

FORMER HOME OF MOULTRIE DOOMED IN PLANS FOR CANAL

Was Scene in 1800 of Breakfast Celebrating Opening of
Original Water Passage. Property Dates Back to 1716

By F. M. Kirk

On the formal opening of the old Santee Canal in 1800, a breakfast was given at Northampton Plantation by General William Moultrie. The event was to honor Major Senf, engineer in charge of the project, and other prominent citizens of the state who had been instrumental in the realization of a half-century dream.

On the formal opening of the new Santee Canal there will be no celebration at Northampton. For General Moultrie's home, the old canal itself, and much of the neighboring country, will be under the red waters of Santee as they seek their way for the first time in nearly a century back to Cooper River and on to the sea, many miles from the outlet provided by nature.

Northampton, located some two miles west of Black Oak Church and the locks of the old canal, is now the property of A.M. Barnes and Clarence Dillon, of New York City. It was purchased a few years ago from the late Percival Ravenel Porcher, a descendant of the original St. Julien owners.

Peter, the eldest son of the emigrant Pierre de St. Julien de Malacare, willed the place to his sister, Elizabeth, wife of General William Moultrie. Apparently, therefore, the tract was secured by the emigrant St. Julien or by his son, Peter, around 1700.

Built About 1716

The house, a square building with a half story of massive brick walls, was built about 1715 by, it is thought, Benjamin, grandson of the emigrant. Benjamin, dying without issue, Northampton reverted to his father and then to Elizabeth.

The Revolution ruined many planters of St. John's. With the removal of the bounty from indigo, the planters had no staple crop. Cautiously, at first they turned to cotton as a money crop. It was General Moultrie who first in South Carolina attempted cotton on a large scale on his plantation at Northampton.

As early as 1748 a shipment of cotton had been exported from Charleston. The cultivation of the crop grew slowly, however, and it was not until towards the close of the century that it became a financial success. In 1788 Kinsey Burden raised the first crop of long cotton in South Carolina on his lands in

St. Paul Parish. Five years later, in 1793, General Moultrie made the first experiment on a large scale by planting one hundred and fifty acres of Northampton to long cotton.

Probably because of his inexperience in the cultivation of the crop, the experiment was a complete financial failure. It is said that his yield was only nine pounds per acre. From that time, however, the movement spread rapidly. Five years later, in upper St. John's Captain Peter Gaillard, of the Rocks, and Captain James Sinkler of Belvidere were averaging better than two hundred pounds per acre for which they received seventy-five cents per pound.

Work Done By Slaves

The cultivation of the crop was a crude process. All work was done by slave labor. Cotton was planted in hills four or five feet square. Four workings were considered sufficient to raise a crop. First the cotton was hoed "flush" in a "hoeing-down" process. Afterwards it was hoed up.

According to old accounts, mules were a rarity in St. John's. On Poooshee Plantation, adjoining Northampton, during a time when 500 acres of cotton were cultivated, there was but one mule on the place, chiefly used to meet the canal boats at the Black Oak landing to bring freight. Oxen were used to haul straw for the manufacture of manure. Cultivation was done entirely by hand labor.

General Moultrie's son, who inherited the place, died at an early age, unmarried. At his death Northampton was sold. Subsequently, it has changed hands a number of times.

Henry W. Ravenel, the botanist, son of Dr. Henry W. Ravenel of Poooshee, purchased the place from Theodore S. DuBose and lived there until he moved to the upper part of the state. It was later bought by Henry Le Noble Stevens, a nephew of Dr. Ravenel of Poooshee.

Henry Stevens, who married Henrietta, daughter of Samuel Gaillard of The Rocks, seems to have been a man outstanding for his ability and his popularity. He was an early volunteer in the Confederate Army. Wounded in the Second Battle of Manassas, he died soon afterwards in Warrenton, Va.

House Burned in 1842

Northampton house burned in 1842. The upper story was destroyed, but the fortress-like walls of the half story were undamaged and the house was soon restored with no serious loss. The house is now in beautiful repair. Surrounded by its numerous outbuildings, all snow-white, and its yard, planted to Italian rye grass during the winter, it presents an ante-bellum look.

An anecdote is told of that Northampton breakfast 135 years ago.

Major Senf, who appears to have made himself thoroughly unpopular with the planters of the community, demanded full credit for all he thought he was due, and was fond of dramatizing.

The morning of the opening, the Major had carefully left a little soil in the bottom of the canal which blocked Santee from flowing to its new destination. He planned to divert Santee into Cooper by himself removing the last barrier.

Sending his servant from Northampton to make sure that all arrangements were completed, he sat down at the general's table to make merry with his host and the distinguished visitors, and in company with them, set out for the canal after breakfast.

Water Had Started

The Frenchman's surprise was little short of apoplexy when, upon reaching the scene of his little drama, he found the show stolen from him. The last spadeful of dirt had been removed and Santee was running triumphantly to Cooper.

Investigation divulged that the servant, wishing to spare his master possible inconvenience and embarrassment before the assembled visitors had himself shoveled out the dirt. The servant lost his job.

Northampton and the several adjoining plantations comprising the hunting preserve of the present owners, fairly teem with game. Through protection and proper care quail, turkey and deer are plentiful and are multiplying rapidly. Possibly duck may take the place of the game to be driven out.