



*Kerce, Red (Benjamin L.), 1911-1964. Vine covered column ruins of Verdura plantation - Tallahassee, Florida. 19--. Black & white photoprint. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/44417>*

## Plantation Houses of North Florida

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### ABSTRACT

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The concept of Plantation conjures an image that identifies the North Florida / South Georgia region of the U. S. Leon County attracted many cotton planters from Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, North and South Carolina in the 1820's to the 1850's. Up to the beginning of the Civil War, Leon County was the 5th largest producer of cotton counting all counties from Florida and Georgia. The Civil War brought the plantation culture to a standstill.

The plantations transformed the environment based on their need for open fields in which to cultivate different crops, or raise a variety of animals with the help of slaves. From the 1900's many plantations abandoned their land to nature producing a deep change in the local landscape. Today plantations are not used as much for planting crops but more for hunting or as tree farms. The hunting plantations do not grow crops but provide good conditions for the hunting of animals and birds. Other plantations were torn apart, sold and now are part of the Tallahassee urban fabric. In other words, they disappeared.

The transformation of the plantations has been slow and steady, and has become the image of the area, even the region. The paper shows five plantations that represent five different evolutions of these traditional landscapes. The landscapes have evolved to accommodate the very local but fluid definition of place. It is this transformation, this evolving identity which helped preserve some of the traditional landscapes and the traditional architecture on them.

The most prominent feature of the plantation is the "Big House" or plantation house. The house embodies all aspects of the plantation life style. The construction materials and methods reflected the times, the technologies and the available resources.

The research has been done mainly in the archives of the Tallahassee Trust for Historic Preservation. The results, still pending, explain the land typology as it evolved from the golden decades of the plantation culture to the present day land use.

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### KEYWORDS

*plantation, culture, traditional, landscapes, construction*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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Plantations conjure a strong image that is deeply rooted in the culture of the North Florida/South Georgia region of the United States. It is an image that defines and describes a particular and peculiar sense of place; the image that still identifies this area, and is different from other plantation based regions of the country. The study area is basically defined by the agricultural land located between Tallahassee in Florida and Thomasville in Georgia. As part of the Deep South as a region it is defined by culture, not by state lines.

Florida became the 27th state of the Union in 1845 and grew significantly until 1860. Historically wealth was related to the plantations, and the plantations in Florida were concentrated mainly in the north of the State. In Florida the plantation golden age or period goes from 1763 to 1865. At that time in Leon County there were numerous plantations that attracted many cotton planters from other states (Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas). Many upper South white settlers moved to Leon County and similar areas in North Florida and the Gulf Coast, promoting this way of growth in the city of Tallahassee and in Leon County. Wilderness was transformed into an agrarian landscape that responded to the socio-economic reality of the South at that time. Large tracks of land were owned by a few people that needed easy access to the land, and a large number of cheap-labor to exploit it. This unplanned growth was informed and modified as it slowly opened the forest, avoiding swamps, following the rolling hills, and made it suitable for planting crops. The Florida soil is fertile and the growing season is long, allowing at times for more than one harvest. While the area grew vast amounts of cotton it also produced corn, beans, sugar cane, potatoes, tobacco, benne (sesame), etc.

The United States acquired the territory of Florida from Spain through the Adams-Onís Treaty (also known as the Transcontinental Treaty, the Florida Purchase Treaty or the Florida Treaty) which was signed in 1819 and took effect in 1821. The treaty established a clear border between the Viceroyalty of New Spain and the U.S. This also gave the country the Gulf areas of Alabama, Mississippi and Western Louisiana. On

March 3, East and West Florida become territories of the United States. A few weeks later, on March 30 East and West Florida merged into a single Florida Territory, the future State of Florida.

Once the territory was acquired the next step was to deal with the natives. The Treaty of Moultrie Creek of 1823 and by the Treaty of Payne's Landing of 1832 between the US Government and the chiefs of several native groups of Florida (collectively known as the Seminoles and commonly called Creek Indians) forced these groups to give up all claims to land in exchange for a 4,000,000-acre reservation in the center of the State. The Treaties produced a lot of conflict and unhappiness amongst the Native Americans, and later on in disregard for all the accords, the Seminoles were forcefully moved West. The Seminole Wars or the Florida Wars were the longest and most expensive conflicts between the Native Americans and the US Army. The First Seminole War was from circa 1816 to 1819, The Second Seminole War was from 1835 to 1842, and the Third Seminole War from 1855 until 1858.

On March 3, 1845 Florida becomes the 27th State of the United States. Florida was admitted as a "slave state", or a state where the practice of slavery was legal. That year the Capitol was completed, partially using bricks manufactured by the Chaires brothers in their plantation.

In 1861 Florida declared its secession from the Union, becoming one of the founding members of the Confederate States. The battle of Natural Bridge just south of Tallahassee on March 6, 1863 is one of the last fights of the war before Robert E. Lee surrenders to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse in Richmond, VA on April 9, 1865 ending the Civil War. The American Civil War brought the plantation culture to a standstill. After the Civil War, in the 1870's-80's the plantation economy changes to sharecropping and tenant farming.

In order to better understand the evolution of the plantations we have selected a few typical examples that show the present conditions of these large country estates. For that we have selected the following plantations: Bannerman, Bellevue, Chaires, Goodwood, and Tall Timbers. Each plantation represents a different path from their glory days to the present.

## 2. BANNERMAN PLANTATION

The Bannerman Plantation (also known as the Lamonía Plantation) began in 1827 when Charles Bannerman purchased his first parcel of land. Charles, a white settler from New Hanover County in North Carolina, sought to build a cotton plantation and find his fortune. At its peak in the 1860s, the plantation covered 1,549.6 acres and 75 slaves worked it.

Charles continued to improve the agricultural output by implementing new methods such as fertilizing with guano and planting new crops, including tobacco which was introduced in 1858. In addition to cotton and tobacco, the Bannerman plantation also produced corn, sweet potatoes, peas, peanuts, turnips, sugar cane, collards and melons as well as hogs, cattle, and other livestock. This agricultural diversity was fairly standard for plantations of this size.

In 1875, nine years after Charles's death, the plantation was divided amongst his children. While the plantation property was sold off piecemeal, the portion where the plantation house stands remained in the family until it was sold by Terry Bannerman Zeigler in 1991. At 141 years, the Bannerman Plantation was the longest family-owned plantation.

The Bannerman Plantation House, built between 1851 and 1852, represents a two-story frame vernacular approach to the main plantation house typical of Charles's native North Carolina; representative of the architectural styles and ideals that the settler from the upper South brought to the new country. The house was originally a four-room vernacular I-house (two rooms on top and two on bottom) with a later addition of two shed roof rooms on the rear, gable roof, Greek Revival and Federal details; compatible twentieth century additions do not affect integrity of 1852 dwelling; rural cultural landscape (Florida Master Site File, Historical Structure Form, 1959). Behind the house there was a pantry and a detached kitchen originally placed a few feet away just in case of a fire. The kitchen, like other parts of the house represented an evolution in construction and in culture. In 1852 the dwelling had a detached kitchen to the back and to the left of the house; in the 1920's the kitchen was moved to the pantry and enlarged; in 1961 the kitchen was removed and placed behind the house, once again separated from the main body of the dwelling, and included a bathroom and a sunroom; and in 1972 the kitchen becomes the laundry room, and it is moved to the location of the 1920's. The house is a good example of a mid-size planter antebellum architecture

of its type and clearly illustrates the environment in which Southern plantation life prospered. Charles built this house to accommodate his large family in comfort not in grandeur.

The house is organized as a Georgian plan using a central passage with adjoining parlors. Georgian plans are characterized for their simplicity, proportion, and balance. Although Georgian was the dominant style for domestic architecture in the 18th c. it continued being used in the South throughout the 19th c. The style developed multiple variations on the simple symmetrical, generally two-story house with a central entrance, and two-rooms deep. While the central hall retains its nineteenth century integrity, the north and west wings were added in the twentieth century. The house is Georgian in organization, with vernacular influences, and Greek Revival dominant decorative elements. The architectural ornamentation of the house is influenced by the Greek Revival style, popular at the time of the house construction and the dominant style until about 1860 in the South. It is seen in the large, squarish six-over-six windows, front doors framed by sidelights and a transom, and classically-derived square columns. On the interior, the central-hall plan is also typical of a mid-century Greek Revival house. Applied symmetrical Greek Revival moldings



Figure 1.

Charles Bannerman plantation home - Tallahassee, Florida. 1976. Black & white photoprint. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. Source: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/36336>

and plain corner blocks trim the five-paneled doors and surround the windows in the six original rooms and the halls. The parlor door and window moldings feature a Greek Revival pedimented crown in addition to the moldings, and recessed panels beneath the parlor windows (McAlester, 1986).

A second style which contributes to the appearance of the vernacular dwelling is the earlier Federal style, which had been the dominant style until the 1820s. It is shown in the five-bay facade with its smooth siding and the lightness and delicacy of the balustraded veranda (National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form). The front façade of the house has a two-story front porch with six square columns and a double-tiered veranda. The five bay organization and the delicate details that emphasize the symmetrical order and the straight forward repetition are the Federal style most expressive influence.

The foundations consist of masonry piers that elevate the house in order to provide natural ventilation to the underside, a typical solution in pre air conditioned days. The piers as well as the chimneys were made of bricks fabricated in the plantation, which was a common practice in the South. The Bannerman journal records the process of construction of the house beginning with making brick or "burning brick" in a locally made kiln (Wladorf). The infill is pierced brick (a screen) for ventilation. Bricks were mainly used for foundations and for chimneys which were the first steps in the construction of the house. This explains large accounts of leftover pieces buried around the big house and around the slave quarters. There is also archeological evidence of brick walls and wells next to the house.

The house is a wood frame structure using primary local, abundant and cheap varieties of pine. The timber was cut and milled nearby. The original section of the house is supported by sills measuring from 9" x 10.25" to 11" x 12" (National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form). Sills under the house are longleaf pine. These large pieces of timber were cut by hand and pegged together. Studs and braces are a full 2" x 4" yellow pine. Around doors and windows, the members are a full 4" x 6". The corner studs or frame columns are a full 8" x 8" with one quarter cut out to make the corner (The Current, January 1962). The front façade is faced with flush siding boards 9" to 11" wide. Aside from the large timbers that were pegged together, all other wood related materials were attached with nails. The nails represent three historic stages: hand wrought nails (17th, 18th, and

19th c.), machine cut nails (late 18th c. to present) and wire nails (1855 to present but became the dominant nail form after 1890). Of course, as expected, nail concentrations are significantly higher around the big house where machine cut nails predominate.

The Bannerman house is one of the few remaining antebellum residences in Leon County.

### 3. BELLEVUE PLANTATION

Bellevue Plantation began in 1826 when Hector McNeill purchased eighty acres of land from the United States government approximately two miles west of the young town of Tallahassee. The plantation continued to expand through the 1840's as numerous owners acquired adjacent land. The most recognizable feature of the plantation, the Bellevue Plantation House, was constructed during this period. Around 1835, Samuel H. Duval, a first cousin of Governor William Pope Duval, had the house built for Ellen Attaway Willis. Ellen was a younger sister of the notable Princess Catherine Murat (born Catherine Daingerfield Willis Gray, Daughter of Colonel Byrd C. and Mary Willis née Lewis, Granddaughter of Fielding Lewis, George Washington's brother-in-law, and Great-grandniece of George Washington).

In 1842, Duval went bankrupt and the property passed through two more owners before being acquired by Princess Murat in 1854. Princess Murat named the property and house after a hotel in Brussels where she and her husband, Prince Achille Murat, spent time. Achille Charles Louis Napoléon Murat was the Eldest son of Joachim, "The Dandy King" (Napoleonic King of Naples during the First French Empire) and Maria Annunziata Carolina or Caroline (Napoleon's youngest sister). Murat was born January 21, 1801. He emigrated to the US in 1821 and settled in St. Augustine in 1824. In 1825 Murat and Col. James Gadsden bought the land Murat would call Lipona Plantation 15 miles east of Tallahassee from the Marquis de Lafayette (Lafayette Land Grant). Prince Murat had an active political life, was elected Alderman of Tallahassee and later become Mayor of the city.

The plantation never grew very large; the 1860 census recorded 520 acres, 24 slaves, and the plantation's worth as \$10,000. After Catherine's death in 1867, the property was eventually sold to William D. Bloxham at \$10 per acre to pay off debt acquired by the Murats. The land continued to change hands through the next

100 years. The plantation grew smaller and smaller as subsequent owners sectioned the larger property into smaller parcels for sale. The plantation eventually became the small scale residential neighborhood it is today, and the plantation land disappeared under the urban expansion of Tallahassee.

Prince Achille and Princess Catherine Murat were well known in the Tallahassee area as being related to two prominent individuals. Prince Murat, adventurous in his ventures and expenditures, left Catherine with numerous debts at the time of his death in 1847. However, in the 1850s, Napoléon III of France declared her a princess of France and gifted her a sum of money and access to the royal livery. With her new found money Catherine purchased Bellevue Plantation and the house in 1854. She spent the remainder of her life living in the plantation house, improving the production of her landholdings, and as the Vice Regent of Florida for the Mount Vernon Ladies Association worked to preserve George Washington's first home. Princess Murat died in 1867. The Murats were buried in the St. John's Episcopal Cemetery in Tallahassee.

The Bellevue Plantation House is representative of the vernacular architecture of the Gulf Coast. This type of house was brought to Florida via the Gulf, and it is frequently seen throughout the rural areas of the panhandle. The residential building is representative of environmentally responsive architecture along the Gulf Coast and the Southeast of the country. The symmetrical and simple house is a fine example of the transition from Creole cottage to simple Classical detailing (J.R Little). The construction date is not known but Henry Edwards and Queen Anne Browning got married in 1850 and shortly after that they moved to their new house.

It is a simple one-and-a-half story, mortise-and-tenon frame house clad in shiplap siding. The main story of the original house was built in the pattern of a double log house or dog-trot house. Two large rooms with exposed end chimneys are symmetrically organized around a large central hall. On the front, an incised or cut-in porch runs the full front of the house. The second floor follows the organization of the first but without proper "rooms", more like partitions to indicate and separate spaces. Sometimes they used portions of the upstairs to spread the harvested cotton to dry (This House). The kitchen was located in the back, separated from the house and connected with a covered walkway. The central hall is a specific response to the hot and humid weather of the South. This response is expressed in the form of an open "dog-trot" or as a

relative large central hall. In the case of a central hall, large windows and/or doors are placed at both ends to allow when open for the sight breeze to move the air and make the interior spaces more comfortable. Other architectural moves to increase the comfort level in the house are elevated brick piers, high ceilings, and large windows throughout.

The House was moved in 1967. The front façade currently faces east. That is a response to the Museum's needs not its original solar orientation. Originally it faced south which explains the deep front porch. Six solid square columns are equally spaced across the front porch. The chamfered edges and general appearance are Victorian (Inspection Report). There is evidence of a possible matching back porch but it was closed-in in a very early date and converted into two single story rooms of unequal size but this is inconclusive (Waldorf, Bellevue).

This vernacular house was built of wood and lifted on brick piers, with an external brick chimney and a gable roof covered in wooden shingles. This represents a typical cottage construction of this place and time. The construction of the house is post and beam with large sills joined by mortise and tenon, double-wooden-peg joints. All sills and beams were mortised for posts. All exterior wall studs and diagonal braces were rough

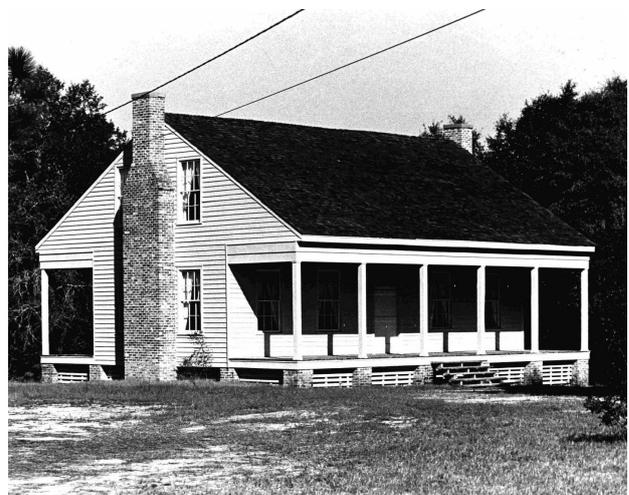


Figure 2.

*Bellevue Plantation House - Tallahassee, Florida. Black & white photoprint. Tallahassee Trust for Historic Preservation. Source: <https://www.taltrust@comcast.net>*

cut heart pine attached by cut or wrought nails. The lumber was heart pine, hand-dressed and cut off the local trees. The roof shingles were hand-riven. The original floor which has been replaced during restoration were from hand-dressed lumber 1 ½ inches thick and varied from 8 to 10 inches wide (This House). The complete original stair remained in place (Waldorf, G. Bellevue).

The current house displays slave quarters and kitchen outbuildings that may not be original.

After Princess Murat's death the house had various owners. The Murat House Association, Tallahassee Heritage Foundation, and Junior League of Tallahassee acquired the home and in 1967 relocated it to the Tallahassee Museum of History and Natural Science, where it still stands exemplifying Tallahassee's rich history.

The house was restored in the 1960's by Herschel E. Shepherd, AIA, of Jacksonville, Florida. It is considered as one of the finest and most accurate restorations in Florida.

#### 4. CHAIRES PLANTATION (VERDURA)

Verdura Plantation was one of the largest and most successful plantations in Leon County. Benjamin Chaires, an influential Florida and Leon County transplant and one of Florida's most successful land speculators, began purchasing land east of Tallahassee in the mid-1820s. The plantation rapidly grew as he acquired more land, raising it to 9,440 acres at the time of his death in 1838. Benjamin's business interests included real estate ventures, construction contracts, building of railroads, banking, brick manufacturing, buying and selling of cotton and slaves, and other commodities.

Benjamin Chaires was highly influential and successful during the end of the Florida territorial period and its early statehood. It is even suggested that he was Florida's first millionaire. Although born in Onslow County, NC, his legacy began after moving to St. Augustine. Before moving to Tallahassee and establishing Verdura, Benjamin helped plan the development of Jacksonville in the 1820s as one of its three city commissioners. He donated the land used for the Duval County Courthouse. He even became

the first county judge of Duval in 1822.

Around 1830, Benjamin moved to Tallahassee and began purchasing the land which would become Verdura. Before Verdura, he purchased land north of Tallahassee and built The Columns. The Columns, also known as The William "Money" Williams Mansion was an important plantation whose main house was built around 1830 is now located next to The Governor's Mansion. The house and surrounding gardens have been recently renovated as a museum. In 1832 he sold The Columns and bought a 500-acre tract east of Tallahassee. That year Verdura was built.

Benjamin was primarily a cotton producer but his continued business endeavors helped create the St. Joseph Railroad and Canal Company as well as the Union Bank of Florida. Benjamin was instrumental in the growth of northern Florida during the state's infancy.

Prior to his death on October 4, 1838, Benjamin deeded part of Verdura to his daughter Sarah Jane Chaires and her husband Col. George T. Ward as part of her dowry. This portion became the Southwood

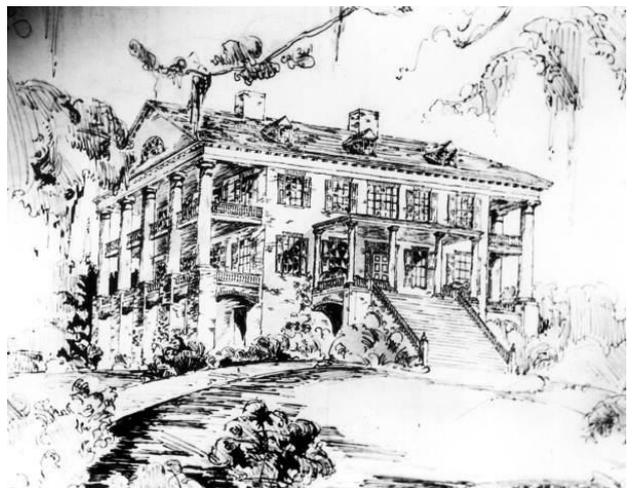


Figure 3.

*Drawing of the Verdura plantation mansion - Tallahassee, Florida. 18--.* Black & white photoprint. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. Source: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/25979>.

Plantation for which the current residential development southeast of Tallahassee is named. St. Joe submitted an application for development to Leon County in 1988 which included land from Southwood and from Verdura. Southwood was developed into a form of New Urbanism but Verdura is still on hold.

The plantation, although subdivided after Benjamin's death, continued to be owned and operated by his brothers and heirs. It remained in the family through 1948 when the St. Joe Paper Company bought the land from George L. Henderson, one of his descendants. All that remains of the prosperous plantation are the ruins of the plantation house.

The Verdura Plantation House was once a sight to behold. Around 1832, Chaires built what was considered by many to be the preeminent plantation house overlooking the fields. The 3 story brick, 15 room Greek Revival mansion embodied Benjamin's fortune. The house was vast and opulent, clearly signaling to any and all visitors that he was a rich and important person. The mansion was one of the best examples of the elite planter culture of the area. Upon approaching the house, one was struck by the unique placement and size of the ten Tuscan columns that framed the house. Curiously enough the massive columns were at the sides and not by the entrance, framing the house instead of facing and perhaps confronting the arrival.

At the front there was a large, grand stair that rose to an entry portico elevating the visitor to the principal floor of the large house. Underneath was an above-ground basement. The interior matched the exterior's grandeur with spacious rooms designed to host well-attended and well-dressed galas. The rooms had high ceilings, and each room had a fireplace. There were no privies in the house. The Chaires family used chamber pots or slop buckets which once used were taken to a wagon fitted with a tank. This job was first done by slaves and later by servants (Heiland: 55). Fire destroyed the house in 1885, leaving only its ten colossal columns and piles of rubble.

The debris, created by thousands of bricks that covered the site, provided a seal and "the potential for archeological data of unusual quality and quantity, heretofore lacking in other antebellum plantation

sites in the county..." (Heiland:3)

Today, the once mighty massive columns stand amidst rubble, overgrown vegetation, and subdivided hunting tracts as ghostly echoes of a distant life. The remaining columns, five facing east and five facing west sit on square pedestals that were placed 80 feet apart. Both columns and pedestals were built of brick made by slaves on the plantation. The bricks would be made from clay pitted on the property and sun dried or fired in a small kiln. Some bricks were molded with a curved surface to create the diminishing curve of the columns.

This was common practice in the South. The quantity of brick left in Verdura plus the brick business ventured by the brothers' state that there was some understanding of handmade brick making in the plantation (Heiland: 8). Benjamin developed a small business of brick making. He and his brothers Green and Thomas contracted to provide bricks for the Federal Arsenal in Chattahoochee. With Jesse Willis he made bricks for the second capitol building in 1838. They also provided bricks for the Columns, the Presbyterian Church, and supplied other builders (Heiland: 34).

If one assumes that Verdura was similar in status and nature to other plantations, a large number of out buildings would be expected to dot the immediate landscape.

According to an advertisement placed in the Tallahassee Floridian and Journal in October 2, 1858, the outhouses were made of brick and built in the most substantial manner. Unfortunately, nothing remains and the land has been plowed and planted on many occasions, and converted into a tree farm since the 1960's by the St. Joe Corporation after purchasing it in 1948. In a plantation of this size and prominence one would expect to find several structures that support its daily activities, such as barns for different purposes, stables, saw mills, grinding mills, carpenter shops, blacksmith shops, cooperages, tanneries, cotton gins, dairy houses, spring houses, smokehouses, nurseries, wells, and/or many others, standing alone or attached according to local use and custom. To this day there is no evidence left of the existence and location of any out-buildings in this plantation.

## 5. GOODWOOD PLANTATION

Goodwood Plantation, originally called Newstead, first began when the Croom Family started purchasing land from the Lafayette Land Grant in the 1820's. This land was part of a township granted to general Lafayette in appreciation of his assistance to the country during the American War of Independence. Hardy Croom, a North Carolina native, bought the first 640 acres in 1833 following in his father's steps. Over the next four years, he continued amassing land in the area. In 1837 Hardy, his wife Frances, and their three children met a tragic fate when their ship the SS Home sank near Cape Hatteras in a tropical hurricane known as Racer's Storm. Hardy's brother Bryan inherited and took over the operations of the property and completed the plantation home. He also commissioned a monument in memory of his brother and family which was erected in St. John's Episcopal Church in Tallahassee.

In 1839, Henrietta Smith, the maternal grandmother of Hardy's children, and Elizabeth Armistead, the children's maternal aunt, sued Bryan for ownership of the property. After nearly twenty years, the case was settled in favor of Smith and Armistead in 1857, who assumed control of two-eighths of the estate, which included Goodwood.

In 1858 the plantation was sold to Arvah Hopkins. The 1860 census reported Goodwood was 1,675 acres (1050 acres of improved land and 625 acres of unimproved land) and eventually it grew to 2,400 acres. The plantation produced 2,500 bushels of corn and 150 bales of cotton, and had an unknown number of slaves. After passing through several owners, Senator William C. Hodges bought the remaining property in 1925. He died in 1940, leaving Goodwood to his wife Margaret.

Margaret remarried Thomas Hood in 1948. After her death Thomas established the Margaret E. Wilson Foundation in her memory and created Plans for Goodwood's restoration as a museum and public park. Upon Hood's death in 1990 the Wilson Foundation and Goodwood Museum and Gardens assumed stewardship for Goodwood, ensuring its continued existence as an example of a way of life long past. Goodwood plantation was similar in size and status to



Figure 4.

*Goodwood, before remodeling - Tallahassee, Florida. ca 1917. Black & white photonegative. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. Source: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/10568>*



Figure 5.

*Goodwood mansion - Tallahassee, Florida. Not before 1911. Black & white photoprint. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. Source: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/28058>.*

Verdura. The mansion designed by architect George Anderson was begun in 1834 for Bryan H. Croom, and supposedly completed in 1839. The house was slightly smaller than Verdura. Goodwood had a footprint of about 55 feet square (about 7,588 square feet) while Verdura was 50' x 80', both were built out of brick, had high ceilings, large windows, columns and a large verandah (Heiland:12). The mansion was simple in conception and details but massive and monumental. The design was based on a Georgian symmetrical square plan with a center hall. The Georgia Style lingered on in America until the 1820's. Goodwood is a late example of this style. For most of the construction slave labor was used but artisans, painters, decorators and landscape designers were also contracted to work on the house (Croom Mansion - MSFile)

The body of the house was organized in two floor plans over a basement with an attic on top crowned by a square lantern or small cupola, a replica of the one in Mt. Vernon. The Main House employed a variety of elements to reflect the wealth and status of the Croom family and of Mrs. Tiers, who later extensively renovated the property. The house was reconstructed and remodeled in 1912-13 and suffered several alterations that provided it with its present look which removed the iron grille work and now includes round columns and an octagonal lantern.

The building has a brick superstructure finished with stucco. The stucco was scored to emulate stone block construction in order to elevate the status of the house. The thick exterior load bearing walls vary from two to three feet thick. The brick for the house was shipped from New York, as were doors, windows and other fittings. All the interior walls, floors and roof are constructed of hand hewn timber. The interior is organized as a central hall four square plan. Two load bearing partitions define the 50-foot-long central hall which in turn defines circulation at all levels of the house. The second floor consists of 5 bedrooms and bathrooms that were added later. In the colonies, after about 1760 the central hall was free of stairs, which were placed to the side, as it is the case here. The U-shaped staircase connects the main floor to the attic. Supposedly it was built by an English craftsman and has both straight and curved runs which was popular

during the revolutionary War period and is associated with the Federal Style (MSFile).

The hip roof of the house has a low pitch popular in the years after the Independence. The ridge is cut-off at the top, provided with a deck and balustrade, and crowned by the present octagonal lantern.

The house was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1972, and is now a historic house museum known as Goodwood Museum and Gardens. The house is now decorated to reflect the years around World War I, decorated with original family furniture, textiles, ceramics, art, and personal effects. The current grounds cover 16 acres. It is important to notice that the house is now structurally different from its original conception. The modifications were done in a very skillful manner with good taste, and have not changed the character of the building (MSFile).

The plantation was conceived as a self-sustaining compound. Although many structures were built by the Crooms, only four still stand. The Guest House, Old Kitchen, Gray Cottage (or Spring House), and Main House were built by Bryan Croom. The Guest House was the original home of the Crooms. Soon after its construction, Bryan had the three-story, Italianate Main House built. The plantation house was surrounded by numerous out-buildings. The plantation buildings were surrounded by extensive gardens that included a private race track, formal English gardens, bridal paths and many winding carriage drives.

Hardy Croom is also remembered as a serious amateur botanist. He actually published several papers in the American Journal of Science and discovered several new species of plants including the Torreya tree. Around 1832 Hardy leased land part of which become designated in 1976 as Torreya State Park, U.S. National Natural Landmark and historic site.

There he explored a series of unique ecosystems that are now protected.

## 6. TALL TIMBERS PLANTATION

Tall Timbers Plantation (also known as Woodlawn, G. W. Holland, and Hickory Hill) has one of the more widely varied histories of the Leon County plantations. The first pieces of land were bought in 1826 by John Phinzy and Samuel Bryan but it truly began its life as Woodlawn Plantation when Griffin W. Holland, a doctor from Virginia, purchased land north of Lake Iamonia in 1834. Throughout the mid-1800s Holland developed his land into a cotton plantation. By 1860, 1,200 of its 2,600 acres produced 225 bales of cotton, 7,000 bushels of corn, and various livestock using the labor of 95 slaves. It was one of the large plantations of Leon County.

After the civil war Holland was unable to maintain the plantation's production, so he eventually sold it to Alexander Mosely in 1871. Mosely later sold the land to Eugene H. Smith in 1880 who renamed it Hickory Hill. During this time, the slave-based farming system was replaced by the tenant farming system. This agricultural production system continued on the property until the 1940s.

The current incarnation began when Edward Beadel, an independently wealthy architect from New York, purchased the land in 1895. Like many wealthy northerners Beadel sought to establish a hunting plantation. Beadel bought the land from the owners of the Live Oak Plantation and named his estate Tall Timbers. He, along with his nephew Henry L.



Figure 6.

*Tall Timbers Plantation: Tallahassee, Florida. ca 1895. Black & white photonegative. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. Source: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/7189>.*

Beadel the second owner of the plantation, created a wildlife preserve and its legacy as a wildlife habitat management and research station began. This was and still is unique. Most hunting plantations simply remain as hunting grounds, nothing more.

Upon his death in 1958, Henry Beadel donated the entire Tall Timbers estate to be used as an ecological research station. The Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy, operated by the Tall Timbers Research Foundation, was established in 1958 and now covers 4,000 acres with conservation land easements of almost 130,000 acres. The foundation seeks to conserve land management practices in north Florida and South Georgia through the study of fire ecology, game bird management, vertebrate ecology and forestry. As a Research Station, Tall Timbers is recognized for the study of fire ecology, and for the advocacy of land management through the use of prescribed burning. As a Land Conservancy, Tall Timbers is one of the country's leading land trusts protecting traditional land uses in the region. The mission of Tall Timbers Research Station & Land Conservancy is to foster exemplary land stewardship through research, conservation and education.

Tall Timbers Plantation was designated Florida's first cultural landscape in 1989 by the National Register of Historic Places.

The two story frame vernacular, clapboard siding, lifted on piers, and under a gable roof plantation house probably designed by Edward Beadel was built around 1895-96. The house was built facing Lake Iamonia, lifted on brick piers with cinder-block infill. The original two story portion of the house is a rectangle. The plan is a typical four rooms per floor divided by a central hall with a U-shaped staircase on the rear. Henry visited every year until 1919, when he purchased the plantation from his uncle. In 1921 Henry and wife Genevieve added a one story, five bay wing to the east of the existing building. The addition retained the vernacular feel of the original house, and was painted to match. The linking of the two buildings was done with an eighty-six-foot porch supported by square posts with wooden balustrade and a wisteria trellis. Henry also added a three-bay dormer to the original house to increase bedroom space.



Figure 7.

*Ned and Genevieve on the porch of the main house. 1913. Black & white photonegative. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/146417>.*



Figure 8.

*Ned and Genevieve on the porch of the main house. 1913. Beadel House at the Tall Timbers Research Station - Tallahassee, Florida. 1978. Black & white photoprint. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. Source: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/43976>.*

In addition to the Beadel House, many architectural remnants of the tenant culture can be found in the plantation. There are two tenant dwellings (Tenant Dwelling no.1 and Tenant Dwelling no.2) built between 1895 and 1919. These are typical examples of rural wood frame construction. The buildings are good examples of local materials, construction techniques, and workmanship for this type of housing. The Jones Family Tenant Farm has been restored in order to preserve and exhibit the often ignored history and cultural legacy of the African American tenant farming communities. The restoration included the tenant house and the adjacent corncrib. The restored buildings provide an opportunity to experience the important role in the local agriculture that the black tenants played in the region.

The remaining outbuildings are the Cook's House, the Pump House, the Hay Barn, the Corn Crib and the Dairy Barn. These outbuildings span from circa 1895 to the 1940's. Some have suffered additions, others have been renovated to accommodate current usage, and sealed to provide air conditioning. Various buildings were built after 1950 as part of the research station.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The fate of the plantations was determined by several factors. It was not just one factor that changed the plantations but a combination that produced different results depending when and where impacted.

The American Civil War had a profound influence on the plantation culture. The political situation after the war put in disarray the principles that held the plantation values together. The plantation economy disintegrated further as the slave population was not able to support it any longer. The slave culture gave way to the tenant farmer culture. Many former slaves become "sharecroppers" by renting land from the plantation and paying a percentage of the yearly crops to the landowner. Unfortunately, this created a culture of perpetual debt that lasted until mid-20th century. Before the war the South was supplying the

textile mills of England with tons of cotton fueled by the development of the cotton gin, a machine that could separate seed from lint by the turning of a crank. This increased the output per slave and in consequence the output of marketable cotton, the income of the plantation, and the need for additional slaves in order to produce more cotton and increase revenue. The added income compelled the South to develop its agriculture disproportionately to the development of its industry. As the national economy shifted from agriculture to industry many plantations not able to keep up were simply left behind. The decline did produce some diversification. After the Civil War land owners in the area began planting pecan trees, cash crops such as tobacco, and herding livestock. The reduction of productivity contributed to the slow disintegration of the plantation culture. This was exacerbated by the simple fact that most plantations subdivided as generations passed, reducing this way even further their profitability. At the same time the city of Tallahassee grew and exercised pressure on the immediate adjacent rural lands. The result was either to sell what was left to a single buyer or piecemeal it to several buyers. This way several plantations were slowly transformed and absorbed by the urban fabric and the needs of the growing city of Tallahassee. Proximity to the urban center of Tallahassee certainly promoted the subdivision of land and their gradual conversion to mainly residential neighborhoods. Today some of the plantations are only remembered by the name they gave to the neighborhoods, such is the case of Betton, Waverly, and Southwood. Others have disappeared to the point that no one remembers them at all, such is the case of Bellvue. One can still find remnants of the old plantations like the old Betton Plantation cemetery now located in the middle of a well-established residential neighborhood called Betton Hills. For most people there is no relation between the cemetery and the old plantation. One can also find at the intersections of two or more plantations the small scale residential zone of the people that worked in and around the plantations. Some of these African American residential pockets survived under the shadow or behind commercial developments. The original population have been slowly replaced

by wealthier white residents; a gradual process of gentrification. These are a few remains of the past that surface here and there as a reminder of what it used to be. Other plantations sold most of their land but kept their house and the immediate surrounding land as a residence. Such is the case of Bannerman Plantation which now holds on to about 120 acres of land, a large track if seen from the point of view of the city. Aside from the tree farm or similar agricultural activity for tax purposes, these properties are no longer agricultural enterprises. They have become private residences of wealthy citizens that attempt to associate themselves with the plantation lifestyle.

A plantation such as Goodwood was able to hold on to its lands for a while. What was left represents a small fraction of what it was during its golden years. Never-the-less the house and surrounding land was protected thanks to becoming a house museum, and as such it offered an alternative solution for the preservation of the plantation. The future of the plantation house is secure, and in the middle of an urban setting, is able to provide a glimpse of the life that it represented. It is important to understand that plantation houses such as these are no longer supported by traditional agriculture but by a contemporary and urban foundation style system. Finally, we have the case of Tall Timbers. The end of the war brought profound changes but it also brought new roads and railroads, and wealthy northern families found it easier to move south for the winter months. Large tracks of land were purchased and converted into hunting plantations. Northern Florida and South Georgia became well known for quail hunting. Many plantations continue to exist today as Hunting Plantations, generally owned by well-to-do northerners for recreation, mostly and originally for private hunting but later expanded to commercial hunting tourism. The lands are groomed for hunting mainly quail. Tall Timbers stood aside when it became a Research Station. This is a unique transformation due to the vision of Edward and Henry Beadel. Tall Timbers Research Station & Land Conservancy stands apart from the regular hunting plantations because of their dedication to research and land stewardship; striving to conserve indigenous forests.

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