

PEACHTREE PLANTATION
South Santee River
McClellanville vicinity
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS SC-882
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PEACHTREE PLANTATION

HABS No. SC-882

Location: McClellanville, South Carolina, Charleston County, South Carolina.

The coordinates for Peachtree Plantation are 647999 N and 3673526 E. These were obtained through Google Earth in May 2014 with, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: Located in the St. James Santee Parish along the South Santee River, Peachtree Plantation stands as a ruin. Peachtree Plantation was once a two-story dwelling owned by the Lynch family, prominent rice planters and politicians in colonial South Carolina. Constructed between 1760 and 1762, Peachtree Plantation is a piano-noble style, Georgian Palladian house, with a raised English basement. Despite its current physical state, the house would have been one of the finest plantation dwellings in the South Carolina Lowcountry. The Peachtree tract was initially used as an indigo plantation soon converted to rice when the demand for indigo waned.

The tract is particularly significant as the site where rice production was revolutionized with the invention of the water-powered rice mill. The house was built for Thomas Lynch Sr., a prominent wealthy planter and politician. The Lynch family was rewarded a tract of land in the Carolina Colony by King George II when they converted to the Church of England from Roman Catholicism.¹ Lynch gifted the house to his son, Thomas Lynch Jr. for his wedding in 1772.² Both of the Lynch men played an active role in the events preceding the American Revolution. Thomas Lynch Jr. was the second youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence at twenty-six years of age. Although the house lies in ruins, as result of a fire in 1840 and weathering multiple storms and neglect, substantial physical evidence remains that sheds light on the appearance and architectural significance of the structure.

Description: Peachtree Plantation is a two-story brick house, one of which is a full daylight basement divided into four chambers likely utilized as storage, a kitchen and a chamber, with a central passageway. Peachtree measures 54'-4" x 61'-9-3/4" deep enclosing a total of 3,365 square feet per level. The house was constructed in English bond brick with evidence of stucco that suggest the exterior was scored to appear as stone. Evidence of three coats of stucco, a scratch coat, a thicker mid-coat, and a finish coat, are visible across the ruin. A watertable exists running the length of the building.

Two primary facades are present, one on the south side where the house would have been approached via land and the second on the north side, accessed from the river. Although there is

¹ Elba McDowell, "Peachtree Plantation was Home to Signer of Declaration of Independence," News and Courier, July 23, 1984.

² Anne Baked Leland Bridges and Roy Williams II, *St. James Santee Plantation Parish: History and Records, 1685-1925*, (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1997), 69.

no remaining physical evidence a visitor to the plantation described the house as “Baronial grandeur (with) spacious Grecian porticos.”³ Entries are located centrally on the north, south, and west facades with no entrance on the east facade. The entrance on the west façade is the only entrance located at the ground level. Remnants of stone steps are present at the north and south entrances that would have led to the porticos on the north and south facades. One visitor recounted that the porticos were floored with square clay red tiles. Several of these tiles are still present at the site.⁴

Like other Georgian Palladian precedents, Peachtree is symmetrical in plan and in detail. The east and west facades have a regularized fenestration with six large windows running above the water table and four windows below with blind windows providing symmetry. Along the river access, or the north façade, there is evidence of four windows above the belt course and two windows below with blind windows flanking the central stair for symmetry. Each window was capped by a segmental arch, one of which is intact on the west facade. It is unclear what the roof structure of Peachtree would have been but there is evidence of four brick chimney stacks at the basement level. When compared to local precedents it is reasonable to believe Peachtree could have had an ‘M’ or ‘W’ roof similar to those found at nearby Drayton Hall and Fenwick Hall. Little evidence exist in the interior of the ruin to suggest the houses’ configuration. Only three small portions of interior walls remain intact along the perimeter of the structure. Based on an analysis of window placement and interior niches it is reasonable to suggest that the basement level was primarily used for storage, kitchen space, and possibly a small chamber. A centrally located depression in the structure and visitor accounts suggest the existence of a well or cistern. Portions of a drainage system are found on the interior of the south side that could have directed water to this interior catchment.

History: The exact construction dates of Peachtree Plantation are unknown but most accounts place the date of construction between 1760 and 1762 by the Lynch family. According to surviving estate inventories that include room-by-room accounts of Peachtree plantation, the Lynch family would have been wealthy during the era they resided at Peachtree. Thomas Lynch Jr. was the only male heir and inherited most of the family’s land holdings along the Santee. Lynch Jr. was born in 1749 at Hopsewee Plantation, located across the Santee River, to the north of Peachtree. He was educated in London and returned home in 1771 to marry Elizabeth Shubrick. The couple moved to the property in 1772 after receiving Peachtree Plantation as a wedding gift from Thomas Lynch Sr. Lynch Jr. played an active role in the events preceding the American Revolution. He was elected to the First Provincial Congress of South Carolina in 1774 and served on the committee to prepare a constitution for the state of South Carolina which would later be ratified by the Provincial Congress in 1776. He served in the Second Carolina militia and the First Regiment of South Carolina during the American Revolution. On August 2,

³ Bridges and Williams, *St. James Santee Plantation Parish*, 123-24.

⁴ Kendanne Altizer, “Three Hoes in the Kitchen: The Conceptualization of Peachtree Plantation, St. James Santee Parish, South Carolina (Masters Thesis: Clemson University, 2014), 44-63.

1776, Lynch became the 52nd signer of the Declaration of Independence at twenty-six years of age, making him the second youngest signer of the document.⁵

During the eighteenth century, Peachtree changed hands various times, each time staying within the Lynch family. In 1779 Thomas Lynch Jr. and his wife Elizabeth were lost at sea during their voyage to France leaving no heirs to inherit the property and its surrounding rice fields. Thomas Lynch Jr.'s nephew was next in line to receive the plantation under the requirement that he change his last name to Lynch. At the time of Thomas Lynch Jr.'s death his nephew was too young to inherit and the plantation moved to the ownership of Lynch Jr.'s sister, Sabina and her husband John Bowman. While under the management of John Bowman, Peachtree reached new levels of rice production. In 1787, John Bowman contracted Jonathon Lucas to construct the first water powered rice mill at Peachtree Plantation. This mill revolutionized the production of rice and further boosted the economics of the Lowcountry.⁶ After coming of age, John Bowman Lynch assumed ownership of the plantation. John Bowman Lynch had no surviving children at the time of his death and the Lynch name was lost. John Bowman Lynch moved to Tennessee prior to 1835 leasing Peachtree and the neighboring plantation, Peafield, to Stephen Doar. Doar rented Peachtree and cultivated rice on the tract. Although the exact date is often disputed, it is widely believed that the plantation burned between 1840 and 1846. The exact cause of the fire is unknown.

John Bowman Lynch had one daughter, Sabina, who married Paul Desmukes. Paul Desmukes administered the will of Bowman in 1879 and continued to lease the plantation to Stephen Doar.⁷ The tract would stay in the Desmukes family although portions of the tract were sold among family members. In the 1930s, a large portion of the tract was sold to Booth-Boyle Livestock Company. The family maintained ownership of a 481 acre parcel that stayed with the McCrady line of the Desmukes family until 1944. Booth-Boyle sold their portion of the tract to the Atlantic Creosote company in 1955 who maintained ownership of the lands until 1986. At this time the tract was sold to White Oak Forestry, the current property owner. The McCrady's sold the smaller portion of the tract to Helen Stewart in 1944 who later sold it to DeWitt King in 1947. The property remained with the King family until 1989 when it was conveyed to White Oak Forestry, returning the tract to one owner. White Oak Forestry placed the land under a conservation easement that ensures that no development or ground disturbing activity will take place within 100 feet of the ruin and that the ruin not be demolished.⁸

Sources: Altizer, Kendanne M. "Three Hoes in the Kitchen: The Conceptualization of Peachtree Plantation, St. James Santee, South Carolina." M.A. Thesis: Clemson University, May 2014.

⁵ Altizer, "Three Hoes in the Kitchen: The Conceptualization of Peachtree Plantation, St. James Santee Parish South Carolina," 17.

⁶ Susan Hoffer McMillan and Salden Baker Hill, *McClellanville and the St. James, Santee Parish* (Charleston, SC; Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 88.

⁷ Altizer, "Three Hoes in the Kitchen: The Conceptualization of Peachtree Plantation, St. James Santee Parish, South Carolina," 20-21.

⁸ Altizer, "Three Hoes in the Kitchen: The Conceptualization of Peachtree Plantation, St. James Santee Parish, South Carolina," 23.

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Historians: Kendy Altizer and Brittany McKee, Clemson/College of Charleston Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. Report completed in May 2014.

Project

Information: This documentation project was conducted by students in the Clemson University/College of Charleston Graduate Program in Historic Preservation under the direction of faculty advisor, Amalia Leifeste. Team members included: Kavan Argue, Kendy Altizer, Megan Funk, Valerie Heider, Kelly Herrick, Lindsay Lanois, Lindsay Lee, Brittany McKee, Erin Morton, Melissa Roach, Leigh Schoberth, Katie Schulteis, and Will Smith.