

Sunken Plantations

THE SANTEE COOPER PROJECT

Douglas W. Bostick



Published by The History Press
Charleston, SC 29403
www.historypress.net

Copyright © 2008 by Douglas W. Bostick
All rights reserved

Cover design by Marshall Hudson.
All images courtesy of Santee Cooper unless otherwise noted.

First published 2008
Second printing 2010
Third printing 2013

Manufactured in the United States

ISBN 978.1.59629.469.1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bostick, Douglas W.
Sunken plantations : the Santee Cooper project / Douglas W. Bostick.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-59629-469-1

1. Plantations--South Carolina--History. 2. Plantations--South Carolina--History--Pictorial works. 3. Historic sites--South Carolina. 4. Historic sites--South Carolina--Pictorial works. 5. Berkeley County (S.C.)--History, Local. 6. Orangeburg County (S.C.)--History, Local. 7. Berkeley County (S.C.)--History, Local--Pictorial works. 8. Orangeburg County (S.C.)--History, Local--Pictorial works. 9. Santee Canal (S.C.)--History. 10. South Carolina Public Service Authority--History. I. Title.

F270.B67 2008

975.70022'2--dc22

2008006554

Notice: The information in this book is true and complete to the best of our knowledge. It is offered without guarantee on the part of the author or The History Press. The author and The History Press disclaim all liability in connection with the use of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form whatsoever without prior written permission from the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

SOMERSET PLANTATION

Prior to the Santee Cooper Project, Somerset Plantation could be found just two miles from Pinopolis. The origin of property ownership can be traced back to a grant conveyed to John Stewart in 1696. Soon thereafter, Stewart conveyed his property to Reverend William Screven, thought to be the first Baptist preacher to settle in Carolina. Screven hoped to establish a Baptist settlement in St. John's Parish. However, it did not materialize and in 1704, Screven sold his property, now totaling 1,100 acres, to Rene Ravenel.

In 1736, Ravenel divided his property, conveying 725 acres named Somerset to his brother Daniel. In the following years, Somerset sold through many owners until Isaac M. Dwight and William Cain purchased it in 1827. They divided the property and Cain took title to the portion with the plantation house, which he remodeled in 1854.

Cain was an influential man across the state, serving in the state legislature, as South Carolina's delegate to the Electoral College and as lieutenant governor. As South Carolina debated its exit from the Union, Cain was a signer of the Ordinance of Secession.

In an address before the St. John's Hunting Club in 1907, Reverend Dr. Robert Wilson spoke of Cain, describing him as "tall of stature, dignified in presence and deliberate in all his movements, Mr. Cain exhibited to all a gentle courtesy and polished address which testified conclusively that these traits were not the exclusive heritage of pure Huguenot descent...Cain was a successful planter of long cotton and his crops usually brought the top of the market."

Cain enjoyed a great reputation for his Santee long-staple cotton. He developed a habit of baling his cotton in round bales and marking them with his initials to ensure the brokers would find his cotton at auction. On one trip to Paris, Cain was excited to find his round bales arriving in the French capital.

The plantation remained in the Cain family until Santee Cooper acquired it. The property was cultivated until the family was forced to leave. The heirs of Dr. Joseph P. Cain, who held title to the property, dismantled the house before the flood.

SUNKEN PLANTATIONS



The Somerset house, constructed in 1827, was two stories tall with an attic and a ground-level basement and was covered with unpainted cypress weatherboards.



The Somerset house was built on a flat site beautifully surrounded by moss-draped live oaks. When the house was remodeled in 1852, Cain enhanced the mantels and doors and made changes to the porch columns. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*



When acquired by Santee Cooper, Somerset still had the full complement of outbuildings and farm buildings. These structures were destroyed along with the house. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*



This photograph of Somerset was colorized and sent by William Cain as a Christmas card in the early twentieth century. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*

SUNKEN PLANTATIONS



This view of the Somerset front parlor reflects the elegance with which the house was decorated. Actively living and working the plantation, the Cain family did not willingly leave Somerset. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*



This mantel and fireplace in one of the front parlors is typical of the fine adornments in the Somerset house. The mantels in the front rooms were made of black and gold marble. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*

Right: This photograph is of the southeast room on the main floor of the Somerset house. The portrait hanging between the windows is of Henrietta Gourdin Ravenel Gaillard, born in 1816. Her daughter by her first marriage wed Charles Macbeth. Two of the Macbeth daughters married sons of William Cain.

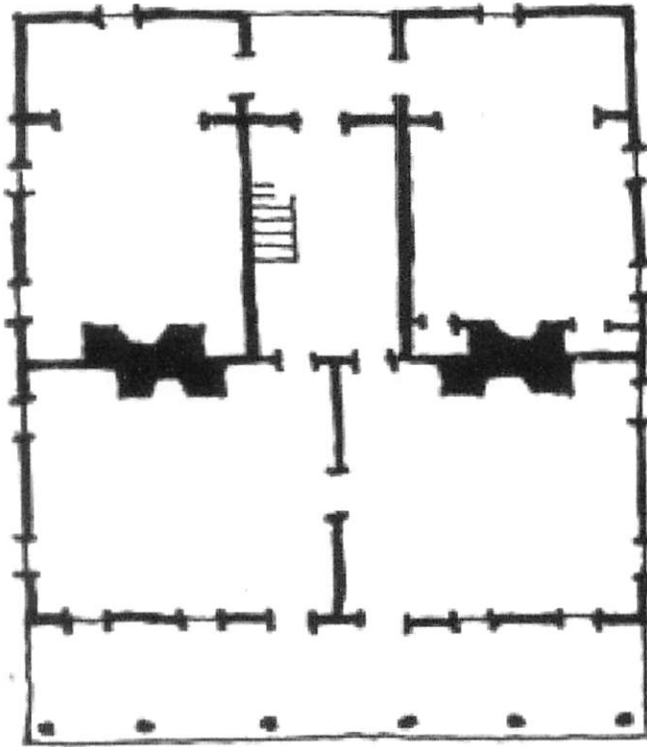
Below: This mantel, located in the northeast room of the first floor of the Somerset house, is also made of black and gold marble. The intricate hand carvings are thought to have been original to the house.



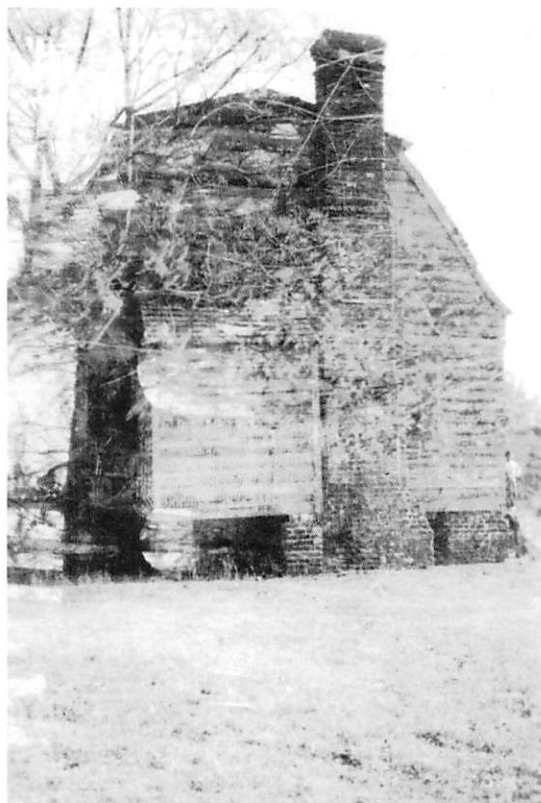
SUNKEN PLANTATIONS



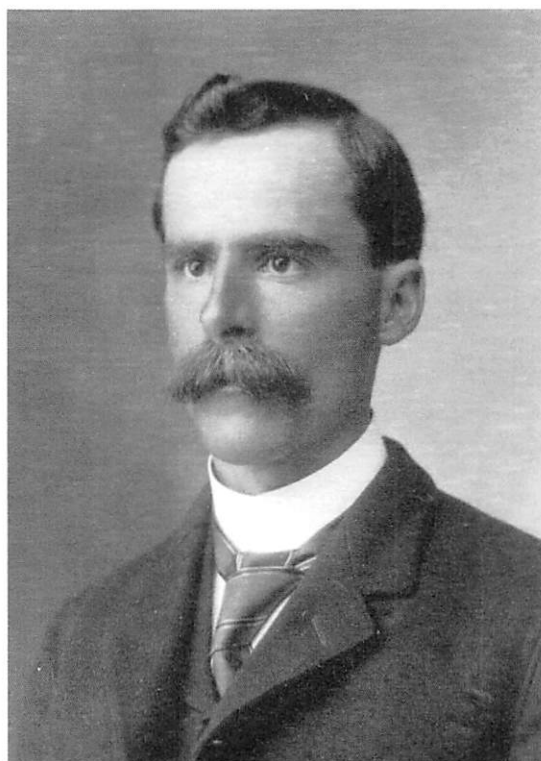
Above: This view of Somerset Plantation is from the front porch of the house. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*



Left: The floor plan is similar to other plantation homes in the Santee group, including Belvidere, Pond Bluff and the Rocks, with the double front doors and central hall only in the rear of the house.



This photograph is of the Somerset kitchen located off the rear of the main house. The kitchen building was a simple construction, built with cypress weatherboards. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*



Pictured is William Cain (1874–1926), son of Dr. Joseph Palmer Cain. He was the last family member to farm the land at Somerset. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*

SUNKEN PLANTATIONS



Left: Pictured is Mrs. Mary Macbeth Cain (1851–1926), the wife of Dr. Joseph Palmer Cain. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*

Below: In this photograph, circa 1920, the Cain family poses on the front steps of the Somerset house. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*





A drought in 1954 brought the level of the lakes down to the lowest point since the flood. The remnants of many of the destroyed plantations were now exposed. Here the Cain family poses on the ruins of the steps of their once proud Somerset Plantation home. *Courtesy of Mrs. Sarah Spruill.*