricklayer, William, began to work on the twentieth of October 1817— at 50 cents per day. Francis Marion Jr’s man Dick began work on

61 Palmer Family Papers, Account Book, 1817, Available at the South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, SC.
63 Palmer Family Papers, Account Book, 1817, Available at the South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, SC.
September 15. Thomas Cordes Jr’s Bricklayer Paul, began work for me, Tuesday, 10th March 1818 at $20 Per Month. Major Samuel Porcher’s 3 carpenters began work 10th of November 1817 – I have agreed to give one of them $20 Per Month.

Mr. George Champlin’s work ended June 17- 1818 for which he received $609."\(^{64}\)

The latter entry reveals the use of skilled slaves from neighboring plantations being utilized at Springfield. Relevant to the woodwork inside of the house was the borrowed labor from Major Samuel Porcher, owner of Mexico Plantation. His sister Elizabeth Catherine Porcher, was the wife of Joseph Palmer, which would in part explain the use of three of Major Porcher’s carpenters to assist George Champlin. An entry in Palmer’s account book in 1818 reveals another individual involved in the architectural details at Springfield: “By seven months and 3 days work of George Champlin ending on the 7\(^{th}\) June 1818 – at $60 – $429 – By the hire of one of Major S Porcher’s Carpenters @ $20 per month – being with me 7 months for the good of Champlin – 140 – By ditto of Mr. Champlin’s apprentice Harry – 40 – $609."\(^{65}\)

The months between November and June therefore consisted, in a large part, of the addition of detailed and elaborate decorative trim and gouge work throughout the entirety of the structure. It was during these seven months that Major Porcher’s carpenters, as well as George Champlin’s apprentice Harry, delicately carved nearly every available inch of wood in some cases. Ophir, believed to have been constructed eight years earlier, contained some similar ornamental details, and it is possible that the tools, as well as Major Porcher’s carpenters from Mexico Plantation, were already involved in this form of gouge work. Therefore, assuming that Ophir was built in 1810, it

\(^{64}\) Palmer Family Papers, Account Book, 1818, Available at the South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, SC. 
\(^{65}\) Ibid.
is possible that the structure contained the earliest forms of this particular style of gouge work and that Major Porcher's carpenters were already skilled in the craft and may have begun elaborating on variations of this style.

Very little is known of George Champlin, yet it is suggested that he was a carpenter from New England, probably Rhode Island, as that appears to be the seat of the Champlin family in the late eighteenth century based on genealogical information concerning the surname. His name does not show up in any other records in or around Charleston, and it is as if he appeared and disappeared from the records after his eight-month tenure at Springfield. Harry, Champlin's apprentice, also disappears from the record after this particular endeavor.

As stated earlier, wealthy planters like Joseph Palmer often purchased their own set of tools, which appears to be the case at Springfield. The tools remained in the family through the latter part of the twentieth century, revealing that the work conducted in the structure was made with Joseph Palmer's tools, possibly in combination with those of Champlin's. In her reminiscences of Springfield Plantation, the granddaughter of Joseph Palmer, Leize Palmer Gaillard noted, "Nothing could hide the beautiful carving, all done by workmen on the place with their own hands, the little case of tools with which it was done still being in the house." These tools were seen by visitors during a reunion at the Plantation in 1935, just one year after the South Carolina legislature authorized the Santee Cooper Project. The tools had remained in the hands of the Palmer family, but the

---

last descendent who knew of their whereabouts, Robert Palmer, passed away in September of 2008, allowing the location of the tools to fall into obscurity.

Although there is no mention of Palmer’s carpenters, this set of tools may have been used on surrounding plantations, which will be examined shortly. The most elaborate in the region in terms of decorative carving, “Every door and window has its carved frame and cornice, and there are carved mantels and cornices and paneled wainscots in every room. The front rooms on the first floor have each an entrance door on the front piazza, and these rooms have mantels carved from floor to ceiling and very wide and elaborately carved cornices around the ceiling and over their doors and windows.”

The specific elements at Springfield appear at later plantations within the region, suggesting that the same tools and craftsmen may have been employed in the process (Figures 47 and 48). A newspaper article appeared in the Charleston News and Courier on January 6, 1935, which covered the family reunion held at Springfield. Flora B. Surles noted, “The carving of window and door frames both inside and outside the drawing room gives one the impression of looking at something made of lace rather than of wood.” Another article dated the same year discusses the loss of such fine architecture: “The building today is in as good condition as it was a century ago,” and while its ornate woodwork was marveled by these later generations, it was destroyed nonetheless in the name of progress.

---

Figure 45. Springfield Front Porch (Photo: Samuel Gaillard Stoney)
Figure 46. Springfield, Drawing Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 47. Springfield, Mantel in Drawing Room (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 48. Springfield, Cornice in Drawing Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Blueford

While not previously discussed in terms of architecture or region, one building in particular contains not only the same elements, but nearly the exact same form as the mantel and overmantel found at Springfield (Figure 50). Blueford Plantation, located between Mexico Plantation and Pineville in St. Stephen’s Parish, was the residence of John Palmer, the son of Captain John Palmer of Richmond Plantation. John Palmer was the brother of Joseph Palmer of Springfield, and it appears that John may have used the same craftsmen and tools employed at Springfield. Little information is known about the structure itself, except that it later became the property of the Oakland Hunting Club and was destroyed by a fire in the 1950s. The drawing room contained gouged swags that resemble those found at Ophir, Loch Dhu, and Somerset, and elliptical and quarter sunbursts in the frieze of the mantel (Figure 49).

Figure 49. Blueford, Mantel in Drawing Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 50. Blueford, Drawing Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Lawson's Pond

Although there is little to no record of the construction of Lawson’s Pond between 1818 and 1823, there is substantial reason to assume that those employed at Springfield were responsible for the gouge work found at Lawson’s Pond. The only reference to a carpenter in association with the structure is found in the will of Philip Porcher II, Charles Porcher’s father. It reads as follows: “Item, I give and bequeath unto my son Charles Cordes Porcher his Executors, Administrators, and Assigns my Carpenter Man Renty…” Renty was a popular slave name in the region, and it is assumed that he would have had a hand in the carpentry work and ornamentation found at Lawson’s Pond. With the completion of Springfield in June of 1818, it is possible that George Champlin, or at least a portion of the carpenters previously employed at Springfield, may have worked on the structure at that time. Noting strong similarities within the interior of the two structures, some of the details at Lawson’s Pond appear to utilize different motifs by using parts of the consistent forms found in the other structures. In particular, the entablatures above the windows and doors in the drawing room contain four quarter sunbursts inverted to form a square pattern that alternates with the elliptical and circular sunbursts (Figure 53). The fact that the back rooms were never completed might suggest that, in fact, the tools, as well as the craftsmen utilizing them, were traveling throughout the region. For reasons unknown, the drawing room itself serves as one of the finest examples of gouge work crafted in Upper St. John’s Parish (Figure 55).

Figure 53. Lawson’s Pond. Photo: Author. Library: Author.

79 Will of Philip Porcher, 1818, Vol 33, Book C, Page 1401, Available at the South Carolina Room, Charleston County Library
Figure 51. Lawson’s Pond Front Porch (Photo: Samuel Gaillard Stoney)
Figure 52. Lawson’s Pond, Drawing Room (Photo; Library of Congress)

Figure 53. Lawson’s Pond, Window Entablature and Cornice in Drawing Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 54. Lawson’s Pond, Exterior Front Doors (Photo: Author)

Figure 55. Lawson’s Pond, Drawing Room (Photo: Author)
Figure 56. Lawson’s Pond, Front Door in Drawing Room (Photo: Author)
Figure 57. Lawson's Pond, Entablature in Stair Landing (Photo: Author)

Figure 58. Lawson's Pond, Entablature in Stair Landing (Photo: Author)
Figure 59. Lawson’s Pond, Entablature in Stair Landing and Cornice in Hallway (Photo: Author)
White Hall

White Hall, constructed between 1822 and 1824 by Colonel Thomas Porcher for his son Thomas, contains strikingly similar woodwork to the structures previously discussed. Colonel Porcher, having built his house more than a decade earlier in 1810, may have used the same tools employed at Ophir. The dining room contained strikingly similar woodwork to that found at Ophir, which appears to be almost an identical copy, with the addition of a richer cornice. The cornice in this room contained alternating sunburst and vertical gouges. The ornamentation in the drawing room surpassed that of anywhere in the house, and the mantel appears to be nearly identical to the one found at Springfield, without the overmantel (Figure 66). This room contains the same elements, shape, and style of those found at Springfield and Lawson’s Pond, with elliptical, circular, half, and quarter sunbursts in the frieze of the mantel and cornice (Figure 67). Some of these pieces still survive and remain in the possession of members and relatives of the Cain Family. The tools used to create these details are still in possession of Dr. William Cain of Columbia, South Carolina, who recently used the tools to replicate some of the gouge work found at White Hall.

71 When the Santee Cooper Project began purchasing land from the owners, pieces of White Hall were distributed among the members of the Cain family of nearby Somerset Plantation. Thomas Porcher’s daughter Elizabeth married Dr. Charles Lucas of Charleston, which explains how various elements from White Hall are owned by members of the Lucas Family. The architrave of the front door as well as a mantle from one of the rooms is presently located in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, in the possession of Bertha Cain. The entire drawing room was donated to the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Old Salem, NC.
Figure 60. White Hall, Dining Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 61. White Hall, Mantel in Dining Room (Photo; Library of Congress)
Figure 62. White Hall, Mantel (Photo: Author)

Figure 63. White Hall, Front Door (Photo: Author)
Figure 64. White Hall, Drawing Room (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 65. White Hall, Drawing Room (Photo Courtesy of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts)

Figure 66. White Hall, Drawing Room (Photo: Author)
Figure 67. White Hall, Mantel in Drawing Room (Photo: Author)

Figure 68. White Hall, Cornice in Drawing Room (Photo: Author)
Somerset

William Cain constructed Somerset Plantation in 1827 shortly after purchasing the property near Pinopolis. The festoons located in the frieze of the mantel closely resemble those found at Ophir and Luch Dhu, yet the sunbursts are much more restrained and simple than those found in the earlier plantation houses. Each individual gouge appears to be separated with some distance, while earlier sunbursts contained connected gouges with ridges in between each. It is possible that the craftsmen employed a decade earlier were no longer present at the time of Somerset’s construction. However, William Cain married Anne Palmer, the sister of Joseph Palmer of Springfield. The same tools used in the detail at Springfield may have been used at Somerset, but the simpler detail suggests that either the craftsmen no longer followed the same patterns employed in the earlier structures or that the ornamentation had fallen out of style by 1827 (Figure 69).

Figure 69. Somerset, Mantel (Photo: Library of Congress)
CHAPTER SEVEN

DIFFERENT EXAMPLES OF GOUGE WORK

The particular form of gouge work displayed in the homes of the early eighteenth century in the region of St. John’s Berkeley varies dramatically from other examples found in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Some other forms were quite elaborate, and, while employing similar forms of gouges, accomplished a unique style of gouge work that did not appear in the plantations near the Santee River. Elements of sunbursts and parts thereof appear to have been a popular form throughout the Lowcountry during the first decades of the eighteenth century, with some fine examples present at Marshlands Plantation (Figure 70) and 301 East Bay Street in downtown Charleston (Figure 71).

Figure 70. Marshlands, 1810, Charleston Neck, Charleston, South Carolina (Photo: Library of Congress)
Figure 71. 301 East Bay Street, Charleston, South Carolina (Photo: Library of Congress)

Figure 72. 301 East Bay Street, Charleston, South Carolina, Front Door (Russell F. Whitehead and Frank Chouteau Brown)
Figure 73. 301 East Bay Street, Charleston, South Carolina, Front Door (Russell F. Whitehead and Frank Chouteau Brown)
Figure 74. 301 East Bay Street, Charleston, South Carolina, Detail of Front Door (Russell F. Whitehead and Frank Chouteau Brown)
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Today, the area known as St. John’s Berkeley Parish lies, in part, under the waters of Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie. In Samuel Dubose’s reminiscences of the region in the nineteenth century, a note on the title page reads: “Printed at the request of numerous friends desirous of preserving the fast fading history of the region.”\(^72\) This statement, while more than a century and a half old, is as relevant today as ever. The region has experienced war, economic hardship, natural disasters, and the largest land-clearing project in United States History. The few buildings that survive offer tangible evidence of the vernacular architecture of the region and a craft that has long disappeared over time. Lawson’s Pond, now one of the last remaining structures of the early nineteenth century, provides the opportunity to examine, first-hand, the gouge work found in many of the houses now vanished in order to gain a better understanding and perspective of rural craftsmanship in the South Carolina Lowcountry.

Around the year 1817, with the construction of Springfield by carpenter George Champlin, it appears that slave carpenters were trained in a particular form of gouge work that emerges at both Lawson’s Pond and White Hall. If the dates assigned to the construction of these structures are correct, the elements employed at Lawson’s Pond were made from tools that may have belonged to Joseph Palmer of Springfield. After an understanding of the distribution of these tools was gained, it was assumed that since

these tools have remained in the hands of the Palmer family for nearly two centuries, it is likely that they were also used on surrounding plantations. The same reasoning was used to explain the presence of tools from White Hall that have remained in the possession of the Cain family to this day. Noting the fact that in the nineteenth century, most, if not all of these families were connected through marriage or blood, it is likely that slave carpenters would be hired out to family members constructing their plantation houses nearby. Although the evidence used to draw such conclusions is based on select photographs and information obtained in the hasty documentation of the region, strong comparisons can be made between these structures, which only appear in a short window of time.

Although little is known of George Champlin and the skilled slaves present during the construction of Springfield, it is quite clear, through photo documentation, that the work on the other structures were conducted by the same hands. It is, however, unclear where this style originated, both in design and region. Further research might pursue this avenue of thought, considering possible design templates used by carpenters of that period. The answers to these questions might, in fact, lie interred beneath the muddy waters of the lakes, where planters carved their plantations out of the wilderness and built a community unique in and of itself.

Elizabeth Palmer Gaillard concluded her recollections of Springfield Plantation with the following appropriate statement:

How long will Springfield remain in its setting of oaks, sycamores, cedars, walnuts, holly and crape myrtles – each with their long streamers of gray Spanish moss? Who can tell! Progress, the insatiable monster, demands that all that area of St. John’s Berkeley, with its beautiful homes and historic associations, be
submerged by the muddy waters of the Santee. Who are we, the last of a family of kindly, hospitable, gentlefolk, to withstand such demands? 73

The protection of historical resources weighed against society’s progress will always form a platform for debate. The Santee Cooper Project accomplished great things for the state of South Carolina, yet at the expense of a part of the state’s history. At that time, progress outweighed the desire for preservation. While debating this issue, it is the responsibility of this generation to document what is left instead of dwelling on what has been lost. Today, the last remaining intact evidence of those earlier days lies within the walls of Lawson’s Pond, offering a unique glimpse into the craftsmanship and lives of those who once called this place their home.

---

APPENDIX A

PHOTOGRAPHS OF LAWSON’S POND

Drawing Room wainscot with faux grained finish (Photo: Author)
Drawing Room wainscot with gouge work below the dado cap (Photo: Author)

Faux finish on stairs in the hallway (Photo: Author)
Original mutons of the windows located on the second floor, northeast room (Photo: Author)

Drawing Room mantel with faux marble finish (Photo: Author)
Dining Room mantel with composition ornament (Photo: Author)

Dining Room cornice (Photo: Author)
Unfinished northwest room on the second floor containing original shutters and hardware
(Photo: Author)

Unfinished northwest room on the second floor (Photo: Author)
Unfinished southwest room on the second floor (Photo: Author)
Original hardware on shutters in the southwest room on the second floor (Photo: Author)

Original hardware on west door in stairhall (Photo: Author)
Original gas line and auger, southeast corner of the house (Photo: Author)
East façade, front porch (Photo: Author)

Door on south façade leading to the Dining Room, with a plain board that was likely intended to contain a decorative entablature (Photo: Author)
Hand hewn floor joists above basement containing wooden pegs (Photo: Author)

Southwest room of basement with functional chimney (Photo: Author)
Brick pillars of basement containing two different forms of bricks (Photo: Author)
Road where slave cabins were located (Photo: Author)

Road where slave cabins were located (Photo: Author)
APPENDIX B

PLANTATION PLATS

Plat of Lawson’s Pond, 1796
Plat of Ophir Plantation
(Surveyed by J. P. Gaillard, 1931)
FLOOR PLANS
1/16" = 1'-0"  1:192

SECOND FLOOR
1/16" = 1'-0"  1:192

BASEMENT
1/16" = 1'-0"  1:192

FIRST FLOOR
1/16" = 1'-0"  1:192
NORTH ELEVATION

\[ \frac{1}{2}'' = 1' - 0'' \]

\[ 1:24 \]

FEET

\[ 0 \quad 1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5 \]

CENTIMETERS

\[ 0 \quad 50 \quad 100 \quad 150 \]

\[ 1:24 \]
EAST ELEVATION

1/2" = 1' - 0"

1:24

FEET

CENTIMETERS

0 1 2 3 4 5

1/2" = 1' - 0"

0 50 100 150
DRAWING ROOM MANTEL

1 1/2"=1'-0"  
1:8

0  
1  
2  
3  

1 1/2"=1'-0"  
0  
50  
100  

FEET  
CENTIMETERS  
1:8

LAWSON'S POND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DRAWN BY: JEREMY ROBERT RASELU

SCALING AND EDITING: ROBERT L. EVERETT