

Numertia Plantation, A Particular History of ~

Major Samuel M. Porcher, of Mexico, purchased Walworth after cotton culture became so successful and made him, along with others, wealthy. Also in Upper St. John's, Berkeley, Porcher purchased Numertia, which was made up of a number of tracts belonging to the Byrd's and other English families. It became the home of Porcher's, and then Gaillard's.

English families appear to have been the original owners of much of the land in Upper St. John's, Berkeley. When cotton became a source of quick wealth after the Revolutionary War and the St. Stephen's swamp land was being ruined by floods, many of the families of Huguenot descent began moving across the old Parish Line near the Old Santee Canal to the rich new lands of St. John's, Berkeley, and bought up the smaller plantations from many of the English who moved into new lands in St. Matthew's Parish and Upper St. James, Goose Creek, and then the Up Country, constantly pushing back the Indian, and the forests.

Berkeley County *Women in the Confederacy* meetings were recorded as being held at Numertia, Walnut Grove, Pond Bluff, Eutaw, Belvedere, Walworth, The Rocks, Mrs. P.C. Hicks', Mrs. T.W. Porcher's, Mrs. Palmer's, Mrs. W. Sinkler's, Mrs. K. Simons', Mrs. C. Gaillard's, Mrs. Gourdin's, Mrs. Chas. Sinkler's, and at Seagewood.

The Numertia house was added to the National Register in 1982, building #82003898, Period of Significance – 1850-1874, area of significance – Architecture and Social History.

From Mrs. W. S. Gaillard of Numertia, an interesting account of this plantation: Major Samuel Porcher of Mexico Plantation, built Numertia house, ca. 1840, for his grandson, Richard Shackelford Porcher, who was the son of Philip Porcher (the eldest son of Major Porcher, by his wife Selina Shackelford). "Records for the year 1851, in the Plantation Book of Numertia (now owned by W. S. Gaillard), show that the place was planted, and a map shows the house and the Negro quarters.

"Richard S. Porcher sold Numertia to his newly married cousin, Lydia Gaillard, whose father was Samuel Gaillard of the Rocks Plantation. Lydia married Capt. Christopher Gaillard, also a cousin, of Walnut Grove Plantation in 1855. Numertia was made up of twenty-two tracts. The house was built on tract No. 3. Hence the name Numertia, taken from the Latin meaning, 'numerous tertius.'" (One such spelling I found was *New Mercia*.)

In 1911, Christopher's grandson William S. Gaillard returned, bought the divided land back and, with the help of Gabrielle Marion Kirk, whom he married in 1916, started a prosperous dairy that continued operating until the 1970's. During the 1930's, the family re-established a tradition of fine horsemanship that in the Eutawville area dated back to the Revolution. A bit more about Christopher and his family: Christopher Gaillard, the son of James Gaillard and wife Henrietta, daughter of Theodore Gourdin of Pineville, married Lydia, second daughter of Samuel Gaillard. He served through the war with the gallantry that is native to his race.

Marion Salley states (in an article about the Santee Cooper project and homes being inundated): ". . . in all, it [Numertia] has only about fourteen hundred acres. An old plat in possession of the owner gives the names of some of the owners of bordering lands as: James McKelvey, David Owens, Henry Puckey, Peter Rye, J.M. Byrd, and others. A swamp was designed as "Devil-Go-Round-Bay."

"The Gaillard home was erected over a hundred years ago by Thomas Porcher for his son, Richard S. Porcher, who later sold it to Christopher Gaillard, the father of the owner. Mr. Gaillard did not seem very much worried over the prospect of Numertia being covered with water by the Santee project. He commented on present day affairs by telling of the reply of an old Negro woman whom he had told of the Townsend pension proposal. When asked what she would do with two hundred dollars a month, should she be given it, the old lady answered, "Great God, den I'd hah coffee an' macaroni pie t'ree time a day."

Springfield Plantation, of which the site of the old Rock's Church was a part, now lies under the waters of Lake Marion. (Today we call it Church Island Cemetery.) The first burial in the cemetery was that of George Benisco, 1769-1807, and the last to be buried there—just before the rising waters separated the site from the mainland—was James Samuel Gaillard, 1857-1942 of Numertia Plantation.

Many ghosts' stories have been told about Numertia House, and one specifically I remember being told by the owners Pat and Walter. This writer does not believe in ghosts, but by the same token, I'm totally convinced the story is legit! Here goes:

Pat had been doing a bit of cleaning upstairs and perusing the beauty of the old portrait of Mrs. James [Henrietta Gourdin] Gaillard, one of the earlier owners, and imagining how well she would look downstairs, she

determined to get her husband to help ‘relocate and rehang’ it over the Living Room fireplace mantel . . . “so visitors could get to see it more often.” Now, it must be said, that word had been handed down by generations of Gaillard’s, “Ms. Henrietta’s portrait is not to leave this room!”

Regardless of previous warnings, Pat had Walter assist her in the project, on this particular day, relocating the portrait to the downstairs main Living Room. Walter got out his electric drill and some heavy-duty frame hangers and went to work. “With plaster walls and ceilings throughout the home, and a doubly heavy framed portrait to hang, I had to be extra careful to ensure stability as well as making sure that the beautiful wallpaper over the plaster walls remains ‘undamaged’”.

With professional masterclass work, the hangers were strategically placed, centered, well anchored, over the mantel piece; perfectly! “Walt, I think we’re ready to get the framed portrait from upstairs so we can get it hung,” was the request (more like instructions!). Walter relocated the portrait, hung it with precision, stood back with his wife, and admired the “job well done.” (This was about 10 a.m. in the morning.)

The next morning, after a splendid breakfast, the couple suggested they enjoy their coffee while sitting in the Living Room, admiring “Mrs. Gaillard’s” relocation over the Living Room fireplace.

“What in the world? What happened here?” Astounded as they both entered the room, the portrait was NOT hanging over the fireplace . . . but ‘placed’ perfectly on the floor, upright, and leaning back lightly against the fireplace hearth screen. Not a scratch on it! Anywhere!

“No way it could have fallen, not with those hangers I used,” Walt said.

“Wait! Where are the hangers? There are no frame hangers on the wall . . . through the wall, through the wallpaper, there are no holes where I drilled them,” exclaimed Walter. “The wire hanger on the back of the frame is still perfect, still attached to the frame, perfectly!”

“Is this a joke? You [Pat] evidently took it down, but how? It’s too heavy for you to lift. And what happened to the holes in the wall . . . through the wallpaper, that I drilled? They’re gone! There is no sign of holes!”

Well . . . it had been said that Mrs. Gaillard did not want . . . no, she had commanded, many times, “do not take my portrait from my bedroom.”

This couple had no explanation for the removal of the portrait, nor the explanation of what happened to the holes drilled in the wall. There were no holes. This author looked! The wallpaper was flawless, no holes or tears. Before that day was over . . . Mrs. Gaillard was back upstairs, properly placed over her fireplace in her bedroom never to leave, or be moved, again.

Questions? You bet. But I have no answers, no solutions nor suggestions. I have heard many more [ghosts] stories about Numertia. Maybe later.

Keith Gourdin