



BOWEN'S CORNER

About the Cover

In 1917 the City of Charleston purchased the Goose Creek Reservoir and pumping station from a private company. The water system featured a dike reaching across Goose Creek to create a fresh water reservoir. Some residents of Bowens Corner walked along the dike to Midland Park and points beyond.

Bowen's Corner

Goose Creek Refuge by the Water's Edge

For more than two hundred years, African-Americans worked little farms in Bowen's Corner near Charleston, South Carolina. This isolated settlement originated as a nested slave village, persisted with semi-independent farms into the early 19th century, expanded with liberated families after emancipation and eventually supported a one-room school and a clapboard church until the modern era. The remote, yet dynamic neighborhood evolved in a section of a 1680 Proprietary land grant to Barnard Schenckling.¹ The original Schenckling tract bordered the famed Middleton Oaks Plantation on the north and ranged along the eastern bank of Goose Creek on a southeastern course toward the Cooper River. Thick hard and soft wood forests spanned across flat acreage gently rising from the flooded Goose Creek lowlands to Red Bank Road. This tract subdivided among several subsequent owners who attached sections to other properties until the boundaries of the original plantation blurred beyond recognition. However, the isolated slave settlement persisted in the northern-most corner of the original Schenckling land and adopted the tag "Bowen's Old Place," and later, "Bowen's Corner" after John Bowen acquired the property.

John Bowen bought sections of land on Goose Creek before the American Revolution attaching his moniker to the vicinity,² but according to oral history, it was Confederate Captain Philip J. Porcher, who awarded small parcels to freedmen during the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877).³ Although documents do not verify the genesis of "Bowen's Corner," Porcher's gift, considered in context with relevant suppositions, links the small plots worked by slaves to the farms that remained in the hands of capable African-American families well into the modern era. Developers rediscovered the potential of Bowen's Corner and are transforming it into a beckoning suburban community featuring mixed commercial and residential nodes with all of the conveniences for the most discriminating home buyers. Accessed by way of Foster Creek Road, Henry Brown Boulevard and Tanner Plantation Road in the City of Hanahan, this upscale development remains gently oriented to the soothing course of Goose Creek, bespeaking its long legacy as a refuge by the water's edge.

Barnard Schencklingh

Barnard Schencklingh received the original proprietary land grant where Bowen's Corner ascended. He immigrated to South Carolina from Barbados with his wife Elizabeth, daughters, Elizabeth, Katherine, Amarinzia and Hannah and sons Barnard and Benjamin.⁴ Soon after arriving in Carolina, he entered into public service as sheriff and searched the countryside for suitable planting ground, eventually receiving a land grant on Goose Creek.⁵ As a landowner in the raucous Goose Creek neighborhood during the frontier era, he also kept quarters in Charleston between the present Calhoun and Line Streets,⁶ and in 1688 he received an additional three acres in town known as Schencklingh's Square.⁷

Barnard Schencklingh's land grant was the last unclaimed tract lying along navigable Goose Creek and like those who arrived before him, his deed required a perpetual rent wherein he promised to pay annually, "one penny in lawful money of England and or the value thereof for every acre..." to the Lord Proprietors.⁸ The northern reach of Schencklingh's plantation approached the Goose Creek Bridge. Here was the epicenter of land travel and frontier trade in the Charleston hinterland. The central section of the Schencklingh tract featured ponds at the head of a long stream that emptied into the Goose Creek flow-way. Schencklingh erected his main house and outbuildings near the ponds and he channelized the rivulet near its outfall, where he built a wooden gate and weir to store water for irrigation. His slave village cabins nestled south of the outfall near the eastern terminus of the granted land.

Cattle, horses and sheep ranged freely, and Schencklingh conveniently drove his herds through the ford near the bridge and sixteen more miles to the butchers in Charleston. Although packhorses carrying lucrative trade in hides and Native-American slaves passed over the nearby bridge, he complied with the

wishes of the Lord Proprietors, concentrated his efforts on cattle grazing, and refrained from illicit tribal slave trade.

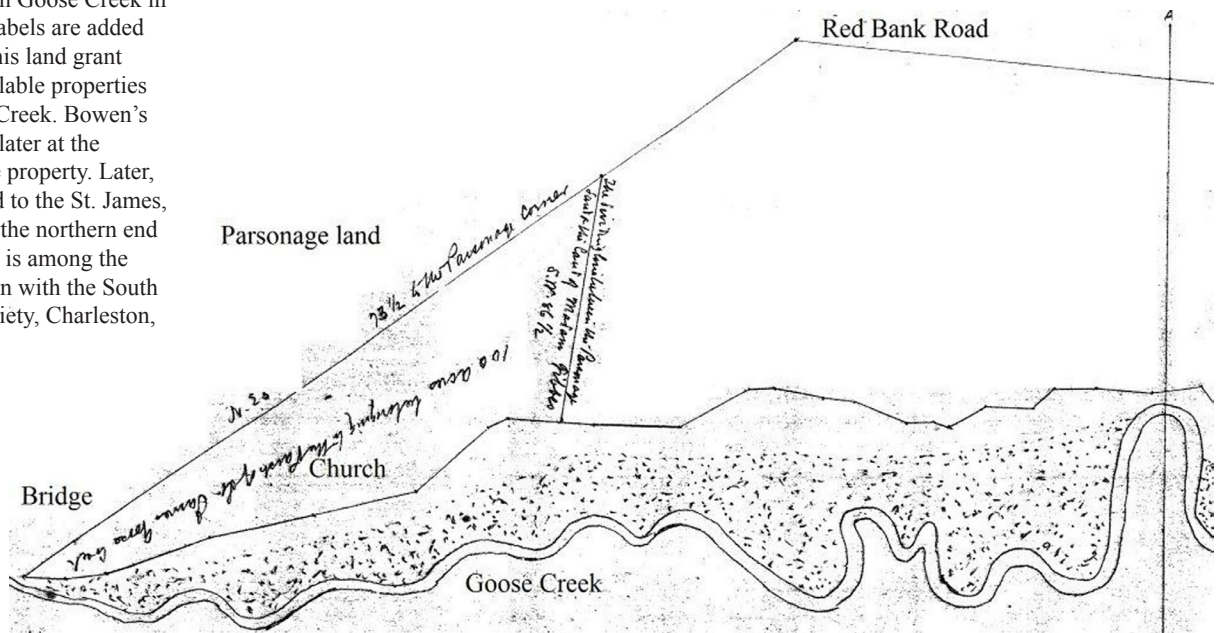
By 1685, the Lord Proprietors and their Fundamental Constitution had fallen out of favor with many of the "Goose Creek Men," but that year Schencklingh signed a letter of promise and allegiance to the King, the Proprietors, and the Fundamental Constitution.⁹ He skillfully remained non-controversial despite growing political conflict in Charleston and the countryside.

Barnard Schencklingh adeptly tacked before the political winds that raged during the frontier era, whether the storms prevailed from the Lord Proprietors or surged from the emerging political party known as the "Goose Creek Men," composed largely of his neighbors and in-laws.¹⁰ Within that dicey political context, he rose to the powerful position of Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in 1692, where he could have wielded considerable influence had he not died the same year of his appointment.

Barnard's oldest son and namesake died shortly after his father, requiring Elizabeth Schencklingh, widow and mother, to serve as administrator to the estate.¹¹ The second son, Benjamin assumed the right to the Goose Creek land, as well as the town property. Benjamin increased his inventory with another grant of contiguous acres in 1702, and when he married Margaret Moore of neighboring Boochawee Plantation, her inherited properties blended with his until their combined tract exceeded 1000 acres.¹² When Benjamin and Margaret offered their settlement for sale in 1733, they described it in an advertisement in the South Carolina Gazette:

...one mile from a landing and two miles from Goose Creek Bridge, 300 acres are good un-cleared oak and hickory land the other 500 acres are good for corn, rice, with dwelling house, barn, stables and other outhouses, garden, orchard and other improvements on the same.¹³

Figure 1: A plat detail describes seven hundred acres of land awarded to Bernard Schencklingh on Goose Creek in 1679. The manuscript labels are added here for orientation. This land grant was one of the last available properties bordering upon Goose Creek. Bowen's Corner appeared much later at the southern extreme of the property. Later, proprietors granted land to the St. James, Goose Creek Parish on the northern end of this section. The plat is among the H.A.M. Smith collection with the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.



The property did not immediately convey, except for a parcel that transferred to Arthur Middleton, but in his will dated a year prior to the advertisement, Benjamin empowered Margaret to sell all of it.¹⁴ Consequently, the following year, Arthur Middleton purchased the remaining portion and devised it to his son Thomas Middleton.¹⁵ Thus, the tract upon which Bowen's Corner later evolved was once part of the famed Middleton Oaks Plantation.

The Oaks property subdivided through subsequent ownerships until Thomas Smith acquired the southeastern section in 1747, where Bowen's Corner later ascended, three miles from the Goose Creek Bridge. Smith, one of the early landgraves of South Carolina,¹⁶ conveyed the tract five years later to Benjamin Coachman.

Benjamin Coachman and Peter Manigault

Benjamin Coachman resided on the land with his extended family and slaves. He emerged a prominent South Carolinian during the turbulent years leading to the American Revolution.¹⁷ He married Sarah Smith, daughter of George Smith and Elizabeth Allen. Together they reared three children: Benjamin Jr., Nancy and Sarah. His livestock foraged freely and fattened quickly on the lush fauna, but Coachman also put his slaves to work impounding the wetlands along the winding creek bank and shaping the fields. He sowed rice, a promising enterprise that produced envious wealth for him and his trans-creek neighbor, Peter Manigault.

Peter Manigault, the richest man in British North America produced great shipments of rice at his Steepbrook Plantation located directly across Goose Creek from the Coachman land. The Manigault and Coachman families joined by the marriage of two of their children, cooperated by sharing labor, as well as technical and agricultural knowledge. Successful rice culture required skilled workers to properly shape the fields, control irrigation, clean and transport the precious grain.

Benjamin Coachman and his brother, James purchased 730 acres from James Withers, a neighboring brick baker and another 700 acres to expand southeast along Goose Creek.¹⁸ Their long tract included numerous streams and four important water reserves near prime planting grounds. The streams flooded low-lying ponds where the brothers erected trunk gates to control the flow. They closed the wooden gates at appropriate times to collect freshwater, and opened the structures to irrigate the rice or drown the weeds. Rice flourished in his embankments, and slaves rowed flat bottom bateaus or sailed sloops laden with rice barrels to waiting merchant ships a few hours away in Charleston Harbor. The Goose Creek waters irrigated the rice plants, drowned the weeds, and floated the bounty to market.

Benjamin Coachman's close association with Peter Manigault suggests they used similar slave management styles including the "provision ground system." Immigrants brought this practice to South Carolina from the Caribbean Islands where the plan long flourished; and because many Goose Creek families emigrated from Barbados in the Caribbean, most planters along Goose Creek were familiar with the unusual slave management methodology.



Figure 2: The photograph shows the Goose Creek Reservoir in 2011. The image shows the dike at Bowen's Corner and creek water flowing toward the Cooper River. The photograph is among the collections of the author.

In accordance with the "provision ground system," planters assigned one or two acres of land to trusted slaves to clear, plant and cultivate after their plantation chores were complete. In this manner, slaves enjoyed the bounty from their own labor and sold extra produce to the master, as well as neighbors.¹⁹ Manigault's slaves commonly sold vegetables at the markets in Charleston.²⁰ Town officials complained about Manigault slaves selling produce every Sunday in the marketplace without securing licenses required by town ordinances. Some masters resented and feared the liberal practices, but others understood the benefit of granting opportunities to slaves, and it is likely that Coachman arranged provision ground for some of his workers as did his cohort Manigault. Conceivably, the provision acreage on Coachman's land was the genesis for the Bowen's Corner farms of a later era.

Benjamin Coachman traveled with his family by land or water to attend the St. James, Goose Creek Church three miles upstream from his main house. He led as warden of the church vestry and subscribed generously to the Ludlam fund, which provided education to the poor children in the parish. From that formidable political base, he was elected twice to the Royal Assembly representing the St. James, Goose Creek Parish.

The Coachman family realized fortunes from the bounty of their lands, and by the time of Benjamin's death in 1779, he was one of the wealthiest men in the colony. He served early in the rebellious affair as a member of a Goose Creek committee that executed the directives of the infant patriot government, and he rose to the rank of captain in the militia. However, he perished before the British blasted into Charleston Harbor and occupied the City. Nonetheless, shortly after his death, his estate lent the struggling patriot government £180,000, one of the largest gifts of that era. He is buried in the St. James, Goose Creek church yard.



Figure 3: The congregation completed the St. James, Goose Creek Church in 1719. It stands near the Goose Creek Bridge, the only road passage from Bowen's Corner to Charleston until 1966.

John Bowen

Peter Manigault purchased the expansive Coachman estate for £8000,²¹ but Manigault's heirs transferred a section of the tract five years hence to planter, John Bowen, from who the isolated locale derived its name.²²

John Bowen served as a lieutenant with Francis Marion during the American Revolution and acquired property next to Mount Pleasant Plantation, owned by the father of Captain John Withers who was also in Marion's command.²³ John Bowen acquired the Goose Creek property during the post war years when the wealthy Goose Creek plantations declined rapidly due to soil exhaustion, malaria, and competition in the world markets. Trade competition stiffened because the protection of the British navy, the advantage of subsidies and the vast markets of the British Empire succumbed to the rebellion. Nonetheless, John and his wife, Mary developed their 1,370 acre-plantation and 25 slaves into one of the most successful post war estates in Goose Creek.²⁴

By 1790, some large Goose Creek estates, such as nearby Crowfield and Bloomfield Plantations devolved into country retreats. Other estates such as the Oaks Plantation sold outside the family and shrunk in size when individual parcels conveyed. However, John Bowen and his neighbor, James Withers at Mt. Pleasant succeeded by diversifying their production. They grew rice during warm spring and summer seasons, and mined clay and baked bricks in the winter.²⁵

The predictable surges of the Atlantic tides lent to the success of these creek-side plantations. The rising and falling tidal water levels in Goose Creek resulted in a "pitch of tide" that supported the most productive agricultural methodology of the post war era. John Bowen successfully employed this new approach and continued as a successful rice planter in an increasingly competitive business and discriminating marketplace. His cattle

grazed on the "hard marshes" and he grew great bounties of rice in his embanked fields along the waterway. He surmounted many challenges, including one that came from an unexpected source.

Two years after the Revolutionary War ended, John Deas, a Goose Creek planter at Thorogood Plantation, along with eight others, requested that a canal be dug along Goose Creek. They appealed to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1785 to make "a few short cuts through the marshes that... thirteen miles and a quarter may be shortened to a distance of...one and one quarter mile."²⁶ John Bowen protested against the popular project because of its potential damage to his valuable marshes, and after much consternation, the legislature agreed with him.

John Bowen built his manor on a knoll rising 25 feet in elevation on the northern side of a small inlet. The avenue proceeded east from the main house, outbuildings, and a slave village to intersect Red Bank Road.²⁷ The settlement sat approximately 200 yards from the creek bank,²⁸ where a dock and landing facilitated access to navigable Goose Creek.²⁹ Bowen's Corner consisted of little homes and farms nestled on a wide creek bend and delineated by two minor inlets within 1000 yards of Bowen's settlement.

By the beginning of the 19th century, a society composed of marginally affluent planters, tenant farmers, and African-American laborers supplanted the once prevailing dichotomous social order with "high society" at one extreme and slaves at the other. More families evaded the summer fevers and more absentee landowners managed their plantations from afar. Landowner families commonly returned to their rural estates near Thanksgiving to hunt and fish, enjoy the winter holidays, rekindle acquaintances with the hired and enslaved help, and stay until workers planted the land. Affluent families departed in late May or early June to their principal residence in Charleston, or to sea-island homes with ocean breezes. Others sought reprieve in high and dry pine-land retreats such as nearby Summerville, Pineville, Pinopolis, and Barrows. Consequently, the landowner became less involved in day-to-day management and overseers became more important to the success of the plantation, and to the society and economy of Goose Creek in general.

In some cases, overseers owned slaves and worked them side by side with the owners. For example, Goose Creek overseers William Browning, William Campbell, Joseph Cantey, and Andrew Dehay owned 129, 137, 69 and 6 slaves respectively in Goose Creek.³⁰ These land managers led relatively wealthy households who resided upon an absentee owner's land. Nevertheless, most overseers were less wealthy with few or no slaves, and there was an increasing number of "free colored" overseers during the 19th century. By 1830 there were 61 emancipated African-Americans residing in Goose Creek, most of who were employed as farm workers with varying levels of responsibilities, including providing oversight and supervision.³¹ Approximately 40% of the landowners in the eastern section of the parish used white overseers, but 27 planters (60%) including John Bowen, did not employ white managers.³²

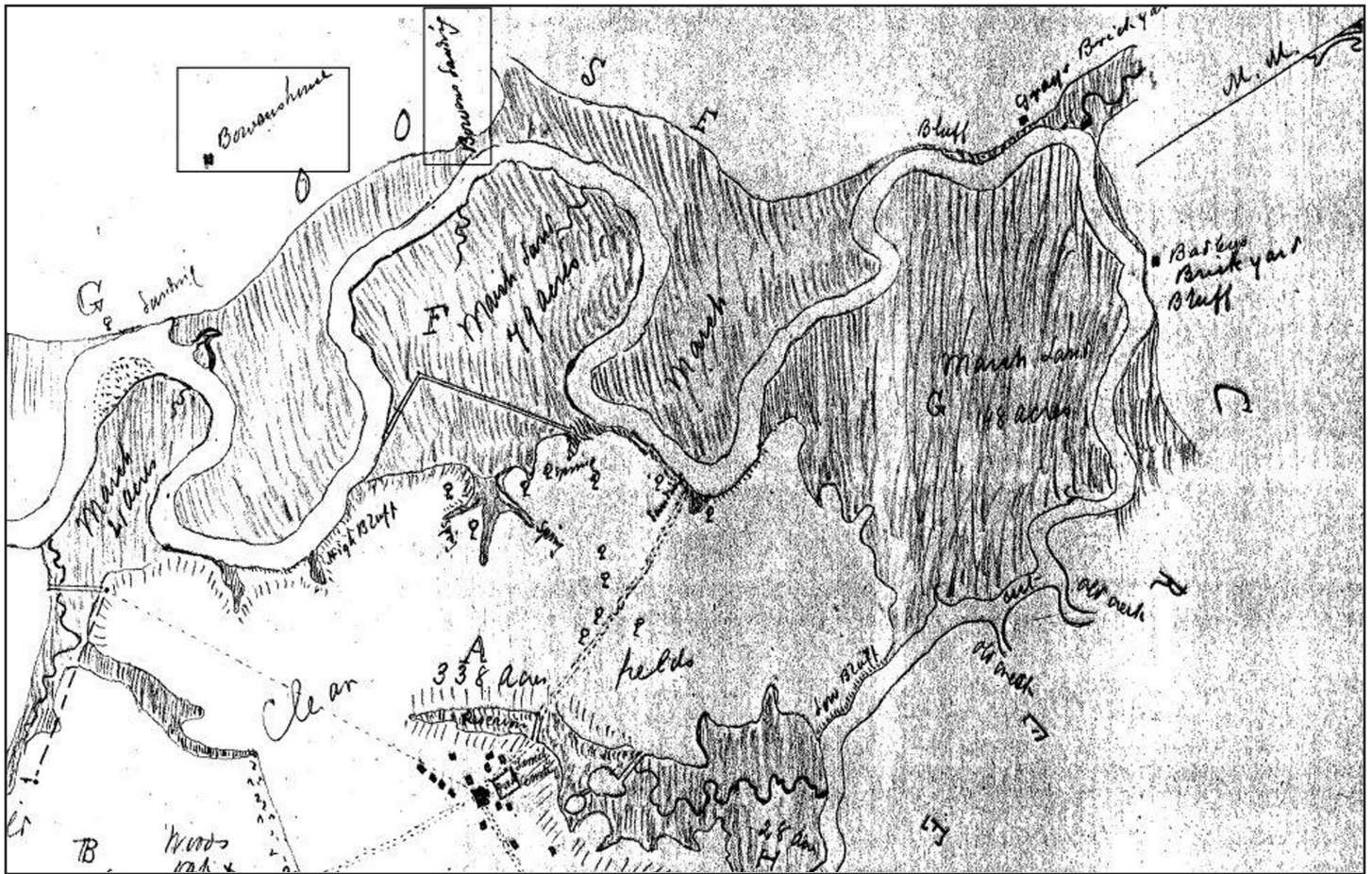


Figure 4: The plat detail shows “Bowens House” and “Bowens Landing” north of Goose Creek and Yeamans Hall Plantation. The plat is among the H.A.M. Smith Collections at the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, S.C.

The table shows John Bowen and his neighbors listed in the United States Census, St. James, Goose Creek Parish, 1790

Plantation Name/ Location	Name of Head of Household	Number Whites in Family	Number Freemen in Family	Number Slaves	Number Acres	Parish of Residence
St. James Church	Reverend Ellington	2	3	10	548	St. James
The Oaks	Thomas Middleton	9	0	10	1,800	St. Phillips/ St. Michaels
NA	Rebecca Smith	7	0	42	NA	St. James
Bowen's	John Bowen	4	0	25	1,370	St. James
Mt. Pleasant	John/Rebecca Withers	6	0	26	1,880	St. James

John Bowen owned a home in Charleston and sailed his sloop to his landing and dock on Goose Creek.³³ As he aged, he ventured to his country home less frequently and during those lengthening periods of absence he relied increasingly upon his “free colored” overseers and his bound help to manage the lands. Additionally, he assigned more management duties to his trusted servants.

By the 19th century, some of the Bowen slave families lived several generations on that land. Slave families residing on rice plantations were “extremely stable over time,” because of the demand for their agricultural knowledge and skills.³⁴ Bowen probably continued the provision ground management practiced by Coachman who preceded him, and expanded the practice by granting small plots of land to favorite hired and enslaved workers to encourage them to dutifully remain on the plantation.³⁵

Whether John Bowen was kind, wise or merely practical, he understood workers were more likely to remain on the land when they perceived a stake in its production. Fewer bound souls despaired and ran away when their families depended upon them and when they could assume the rights to some of the eggs in the chicken coop, pigs in the pen, and the crop in the field.³⁶

Upon his death, his property conveyed to his wife Rebecca, except Morris Hill and Sambo Hill, which he bequeathed to his daughter, Mary Bowen Withers. He parsed his slaves into thirds that divided between his wife, daughter, and son. His wife selected her house servants from the number. His only son, John Withers Bowen, a minor at the time of his father’s death, eventually acquired “Bowen’s Old Place.”³⁷

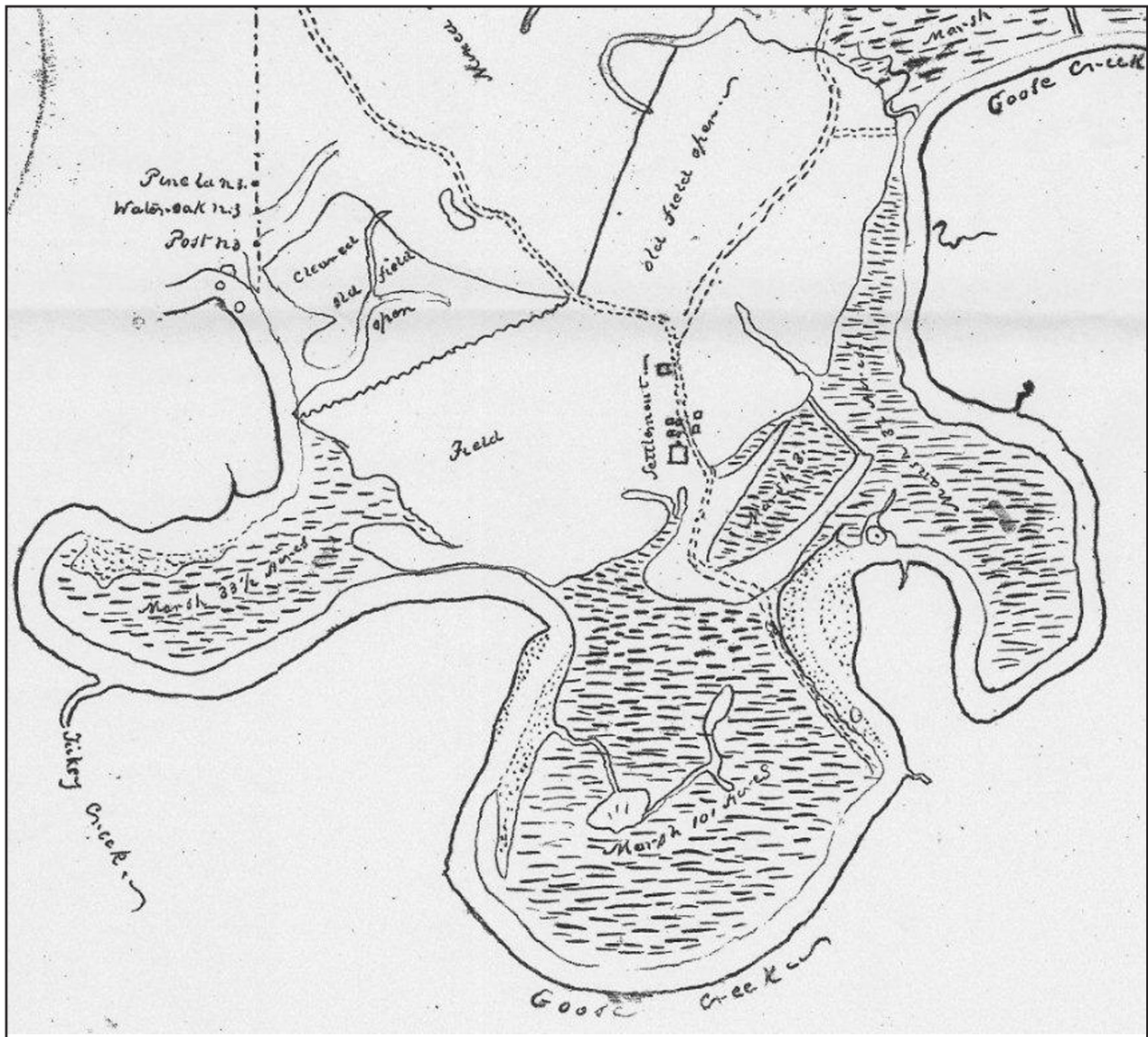


Figure 5: The plat detail describes Bowen’s Settlement near Goose Creek. The full plat is with Charleston County Deed Book, Charleston Office Building T13:173.

Henry Ravenel

Isolated Bowen's Corner evolved into relatively independent farms as the free and enslaved African-Americans acquired greater autonomy by managing tracts of land for the owner and operating their own properties beyond the supervisory oversight of the Bowen family.³⁸ Henry Ravenel purchased this semi-autonomous community when he bought properties along Goose Creek beginning in 1821.³⁹ He added to his holdings by acquiring "Bowen's Old Place," from John Withers Bowen in 1834,⁴⁰ and bought more sections until he accumulated 1,685 acres and emerged as the principal landowner in that part of the parish.⁴¹ In 1850, he worked 66 slaves growing cotton, rice, subsistence crops and a little wool,⁴² but it is unknown how he related to the black farmers at Bowen's Corner. Near mid-century, some small African-American communities in Goose Creek were organizing near small wooden churches with speakers who led from the pulpit. Ravenel probably employed farm workers from Bowen's Corner to pick cotton alongside his slaves, and he likely struck arrangements with the residents of Bowen's Corner by trading labor for the right to farm small plots, as did the Bowen family decades before.

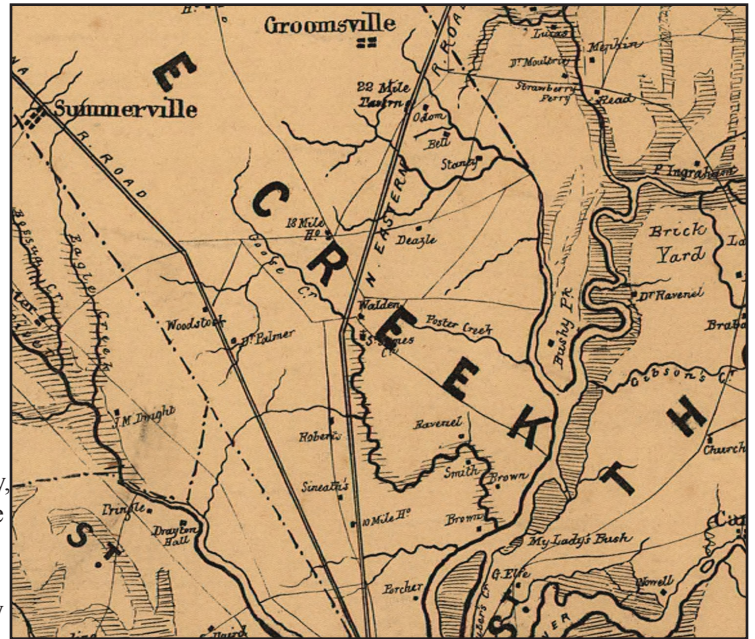


Figure 6: The partial Evans and Cogswell map of South Carolina shows much of the St. James, Goose Creek Parish in 1861. "Ravenel," is labeled near Bowen's Corner. The map is courtesy of the Library of Congress.

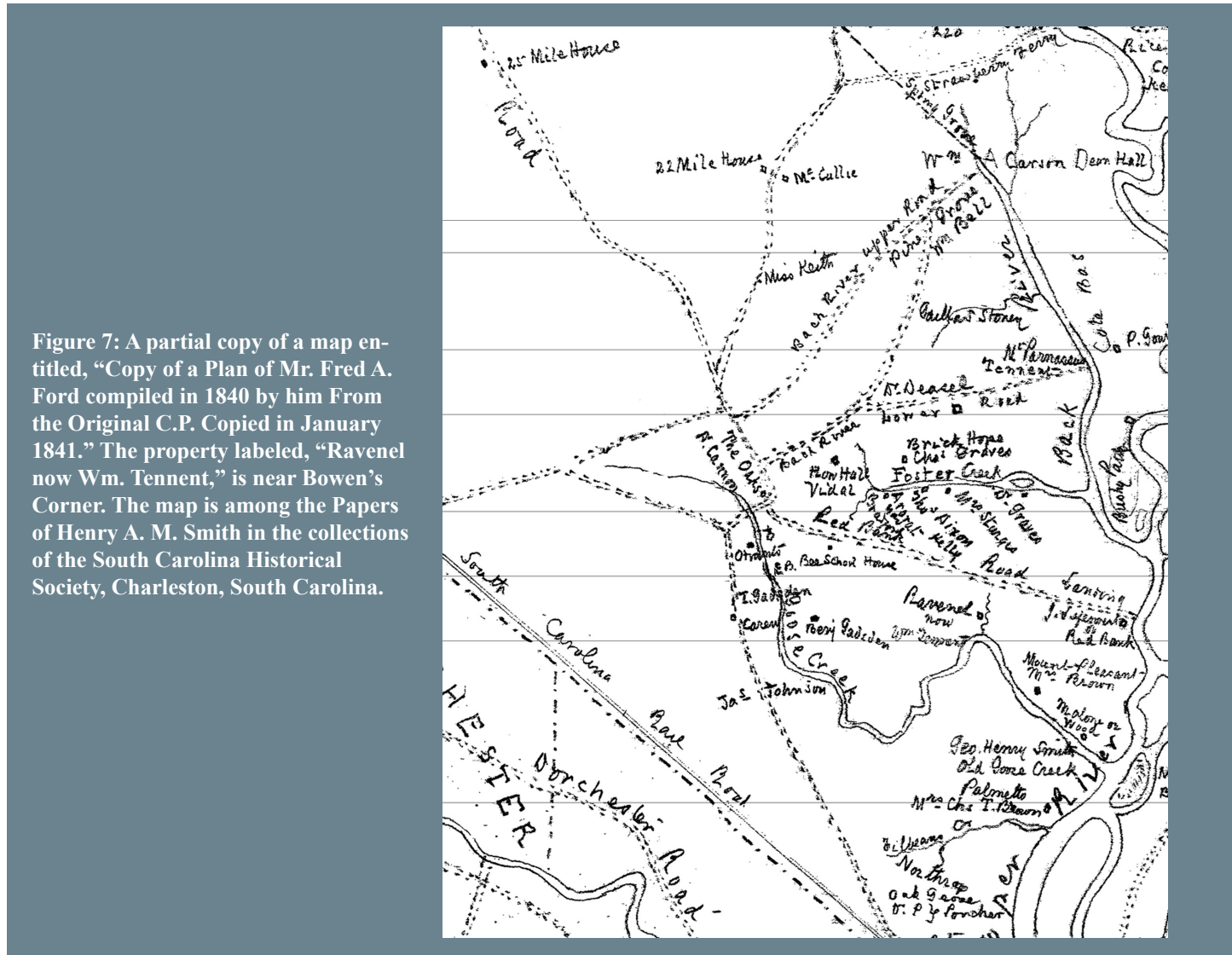


Figure 7: A partial copy of a map entitled, "Copy of a Plan of Mr. Fred A. Ford compiled in 1840 by him From the Original C.P. Copied in January 1841." The property labeled, "Ravenel now Wm. Tennent," is near Bowen's Corner. The map is among the Papers of Henry A. M. Smith in the collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

The Tennent Family

The Tennent family began acquiring properties on Goose Creek in the early 1800's and eventually assumed ownership of the Ravenel tract by mid-century. An 1873 plat of the Tennent land shows "Old Settlement" in the vicinity of Bowen's main house and today's Bowen's Corner.⁴³ By 1860, Charles Tennent owned approximately 3,000 acres and produced large amounts of rice and subsistence crops.⁴⁴ Both Benjamin Gadsden, who owned the land to the northwest of Bowen's Corner, and Ravenel and later Tennent, who owned land to the southeast, produced large bounties of rice.⁴⁵ Charles Tennent diversified the production of his plantation by growing rice and cotton during the growing months, shaping bricks in the winter, and grazing cattle and sheep throughout the year. Tennent invested significantly in his brick baking enterprise. He advanced \$5000 in 1850 and \$22,000 in 1860 in that effort. Although he owned 130 slaves, he employed paid help to bake brick long before the emancipation proclamation freed the bound workers.⁴⁶ He paid wages to at least twenty workers annually during the 1850's,⁴⁷ and he likely employed residents of Bowen's Corner in both his agricultural and industrial enterprises.

During the critical period after the Civil War, when previously bound workers experienced freedom for the first time, many freedmen and women abandoned their homes and never returned. Others however, returned to home ground as landowner, tenant farmer, or sharecropper. Thus, the Tennent family assumed the role of landlord for some of the emancipated workers who long tended the planting grounds. Mary Julia Tennent testified to the difficulties of the post war years when she wrote, "...we find it very hard to get along...we realize scarcely enough to feed us..."⁴⁸

The stories of successes and failures of the emancipated African American men and women are as varied as their numbers and scarce records explain their lives during the first exhilarating years of freedom, but the freedmen families were already well-rooted in Bowen's Corner long before emancipation. Nonetheless, few if any African Americans held legal deeds to their farms prior to the Reconstruction Era.

The means by which most residents of Bowen's Corner acquired ownership of their farms remains unknown. In a few instances, landowners gave acreage to freedmen and it may be that Philip J. Porcher, who bought and sold slaves as property prior to the war, informally awarded parcels to freedmen before he died in 1871.⁴⁹ Philip J. Porcher was a captain of the Goose Creek Company of the 18th regiment of the South Carolina militia during the Civil War.⁵⁰ During the winter of 1865, Union soldiers invaded Goose Creek on the heels of the retreating Confederate army and occupied Otranto Plantation near the Goose Creek Bridge. Some of Porcher's slaves departed with the invaders, but others remained in defense of the family matriarch and female household members. They faithfully kept secrets including the location of buried valuables.⁵¹ Oral history hints that Porcher rewarded those loyal servants with parcels of nearby farmland after the hostilities subsided.⁵²

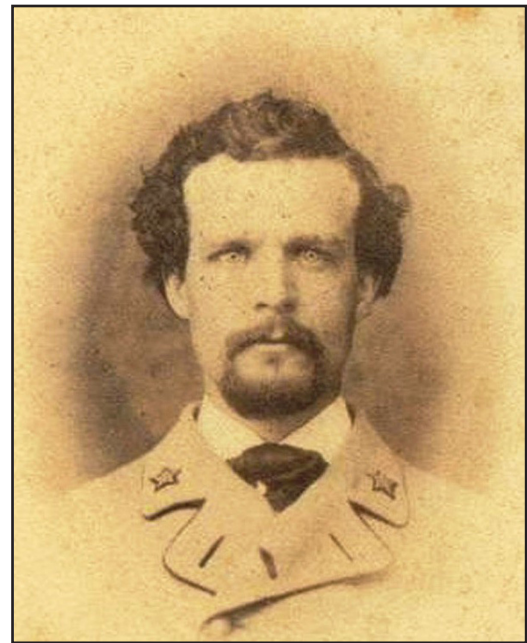


Figure 8: The image depicts Captain Philip Johnstone Porcher as a young military officer. He served as Captain of the Goose Creek Militia during the Civil War.

If Philip J. Porcher's land award was indeed offered to African-Americans, it is possible that the property he granted was the means by which some acquired their farms, while others purchased land through their hard work and thrift. Eloise Watson Williams held the Bowen Corner property into the 21st century, tracing her land to ten acres purchased by her great-grandfather, November Small in 1874.⁵³ November was one of the first African-Americans to hold a legal deed to his farm, and one of many thrifty freemen who succeeded as an independent.

All freedmen were not as fortunate as November Small. Among the scant records of that time is a brief savings account application arranged for Cuffy Campbell, a young freedman who was "brought up" on nearby "William Tenant's Place." In 1868, at the age of 16, he opened an account at the Freedmen's Bank in Charleston.⁵⁴ His parents, William and Hetty Campbell, resided at Bowen's Corner, but Cuffy took refuge at Shaw's Orphanage Asylum in Ladson. Many emancipated African-Americans worked hard and profited from meager investments, but when the Freedmen's Bank in Charleston bankrupted, Cuffy lost all of his treasure.

Besides hard work and thrift, many emancipated men and women employed other means to acquire a little piece of land. Some farms were garnered by squatting upon isolated parcels, claiming it and eventually passing it from parents to children without filing proper surveys or plats. Others devised plots without properly probating the relevant last will and testament. In other cases, the Federal Government sponsored land transfers and properly recorded the conveyances. Two government agencies, the South Carolina Land Commission and the Freedmen's Bureau assisted newly emancipated African-Americans in acquiring land and livelihoods. Unfortunately, few Goose Creekers acquired property through these agencies, and there are no Federal land transfer records explaining the origin of any Bowen Corner farms.

Without formal or government assistance, some African-Americans in Goose Creek employed innovative funding methods to acquire property. Some pooled their dollars and bought shares in joint ventures called, "Societies." Such was the scheme of two black farmers, Cato Jefferson and Frederick Mitchell in nearby Mount Holly. They formed a society and purchased land in its name. More Goose Creekers joined the society and each worked, leased or rented part or all of their subsection and kept a copy of the deed to prove ownership.⁵⁵ In another instance, Frank Ladson, a 26-year-old black farmer from Charleston, teamed with James Rivers and bought a large 200-acre section of Howe Hall from James Vidal. This purchase was the beginning of another society. The societies used a pyramid investment scheme with dubious outcomes, but it was the only means for some Goose Creek freedmen to claim real estate. Many conducted these society arrangements through mutual understandings and secured them with mere handshakes. Thus, the arrangements were not properly recorded and later resulted in questionable titles and ownerships. Some may have employed similar pyramid investment schemes in Bowen's Corner resulting in cloudy titles that persist today.

By 1879, dozens of African-Americans leased their farms, but some sharecropped and most owned small tracts. By the 20th century, families had farmed the land for many generations and new families were arriving. The Watson family purchased 10

acres in Bowen's Corner from Albert Tennent in 1903,⁵⁶ and July Myers purchased his 54-acre farm in 1919 for \$2,500. Their heirs remained on the properties well into the 21st century.

The Gaillard Map (Figure 9) shows the isolation of the Brown tract where the Bowen Corner families farmed during the early decades of the 20th century. Typically, white society and government preferred to keep small black communities invisible and out of mind. Bowen's Corner, with its church, school and scattered farm families, remained sequestered from mainstream society and is not shown on the Gaillard Map.

Residents seldom relied on the outside world, and there were no telephones or radios in Bowen's Corner.⁵⁷ Thus, the dearth of outside information and few ways to depart, offered little incentive to leave. Occasionally some walked four miles to Cannon's General Store near the Goose Creek Bridge. There, those lucky enough to have a few cents bought a Royal Crown (RC) or Nehi Cola⁵⁸ and a Johnnie Cake®. The bridge was a way out, but the children rode bicycles or walked across the spillway at the Goose Creek Reservoir to Midland Park in the North Area. One could also use the "flag" rail stop at Innis Station, carefully walk the railroad trestle over Goose Creek, or row across the waterway. Departure was difficult and few destinations offered opportunities to the disenfranchised African-American.

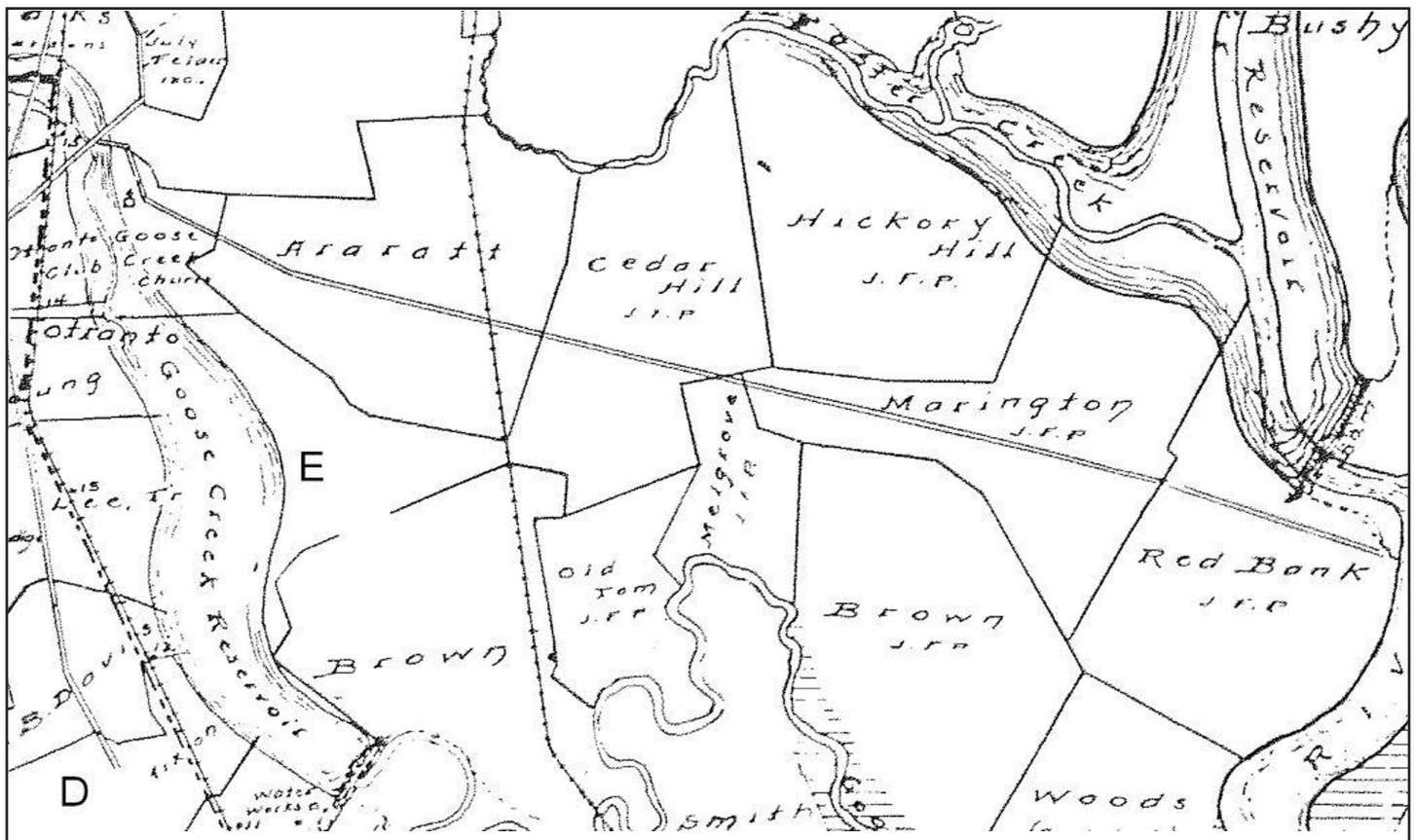


Figure 9: A detail of a map entitled, Map of Berkeley and Parts of Charleston and Dorchester Counties S.C. is shown here. John Palmer Gaillard drew the map of farms in 1930. The detail of the Gaillard Map shows farms of record along the banks of Goose Creek. By 1930, the City of Charleston managed the Goose Creek Reservoir and water treatment plant nearby shown near the dike. Located on the "Brown" property, Bowen's Corner lay contiguous to the dike and on both sides of the rail road right-of-way.



Figure 10: The photograph above shows the Goose Creek Bridge in 1904. The wooden structure spanned Goose Creek approximately four miles north of Bowen's Corner.



Figure 11: The photograph describes a Goose Creek African American settlement during the early 20th century and depicts the common type of home construction. The image is among the collections of the South Carolina Historical Society.

By 1930, approximately twenty families resided in Bowen's Corner including the Delohoney, Richardson, Adkin, Gaillard, Bennett, Barnett, Brown, Myers, Reace, Judge, Watson, Morant, Williams, Glover and McKelvey families.⁵⁹ Most families supported the AME Bethel Church erected in 1936, but some traveled seven miles to Mt. Zion on Howe Hall Road or Trinity Baptist on Old State Road to worship. Almost all families reared children and it was not uncommon for eight or more to reside in one small home on a few acres of plowed ground.⁶⁰ Workers constructed the Bowen's Corner School upon one acre of land donated by Wallace Myers in 1936, the same year the local church opened.⁶¹ There, children from first through eighth grade enjoyed the rigors of rural instruction.

The McKelvey family arrived circa 1870, and they with the Myers family sent eight and twelve children respectively to the little school during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1965, Ms. Gertrude Trescott, an experienced educator and psychologist, arrived to work alongside Mrs. Roseanne Gourdine, as lead teacher and supervising principal. She worked to bring two sanitary toilets that replaced the single outhouse and commissioned her father to construct a sliding wall that partitioned the one large school room. The teachers opened the partition for weekly chapel services and other assemblies, but usually pulled it tight to allow Mrs. Gourdine to instruct first and second grade children while Mrs. Trescott taught curriculum to thirty-five scholars from third through seventh grade.⁶² Student leaders, Bessie Myers and Margie Gibbes assisted in many ways including distributing the lunches prepared daily in the little kitchen. Once a year, a school district bus carried the children 40 miles to the J.K. Gourdine Elementary School Gymnasium in St. Stephens. May-Day competition and celebration, with plenty of sandwiches, potato salad and lemonade filled the day. The long bus ride home for the boys and girls punctuated an exciting excursion into the outside world. Bowen's Corner Elementary School closed permanently in May of 1968. That fall, the children rode a bus to the new consolidated Howe Hall Elementary School near Cannon Store.⁶³

Today, the old school building is gone, but its bell remains protected by members of the Bethel AME Church who organized spiritual services at Bowen's Corner since the Reconstruction Period. They also care for the private cemetery, the final resting place for many local families. The school relic and cemetery monuments reflect the transition of Bowen's Corner during its 200 year history. They also remind how the significant events and movements during that time durably shaped the character of the people and the texture of the landscape. Understandably, as a result of slavery, war, emancipation, reconstruction, and isolation in the bend of a creek, the orderly transfers and legal conveyance of the land has been challenging at best and unorthodox at times. Consequently, many "heir properties" resulted, and like many other clusters of heir lands, Bowen's Corner remained unimproved while other tracts modernized.

During the first half of the twentieth century when the land was inexpensive and taxes low, the Federal Government, lumber companies, and prosperous northern speculators purchased available remains of the Goose Creek estates and transformed them into expansive military, residential, and commercial

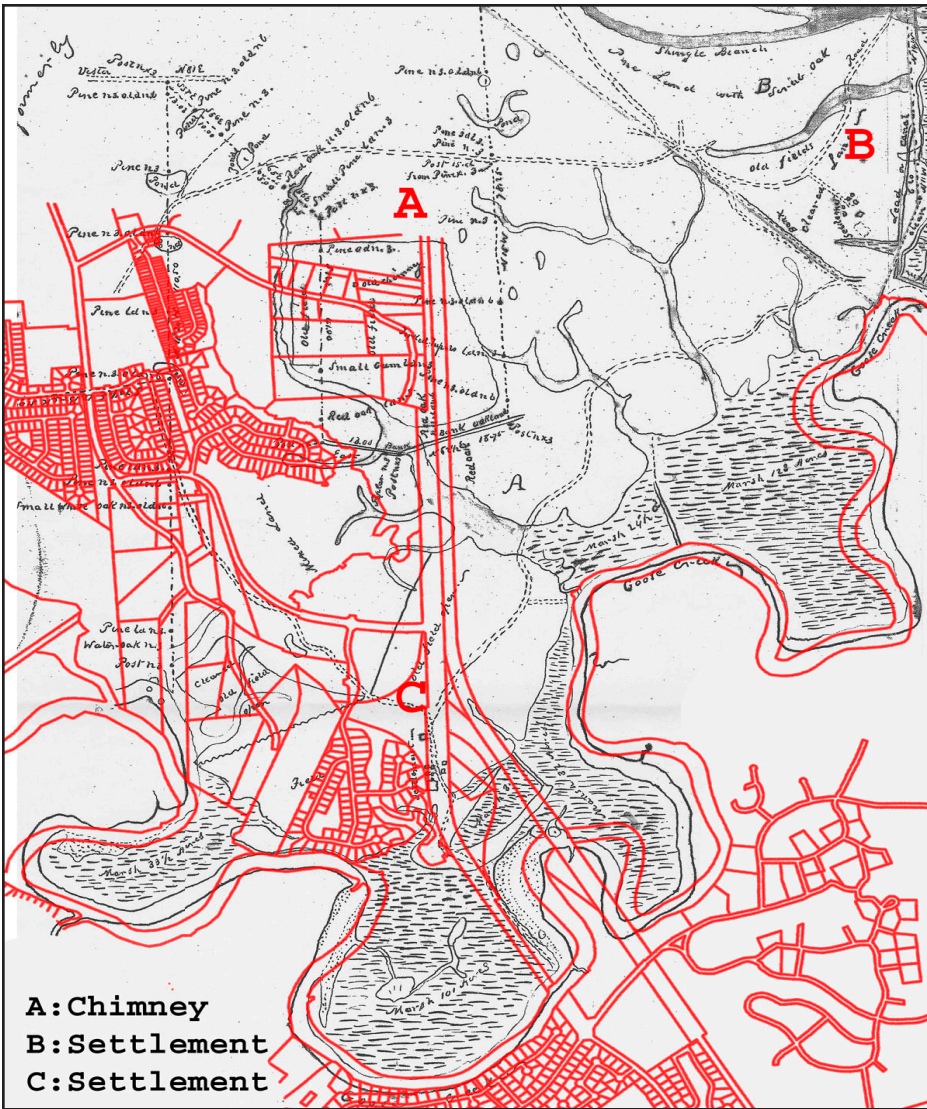


Figure 12: The image shows a current tax map in red laid over the 1857 plat of land owned by Henry Ravenel. Letter A shows the proximity of an “old Chimney” and B shows other settlements with clustered buildings. Letter C indicates Bowen’s original settlement.



Figure 13 (Photo on Left): A sign announces a new multi-family community at “Bowen” near Tanner Plantation in the City of Hanahan. The 2011 photograph is among the collections of the author.



Figure 14 (Photo on Right): The McKelvey home totters at the center of construction at Bowen’s Corner. The 2011 photograph is among the collections of the author.

developments that eventually defined the City of Goose Creek and the Town of Hanahan. However, lands with unclear titles remained in minority holdings because valid titles were too difficult and expensive to obtain. Rapidly increasing property values made the expensive legal process worthwhile to speculators. Consequently, Bowen's Corner is now slipping out of small, private holdings and combining with new commercial and residential developments. Some sections became legal labyrinths when the property values increased to levels conducive for land developers to invest time and money sorting out the ownership rights. One by one, developers offered payment to individuals in return for rights to their land.⁶⁴ Developers settled claims, secured clear titles, purchased tracts, and finally melded the old homesteads into modern commercial centers, with multi-family residences, as well as upscale waterfront homes.

As Bowen's Corner transposes in the 21st century, its origin remains an intriguing story of suppositions and mysteries. Its legacy begins as a tale of a quasi-independent black neighborhood as early as the turn of the 19th century, while its newest chapter explains how the isolated community finally converged with the modern world. During the colonial era, Benjamin Coachman adopted provision ground practices to encourage his Africans to remain at their tasks. Later, John Bowen relied upon freedmen to oversee his plantation and granted quarters and farm land as payment for their services. The freedmen on Bowen's plantation lived closely with the bound souls and steadily blurred the distinction between freedman farms and provision grounds. At the same time, Bowen wisely awarded farm land to multigenerational slave families to encourage their continued loyalty upon which he depended. Consequently, the slave community on Bowen's rice plantation remained stable at a time when it was increasingly common for slave leaders to undertake managerial roles and responsibilities that further obscured distinctions between the emancipated and bound workers. Thus, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, a semi-autonomous African-American community entrenched at a time when John Bowen and his family remained increasingly absent. Furthermore, Bowen's Corner persisted in part because of its remote location.

The location of Bowen's Corner isolated and buffered it from suspicious white authority that may have objected and interfered with its emergence as an independent African-

American neighborhood. Additionally, subsequent land owners relied upon laborers residing nearby, a situation that persisted until the end of slavery. Finally, after the Civil War, familiarity and opportunity kept many of the African-American families at Bowen's Corner with some squatting, and others purchasing farms that they had worked for decades. Finally, a Philip Porcher gift may have transferred land to individuals, legally sealing families to properties, and enabling the collective homesteads to persist well into the twenty-first century.

Today, modern residences are rising in Bowen's Corner, and the newest occupants are finding the bounty that is Coastal Carolina. Few of the new-comers understand the intriguing legacy of their new home place, nor appreciate its transformation across two centuries. Nevertheless, they discover a unique patina, finely honed by thousands of working hands, and a blessing from the southern souls who once lived, labored, and loved in Bowen's Corner. Most importantly, the newcomers find the same comfort and security sought by the families who came before, and like them, arrive home to a new place, as well as an old place that has long been a refuge by the water's edge.



Figure 15 (Photo Above): The plat details a section of the Berkeley County tax map, 2005. It describes the small parcels of properties near the Goose Creek dike that are commonly referred to as "Bowen's Corner."

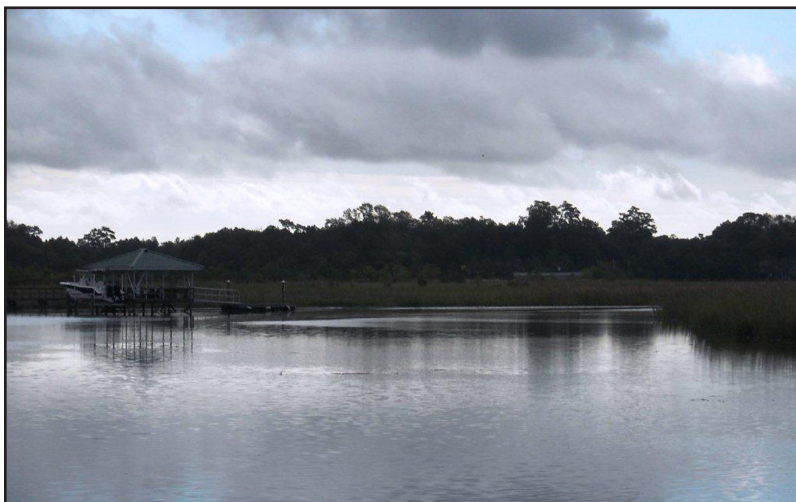


Figure 16 (Photo on Left): Storm clouds darken Goose Creek at Tanner Plantation where African American families resided for centuries. Today the deep water lots bring premium returns. The 2011 photograph is among the collections of the author.

Notes

- ¹ Charleston County Deed Book (CCDB) NN: 40 at the Charleston County Office Building, Charleston, South Carolina.
- ² During the Revolutionary War, John Bowen served as lieutenant in support of Francis Marion, the renowned partisan.
- ³ Philip Johnstone Porcher devised Otranto Plantation to his daughter, Marion (Marianne) who soon after conveyed it to trustees of the Otranto Hunt Club (CCDB H-16, p. 235). Oral history credits Philip Porcher with gifting land to liberated families but there are no records of Porcher purchasing or granting property in the vicinity of Bowen's Corner, nor did his will devise such property. If the land transfers indeed occurred, it may have conveyed informally and without proper deed records.
- ⁴ South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine (SCHGM), The South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina., volume 4, p.30, note 4.
- ⁵ SCHGM, volume 30, p. 89.
- ⁶ SCHGM, volume 19, p. 12.
- ⁷ SCHGM, volume 9, p. 27.
- ⁸ SCHGM, volume 32, p. 234.
- ⁹ Will Book, Works Projects Administration, among the collections of the Charleston County Library, volume 53, p. 522.
- ¹⁰ SCHGM, volume 32, p. 3. In the Letters of John Stewart, Stewart is critical of the "Goose Creek Men," such as James Moore and in the same letter praises "Smith and Skinkeine," [as] men of the greatest sense...in all the country..."
- ¹¹ SCHGM, volume 10, pp. 85, 86 and Will Book volume 53, pp. 4, 279, 299, 556.
- ¹² SCDAH Series S213019, volume 0038, p. 0423, item 04.
- ¹³ South Carolina Gazette, Feb. 24, 1733. The Gazette is available on microfilm at the Charleston County Library, Charleston, South Carolina.
- ¹⁴ SCDAH Series S111001, volume 0005, p. 00275, item 02 and Will Book, volume 3, pp. 39-40.
- ¹⁵ SCDAH Series S372001, volume T, p. 438.
- ¹⁶ CCDB NN: 40.
- ¹⁷ SCDAH, Series 111001, Volume-0009, Page-00173, Item-03, Date 1767. Coachman, Benjamin, Memorial for 740 acres in St. James, Goose Creek Parish Berkeley County, Originally part of 1,040 acres tract, summarizing a chain of title to a grant to Benjamin Schenckling of Sept. 1702, and SCDAH, Series S111001, Volume-0003, Page-00191, Item-02, Coachman, James, Memorial for 500 acres...
- ¹⁸ CCDB NN: 40 and Book R-R, p. 314, December 2 and 3 1754, Lease and Release.
- ¹⁹ Michael J. Heitzler, Goose Creek, A Definitive History, Volume I, Planters, Politicians and Patriots, The History Press, Charleston, South Carolina 2005, p. 90.
- ²⁰ Manigault Family Papers, 1068.02.02, on deposit at the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.
- ²¹ CCDB, E-4, 11-14, 31 December 1771 Release. In 1800 a skilled worker earned approximately 200£ annually.
- ²² CCDB SS: 293; E4:11

Notes Continued.....

²³ Bowen's Plantation lay contiguous to Mount Pleasant Plantation owned by John Withers. Mount Pleasant land bordered upon White House Plantation owned by William Johnson. Virulent patriot families with fathers and sons resisting the invasion of the British resided at Bowen's, Mount Pleasant and White House Plantations. Also, each of the three wives of these homes smuggled ammunition to the patriot defenders of Charleston. After the war John Withers, son of the captain married Mary, daughter of John Bowen. The Bowen and Brown families connected through marriage. John Bowen married Rebecca Withers, daughter of John Withers; and John Withers Jr. married Mary Bowen, the only daughter of John and his first wife Mary. See A. S. Salley, Marriage Notices in the Charleston Courier, 1803-1808, (Columbia, South Carolina), The State Company, 1919.

²⁴ Heitzler, Volume I, p. 132.

²⁵ SCHM, volume 27, p. 224. Mary Bowen, the only daughter of John and Mary Bowen, married John Withers Jr. of Mt. Pleasant Plantation.

²⁶ House of Representatives Journal 1785-1786 p. 434 and S.C. Archives S165015 Year 1783 Item 37. 1796-1797 - James Bowen, Index to Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives lists James, while the listing of the 12th. General Assembly lists John Bowen. Also, in 1808-1809, John Bowen is referred to as "John Bowen, Esq. of Goose Creek, planter."

²⁷ SCDAH, Series: L10005 Reel-0008, Plat-04221, Date 1800-1805. John Bowen Plat for 275.5 acres near Fosters and Goose Creeks, surveyed by Skrim (C.139 and SCDAH, Series L10005, Reel-0011, Plat-05711, Date 1799-1806, Bowen, John, Plat of land on Goose Creek, 126 acres (C.421).

²⁸ Brockington, P. E. Jr., et. al. Cultural Resources Survey of the Charleston Naval Weapons Station, Berkeley and Charleston Counties, South Carolina. Final report Prepared for the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, Brockington and Associates, Inc. Atlanta, Georgia, 1995: p. 41.

²⁹ CCDB T13:173, an 1802 plat shows "settlement" and an 1857 plat indicates an "Old Chimney," at the settlement location.

³⁰ Michael J. Heitzler, Goose Creek A Definitive History, Volume II, Rebellion, Reconstruction and Beyond, The History Press, Charleston, South Carolina, 2006.p. 21.

³¹ Heitzler

³² Heitzler

³³ South Carolina Deed Abstracts, 1783-1788, Books I-5 through Z-5. Abstracted by Brent H. Holcomb, SCMAR Columbia, South Carolina, p. 199. Book R-5, pp. 41-44, Lease and Release February 6 and 7, 1786. John Bowen owned property on Charleston Neck

³⁴ Brian Hicks, Insight into Slave History, The News and Courier, May 5, 2007, Charleston, South Carolina.

³⁵ Interview with Harold Hilton, private resident of Sandridge, South Carolina, at his home April 23, 2003.

³⁶ A review of the Gazette newspaper, published in Charleston during John Bowen's tenure indicates that he never advertised for a run-a-way slave as did his neighbors.

³⁷ Will of John Bowen, Death occurred December 2, 1811, Will proved January 3, 1812 in Will Book E-1807-1818, p. 228, Works Project Administration, Charleston County Library, Charleston South Carolina.

³⁸ Land records reference "Bowen's Old Place," "Bowen's Point," and "Bowen's old settlement." These referrals support the presumption of a place called "Bowen's Corner," as a distinct locale when African American names seldom appeared on records and isolated refuges were omitted from maps and plats.

³⁹ CCDB K9:88

⁴⁰ CCDB G10:83

⁴¹ CCDB G10:83

- ⁴² United States Census, St. James Goose Creek Parish, Charleston District, Products of Agriculture 1850.
- ⁴³ Brockington figure 6, p. 42. Also see Tennent Family History and Genealogy Research Files, 30-4, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.
- ⁴⁴ Brockington
- ⁴⁵ Brockington
- ⁴⁶ United States Census, Products of Industry, St. James, Goose Creek Parish, Charleston, District, 1850 and 1860.
- ⁴⁷ United States Census, Products of Industry St. James, Goose Creek Parish, Charleston, District, 1850 and 1860, and Slave Schedules, 1860.
- ⁴⁸ Brockington, p. 66.
- ⁴⁹ Estate Sale of Negroes – By Permission of the Master in Equity by P.J. Porcher, Sales Advertisement in the Charleston Courier, March 9, 1855. P.J. Porcher offered for sale five female and four male slaves.
- ⁵⁰ Papers of the Adjutant and Inspector General's Office, *Return of Men Liable Under the Recent Call, St. James, Goose Creek Parish*, 1864. The papers are among the collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina call number 43/679
- ⁵¹ Marion (Marianne) Porcher, letter to Clelia, May 25, and June 11, 1865, Porcher family Correspondence among the F.A. Porcher Papers, 1082.02.01, 11/315/04 with the collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.
- ⁵² The last will and testament of Philip J. Porcher, who died December 6, 1871, file 214-13, was probated January 10, 1872. The last will and testament of Philip J. Porcher accounts for approximately \$6000 worth of real estate, but does not indicate any devotement of property outside of the immediate family. Oral history indicates award of property to freedmen as per author interview with descendent, Dr. Richard Porcher.
- ⁵³ CCDB 8, p. 73. Also see BCDB A411, p. 50 "Heirs of November Small."
- ⁵⁴ Application for a Saving Accounts at the Freedman's Bank, Charleston, South Carolina, in 1868. Application number 2237, Record for Cuffy Campbell. On microfilm at the Charleston County Library, Charleston, South Carolina
- ⁵⁵ Cheves Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina, p. 324.
- ⁵⁶ Berkeley County Deed Book (BCDB) 5898, p. 313.
- ⁵⁷ United States Census, 1930, 2nd St. James, Goose Creek Parish Township, Berkeley County, Goose Creek Church Road.
- ⁵⁸ Author telephone interview with Mr. Cleveland Myers at his home at Murrel's Inlet, South Carolina. According to Mr. Myers, African-American children were not allowed to purchase Cocoa Colas ® at any of the general stores.
- ⁵⁹ Cleveland Myers interview.
- ⁶⁰ Cleveland Myers interview.
- ⁶¹ Public School Attendance-Negro, 1930. The record shows 7 boys and 16 girls attending Bowen[']s Corner School. There was a 160 day school year. See attendance records, Berkeley County School District, Moncks Corner, South Carolina.
- ⁶² Telephone interview with Mrs. Gertrude Trescott, June 1, 2007.
- ⁶³ Bowen[']s Corner Negro School, County of Berkeley, School Budgets for the Scholastic Years of 1935-36, 1941-42, 1956-57. Budgets are available at the Office of Finance, Department of Education, Berkeley County School District, Moncks Corner, South Carolina.
- ⁶⁴ Berkeley County Office Building, Moncks Corner, South Carolina, Property Cards number 259-00-00-027-C. Alethia R. Fladger relinquished her rights to land, and Property Card 259-00-00-024-C Robert Williams relinquishes his interest to land.

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