

South Carolina's Story



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Along the coast, near Murrell's Inlet, is located Brookgreen Gardens, one of the largest outdoor collections of sculpture in North America. There are more than 400 pieces of 19th and 20th century works by American artists in a carefully planned garden setting.

Historically, the gardens have been linked to the Allston family to whom the land was granted sometime in the early part of the 18th century. The land included four plantations: Laurel Hill, Springfield, Brookgreen, and the Oaks.

There are some famous names associated with the early history of Brookgreen Gardens. It was probably at Brookgreen that George Washington spent the night of April 28, 1791. Washington Allston, the painter, was born there in 1779.

Theodosia Burr, the daughter of Vice President Aaron Burr, married Gov. Joseph Allston and lived at Brookgreen. It was from there that Theodosia set forth by boat in 1812 for New York. The boat never reached its destination, and nothing is known for certain of its fate; whether it was lost in a storm or captured by pirates.

Brookgreen Is Unique

Shortly before 1800, Brookgreen came into the hands of South Carolina Lt. Gov. Joshua John Ward of Charleston, who turned it into a profitable rice plantation. The Civil War, however, brought financial ruin to the rice planters of the area and, in 1879, Dr. Louis C. Hasell purchased Brook-

green and lived there with his family for a number of years.

The old plantation house, which was most likely built by the Allstons, burned in 1901. Mrs. Hasell erected a building on the same site, which became a clubhouse for hunting clubs, the subsequent owners of the property.

Arthur Huntington, the philanthropist, established Brookgreen Gardens as a setting for the sculptures created by his wife, Mrs. Anna Hyatt Huntington.

Mrs. Huntington was one of America's foremost sculptors and the first woman to create heroic statues. She received many awards during her lifetime. In 1915, for example, the French government bestowed upon her the Purple Rosette, while in 1920 the National Academy of Design awarded her the Salters Medal for Merit.

The Huntingtons made a summer home on the 10,000 acres, a castle-like structure with the romantic name of Atalaya. Atalaya is now a part of Hunting Beach State Park, which is located across the highway from the gardens.

It has been said of Mrs. Huntington's work that she did for the workhorse in sculpture what Millet did for the French peasant on canvas. She modeled several pieces which depicted groups of farm horses ploughing and dray horses pulling heavy loads up steep and rocky roads.

In 1931 the Huntington land was incorporated "to exhibit the flora and the fauna...of South Carolina, to acquire land, to have buildings for their exhibit and preservation, and to promote learning in regard thereto."

The Huntingtons presented to the State of South Carolina in 1935 the 6,635 acres which presently comprise Brookgreen Gardens.

The outdoor museum at Brookgreen Gardens was

soon expanded to include the works of other American sculptors who worked in a realistic mode. An endowment was established to provide funds for the upkeep of the site.

Each work added to Brookgreen has been carefully placed, many of them centered in fountains or tucked away in shady nooks. One collection of small pieces can be found in an atrium with a reflection pool and small statue titled "Frog Baby," which shows a laughing, exuberant child clutching two frogs.

Each year has brought numerous additions of the collection. During the 1930's, some of the added pieces included Herbert Aham's "Seacape," the "Christ Child" by Abraham Belskie, and an early

work by George Grey Burnard titled "Maidenhead."

The fame of the gardens spread rapidly. In 1935 the rebuilding and paving of the sand road to make a main highway to Florida from the Northern United States opened the site to many more visitors.

There is more to Brookgreen Gardens than just sculpture. In 1942 and 1943 the State Legislature passed and amended a bill calling for a game sanctuary at Brookgreen and prohibiting hunting, fishing, shooting, and trespassing. There are also a zoo and a bird sanctuary, allowing visitors to see various indigenous birds in a native setting.

Brookgreen Gardens is ideally located between bodies of salt and fresh water, which provide favorable surroundings for many varieties of plants, including azaleas, hollies, and magnolias, as well as rare, if less spectacular, blooms.

Each year more and more people enjoy the varied attractions of Brookgreen Gardens. Today, the yearly number of visitors totals in the hundreds of thousands.