The Land of Abraham

A Historical Booklet by Michael J. Heitzler, Ed. D.

The Land of Abraham

...a Goose Creek Historical Booklet

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About The Cover

The cemetery stone with an engraved weeping willow marks the grave of Lamb Stevens. It stands in the Cherry Hill Cemetery near the Ladson Exchange Park at South Carolina Interstate Highway, Exit 203.

The stone engraving states: In Memory of Lamb Stevens, Died 23 Sept. 1868, Aged 102 Years.

About The Author

Michael James Heitzler earned a Doctor of Education Degree from the University of South Carolina. He is a Fulbright Scholar and a retired school administrator of the Berkeley School District, South Carolina. He served as Mayor of the City of Goose Creek from 1978 to 2018. He is the author of *Historic Goose Creek, South Carolina, 1670-1980,* published in 1983 by Southern Historical Press, Easley, South Carolina, and *Goose Creek, a Definitive History*, volume I published in 2005 and volume II published in 2006, by the History Press, Charleston, South Carolina. *The Goose Creek Bridge* and *The Chicken Trilogy* were published by Author House Press in 2010 and 2015. The City of Goose Creek, Berkeley County and the South Carolina Historical Society published many more of his articles and booklets.

The Land and Legacy of Abraham Fleury Sieur De La Plaine

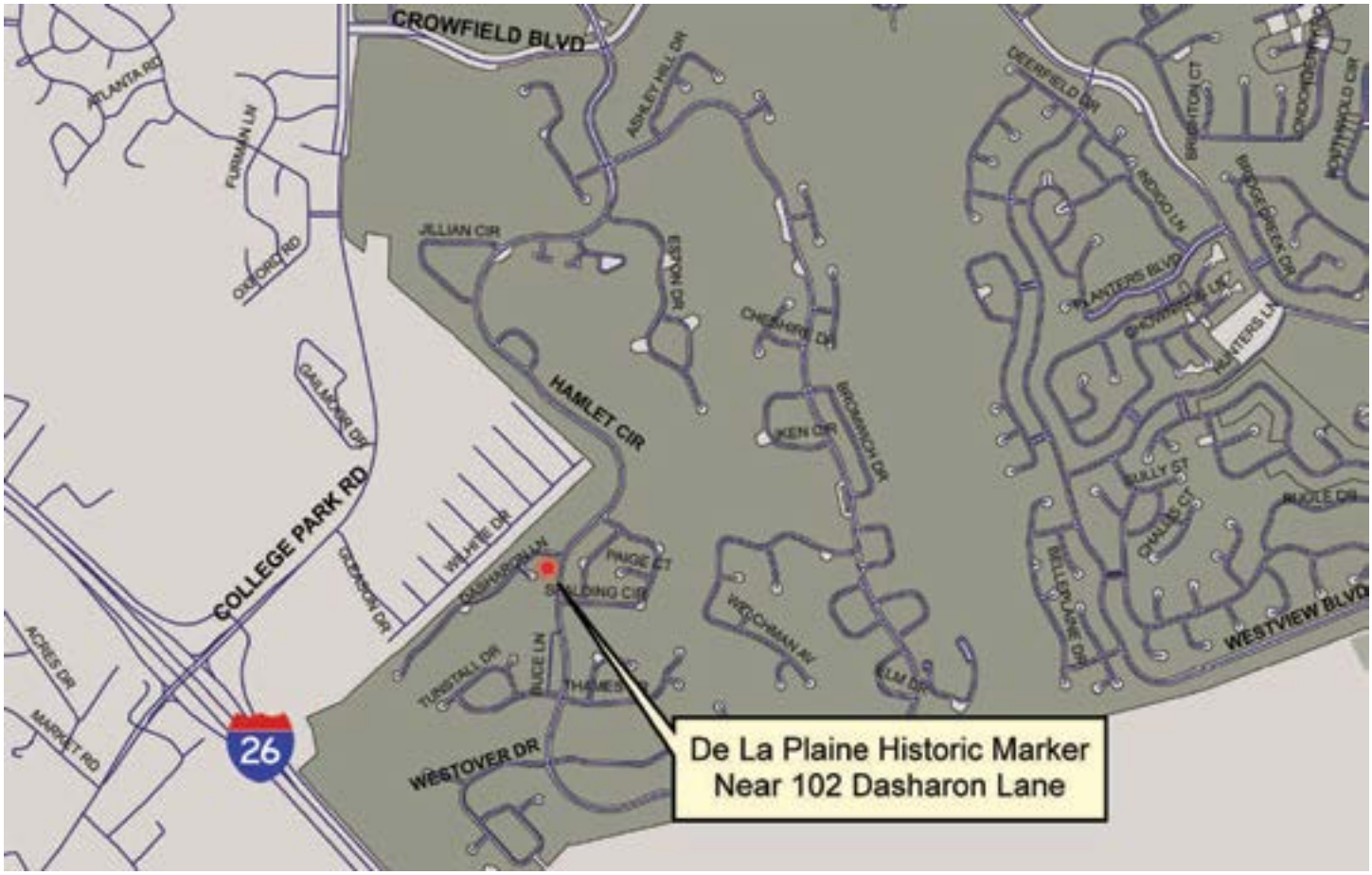
Abraham Fleury Sieur De La Plaine and his brother Isaac emigrated from Tours, France to South Carolina during political unrest and religious persecution in Europe. The elder brother, Abraham, arrived in the province in 1680[1] and eventually settled in the Ladson area where he acquired 830 acres of wetland and high ground.[2] His tract lay on the head waters of Goose Creek and spanned from unclaimed land west of the Goose Creek Bridge to Ladson, where additional French families settled during the early decades of the colony. The land of Abraham Fleury evolved from a simple frontier homestead to a comfortable country estate, where profits from rice harvests supported an envious lifestyle for eighty years until the debilitating post Revolutionary War economy accompanied its descent. Although failed circumstances crippled the enterprise for decades, Lamb Stevens, an unusual antebellum planter applied his uncanny abilities to the derelict estate and returned it to prosperity. Today the boundary lines that defined the land of Abraham are unrecognizable, and the colonial highway that tied it to the marketplace is vanished, leaving the land sprawling wantonly from Goose Creek to Ladson across eight lanes of modern interstate highway that severs the grand old place, and belies its existence. Nevertheless, the legacy of the ancient land of Abraham persists collectively among the private and public records of South Carolina, and the lots, lawns, fields and forests that comprise the contemporary Hamlets, College Park and Ladson commercial and residential subdivisions.

1 Henry A.M. Smith, Goose Creek, South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine (SCHGM), the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina, V. 29: p. 174. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes that guaranteed religious freedom, occurred five years after the arrival of Abraham Fleury Siuer De La Plaine to Carolina in 1685, but political unrest in France preceded the revocation.

2 Henry A.M. Smith, Rivers and Regions of Early South Carolina, Articles from the South Carolina Historical Magazine (SCHGM) V. III, the Reprint Company, Publishers, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1988, p. 310. Abraham Fleury Sieur De la Plaine with his wife Marianne and his stepdaughter also Marianne was one of the earliest families to settle in Ladson. In 1683, he received his first warrant and acquired more land soon after until he claimed 1390 acres of Ladson property. He sold and conveyed tracts until he owned 830 acres where he resided until his death in 1721. His brother, Isaac Fleury received a land grant in 1694.

The image (left) is a photograph of two unidentified people fishing on Ancrum Creek Bridge. The photograph, circa 1904 is among the collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

A historical marker stands (location shown below) on the site of the De La Plaine property. The marker is located near 102 Dasharon Lane in the Hamlets subdivision.



The Journey to Goose Creek

Abraham Fleury arrived in Charleston on the ship Richmond with the first contingency of Huguenot immigrants, disembarking a decade after the earliest British families. The Lord Proprietors of England granted all of the most accessible and valuable properties along navigable reaches of Goose Creek to aspiring planters during the initial decade of British settlement in South Carolina(1670-1680). However, when discrimination against Protestants (Huguenots) worsened in France, Fleury and other brave souls sailed to Charleston where the Lord Proprietors tolerated religious dissent, and offered less desirable but abundant land along the shallow headwaters to enterprising frontier families of most faiths.[3]

Abraham and his family sailed initially to England but soon departed on the Richmond on December 17, 1679, passing first to Barbados and reaching Oyster Point on the Charleston peninsula three months later. Fleury came ashore with his wife Marianne, stepdaughter Marianne, his brother Isaac and four servants in April 1680. He counted his servants Lewis, Lucy, Sharto, and Gabriel Teboo, as members of his family, because he paid their passage to America and in return obligated them to work 18 months in his charge. The indentured servant arrangement provided Fleury with an immediate, meager but steady income from their labor upon arrival in the new world, and by counting them as family members he qualified for a larger property grant in accordance with the head-right land distribution system of that day.[4]

In Charleston, he immediately applied to Governor Thomas Smith for land, and before the governor issued a warrant three years later for 350 acres to "Monsier De La Plane [Abraham Fleury]," he explored and soon after settled coveted properties 18 miles from town where he slashed a clearing on the highest ground for a home and a cornfield.[5] The impatient frontiersman led his family and two pack horses laden with supplies, beyond the walls of Charleston toward the tall forests

3 The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes enacted in 1685, but some foresaw the pending action and departed before the political process commenced. Daniel Ravenel, the compiler of Liste des Francois et Suisses. From an Old Manuscript List of French and Swiss Protestants Settled in Charleston . . . Probably About 1695-6, 1888, notes a Marianne Caroline Fleury and an Abraham Fleury, husband and wife, living in the Carolina area around this time (1695-6). He also records an Isaac Fleury, who was brother to Abraham.

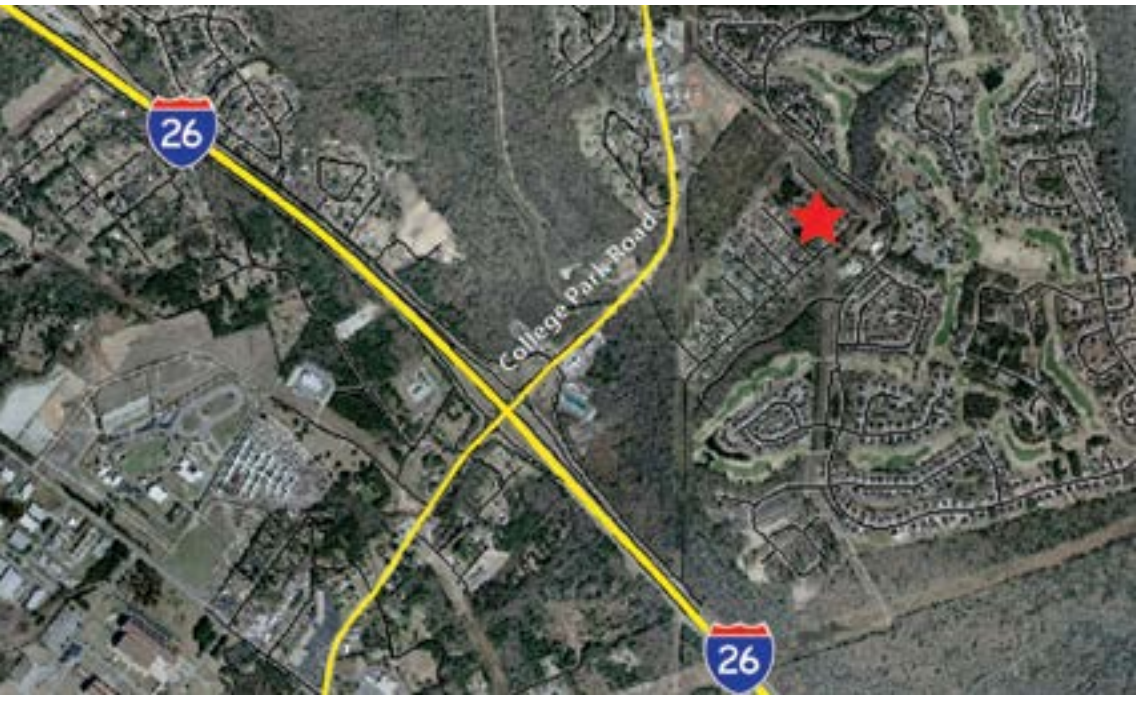
4 The Proprietors granted head rights to anyone transporting a laborer or indentured servant to the colony. These land grants consisted of 50 acres for a person arriving to the area and 100 acres for people previously living in Carolina.

5 Agnes Leland Baldwin, First Settlers of South Carolina 1670-1700, Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, 1985, p. 268. James Dugue Jr. married Marianne the step-daughter of Abraham Fleury De La Plaine. The estate settlement papers of Dugue's father document the son's death before 1696.

spanning the northernmost shores of Goose Creek. By that time, the contract binding his indentured workers expired, and they remained behind but Marianne, the daughter, whose husband died from illness, accompanied her parents and uncle along the brutal trading path proceeding northwest from the town.

Charleston was not a popular destination for Native Americans and across untold millennium, the larger and better-organized tribes of the interior relegated the weaker coastal clans to the thin briny soils of the peninsula. The sparsely populated coastal tribes infrequently used the trail that connected the peninsula to the mainland and consequently, they poorly defined it for the first Europeans. However, by the time the Fleurys arrived, the pathway was much busier with packhorse trains laden with manufactured goods slouching into the interior and returning with deerskins and peltries. Additionally, men such as Bernard Schenkingh drove herds of cattle to the town butchers near markets and ship captains waiting at the wharfs. The herds soon altered the obscured trail by making it wider, muddier and deeply pockmarked by innumerable hooves.

The Fleury Sieur De La Plaine family followed the unseemly cow path all morning, 16 miles inland to a fording point across Goose Creek. There the waterway flowed between lands granted two years before to the Arthur and Edward Middleton brothers. At that place, the creek widened and shallowed sufficiently to wade and the Middleton's committed some of their slaves to improve the crossing by installing a bridge. In the weeks to follow, the workers raised the low approaches by laying a corduroy roadway with numerous logs, spanned the shallowest sections with an earthen causeway, and bridged the deepest



The aerial image (left) shows the "Land of Abraham," on the northern headwaters of Goose Creek. The South Carolina Interstate Highway 26 severs the track. A star indicates the location of the Fleury settlement on the highest section of the Land of Abraham.

water with sturdy hickory logs, crossed beams, and split rails laid flat side up, but the Fleury party arrived too early to enjoy the convenience.

The Fleury party pushed ahead. The women furtively lifted their dresses while the men raised their muskets high, each with two powder horns lashed to the barrel, as they urged their reluctant pack horses around the unfinished crossing and onto the solid bottom of the waist-deep creek. They sloshed and slugged across the 80-yard expanse and slowly ascended the gentle grade on the opposite side where herds of cattle grazed and watered. On the far side, the sojourners paused to converse with their newest neighbors, and purchased four cows and one bull from Benjamin Schenkingh, the second son of Bernard. After the cowboys roped the beeves together in single file the little troupe, with beasts in tow, vanished with the morning chill along their last two-mile stretch on the Indian path.

Although the hesitant cattle instinctively tried to slow the march, the family quickened its pace when, two miles farther north, they found a game trace projecting west through the tall grasses and hundred-foot tall trees. There they diverged from the Indian trading trail to commence the final two-mile leg of their journey along the distinctive track. Small and large animals skirted the higher ground above the northern-most reach of Goose Creek. That renowned creek rose in the southwest among thousands of puddles, pools and springs at the foot of a significant rise later named "Windsor Hill." The shallow water flowed imperceptivity but steadily north down a one percent grade until it bent east at Fleury's new homestead and soon turned lazily south toward its outfall in the Cooper River. All along its 14-mile flow-way, the reliable irrigation produced abundant graze and mash in a thick forest where regular rainfall and alluvial soils supported large herds of deer and great numbers of birds, fowl and fur bearing mammals. Native hunters sought the game for untold millennium, their suede footsteps braided the animal traces along the way, exposing

Cartographer Hermon Moll noted "Dee Plain" on his 1732 map entitled "A New and Exact Map of the Dominions of the King of Great Britain..." The map is courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

hard-pan in places and wearing a foot-wide pathway that led the Huguenots home that early afternoon of an unusually bright Carolina day.

The Fleurys reached the familiar forest, scouted many times in previous months. They consumed a lunch of bread with beans and rested briefly at a clearing near the center of their property. There, a parcel of land ascended slightly above a lesser waterway and the women started a cooking fire, the men improved the lean-to shelter thrown up during a previous visit and together they commenced to erect the most remote European settlement in the frontier hinterland of Charleston.[6]

In the days to come, they plowed and planted fields of corn and raised the first section of a durable shelter for the impending spring rains. They felled pine timber from the higher ground, sawed, notched and stacked them until the interconnected walls stood higher than their heads. They peeled the bark from pine beams before laying them on top, from wall to wall bracing the rigid structure. Finally, they split more pine logs for rafters, secured them with battens, and covered it all with shingles split from felled cypress trees, sawed into two-foot sections and pulled from nearby swamps.

6 Without retracing their steps, their nearest neighbors were Jane and Joseph Thorogood. The Thorogoods arrived the same year as the Fleurys to reside two miles north. Their three thousand acre plantation, long named Thorogood, was located between the Road to Moncks Corner and the Wassamassaw Road.

Goose Creek

Both women scraped balls of clay that lay in thick strata beneath a few inches of topsoil. They kneaded and shaped the clay into fist-sized boles that they moistened and forced between the split pine logs for a tight seal. Similarly, they constructed a hearth and chimney with split pine battens. They stacked the battens in a crisscrossed manner and coated the structure with clay caulking. The first fire baked and hardened the muddy hearth and chimney, and the sun sufficiently stiffened the earthen caulking in the walls to provide a sturdy bulwark. Finally, the family sawed the remaining cypress logs into a thick door and shutters, securable against assault from occasional and sometimes violent Carolina natives and storms.

Simpler abodes sheltered the animals and safeguarded the precious corn harvest and soon a young Etiwan native reported with a quarter section of a deer carcass as a gift to the new neighbors. Expectedly, the Fleury family “kept an Indian” for many decades, who supplied their table

with game in exchange for fascinating gifts, such as scraps of calico, an iron pot, a knife, hatchet or bits of metal shaped and sharpened for arrow tips.

The Etiwan hunter arrived and departed as he wished, sometimes remaining absent for weeks, but always returning with all or part of a deer carcass, several geese or a turkey hen. The native found his wandering clan when he desired and remained with them during meaningful times of the year, but near the Fleury settlement, he bent saplings together and interwove stripped branches to fashion a dome that he covered with deerskins. He hunkered inside during winter storms and the torrential rains of summer.

All hurried to raise barns to protect the livestock during the severest weather, and storage sheds to keep the precious corn dry and safe. Corn was undoubtedly the most versatile and common source of sustenance, and the newest fields produced two annual crops. The family consumed the nutritious kernels, dried and stored the grain from one season to the next and used the leaf blades as fodder during the dearth of winter or for enticing their free-grazing cattle to come home. They survived the first season by consuming the gleanings of the forest, the milk and meat from the herds, and the bounty of the plowed fields. Near the end of the first year in the wilderness, the governor issued another warrant to "Mons [sic] Abraham DeLa plaine"[7] for 200 more acres, in exchange for bringing four servants to Carolina three years earlier.

7 In Nov.1683 a warrant was issued to Fleury for 350 acres for transporting himself and four servants to the Province in 1680. In addition to purchasing the land rights of James Phillips and Henry Blanchart, he received a warrant for 200 acres (50 acres each) for bringing in servants: Lewis, Lacy, Sharto and Gabriel Tebou.

Cartographers Emanuel Bowen and Thomas Bowen noted "French Refugees" along the Santee River section of this map (right), entitled "A Map of the British American Plantations extending from Boston in New England to Georgia, including all back Settlements in the respective Provinces, as far as the Mississippi," 1754, London. The map is courtesy of the North Carolina Outer Banks History Center.

French Neighbors

The well-irrigated and fertile Fleury properties suited grazing and agriculture, and a cohort of French Protestants followed the Fleury family to Ladson, settling north, south and west of him, transplanting a robust French neighborhood. Benjamin Marion, grandfather of the famous patriot, Francis settled a long and narrow tract between Fleury's land and the Goose Creek shallows and[8] Isaac Porcher, patriarch of the ancient South Carolina family, owned contiguous lands west of Fleury. Other nearby settlers included Jean Bosseau, James Francis Gignilliat, Abraham Dupont, Francis Guerin, Pierre Dassex (Dasseau), John Filbean and Charles Franchehomme with their wives and children. Finally, Peter Bacot built Cherry Hill Plantation on Fleury's northern border.[9]

Initially, the greater number of French immigrants clustered in Ladson,[10] but after the first farmers claimed the highly valued irrigated properties, others sought land ten miles farther west, along the Cypress/Wassamassaw flow-way where reliable supplies of fresh water promised successful grazing and harvests. There and in Ladson, the earliest French families labored successfully, but within 30 years, most relocated farther inland to French Quarter Creek, a small waterway emptying into the upper Cooper River. Others settled potential rice lands along the upper Santee River, assigning, "French Santee," as the common moniker for that section. Nonetheless, many of the earlier settlers in Ladson remained, shaping the waterways, roads and institutions to suit their transplanted lifestyles.

Abraham Fleury Sieur De La Plaine remained in Ladson and developed an enviable estate. He improved the approach to his humble settlement by defining a one-mile long walkway. He slashed and cleared along the top of a slowly ascending ridge from the game trace to his settlement knoll. The approach road to the Fleury settlement paralleled his little creek, where he planted grape vines and built arbors with the hope of tying his dreams to those of the Lord Proprietors who envisioned new world vineyards to rival those of France and Spain. He also planted rows of olive trees imported at the urging of the proprietors, and experimented with citrus seedlings, planting them on the southern exposure of his aging cabin. As he searched for more fruits of subtropical Carolina, he erected earthen dikes and drained hundreds of wet acres for rice fields and with rice profits, he brought the first Africans to Ladson.

8 Book D-D, p. 15, November 29 and 30, 1747, Lease and release by mortgage. The record is among the collection of deeds at the Charleston County Office Building, Charleston, South Carolina.

9 Book B-B, p. 56, March 22, 1744, Deed of Sale, Charleston County Office Building.

10 Benjamin Godin, a French immigrant received a grant of land on deep water near the Goose Creek Bridge.

From Servitude to Slavery

Great opportunities sprawled before Abraham's cabin door when his first experiments with rice farming returned currency from ship captains merely twenty miles away. The soil, the abundant rain and the shallow wetlands with its gradual grade portended a great moneymaking opportunity, if he found sufficient labor to shape the land, sow the seed and harvest the precious grain.

Planters struggled to find adequate labor for developing the lands, and Fleury was no exception. The four indentured servants did not accompany him to Ladson, and other European immigrants seldom hired out but sought land of their own. No one kept wily natives against their will.[11] Thus, during the next winter, he ventured to Charleston and purchased "indentured" labor imported from Africa. He marched the four men and two women to his expanding settlement where he put them to work erecting humble shacks and a communal cooking pit.

The moral leap from funding ship passage for impoverished Europeans to purchasing African slaves was not difficult for Abraham Fleury. Europeans commonly exchanged temporary labor for passage to the new world, and all parties usually benefited from the arrangement. At first, some envisioned entering into indentured agreements with Africans, as was successfully employed in some places north of Virginia, but the great demand for labor in Carolina, and prevailing practices in Africa dashed those intentions. African tribes captured and enslaved humans on the"dark continent" for thousands of years and usually indebted their captive lives until death. Consequently, the African captors did not sell temporary indentured labor to ship captains for passage to America, but instead they sold lifetime contracts and many bound souls arrived in Carolina without any hope of eventual freedom. The familiar indentured servant arrangement that temporarily bound workers to the land in exchange for passage to America became less common as more planters purchased life contracts from Africa. Similarly, Abraham Fleury purchased African slaves and tied his fortune to bound labor with lifetime arrangements. Sadly, for all concerned, that nefarious entanglement persisted throughout the remainder of his days and for generations of his descendants.

11 Indentured servants often received land of their own and were not willing to serve other landowners. For example, the governor issued a warrant for 210 acres of land on November 1, 168[9]3 to Lewis Te Boo [Thibou] one of the indentured servants accompanying Abraham Fleury to Charleston in 1690.

The map shows the Road from Charleston to the Goose Creek Bridge. The Road to Dorchester is shown originating at the 18- mile stone, merging with the Road to Ladson and continuing to Fort Dorchester on the Ashley River.

The Land

Fleury's little flow-way (today called Ancrum Creek) bisected his property, and drained south through the emerging roadway and onto the shallow headwaters of Goose Creek. As decades vanished, the mile-long avenue on the eastern side of Fleury's creek connected the plantation settlement to the gradually improved and increasingly important route to Charleston markets. That "Road to Dorchester" overlaid the old animal track, and overseers with slaves from the Oaks, Bloomfield, Crowfield, the Fleury Plantation and most of the families in Ladson improved it with causeways and bridges from its origin at the 18-mile stone to Ladson. This road traversed the Crowfield flow-way[12] by means of a corduroy crossing consisting of logs laid side by side that lifted the path above the soft ground and water. The byway continued another mile to a hickory log bridge over Fleury's Creek, and ascended gradually from the bridge to merge with the Road to Ladson.[13] The highways merged four miles west of the Goose Creek Bridge and continued six more miles to Fort Dorchester on the Ashley River. Thus, Abraham Fleury's frontier homestead conveniently accessed two improved roads. One road tied the land of Fleury to the Goose Creek Bridge from the north,the other accessed the same bridge from the west and both of the roads merged on the western edge of his property to continue to the Ashley River. Moreover, his land lay within a robust community of familiar Huguenot families from his homeland.

12 The waterway is Huckhole Swamp today. The Road to Dorchester is no longer discernible.

13 The colonial era Road to Ladson was tagged the Blue House Road during the 19th century and Ladson Road references SC Highway 78 today.

The French Church

French Huguenots refused to comply with the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church in France, and the immigrants to Carolina transplanted their anti-establishment religious philosophy in Ladson. At first, they worshiped in their cabins as in their European homes, but soon erected a tiny log sanctuary on the Road to Dorchester, one-quarter mile east of its merger with the Road to Ladson. They built that little sanctuary on land owned by Abraham Fleury, but many referred to it as the "French Church between two rivers," indicating its proximity to the Ashley and the Cooper.[14]

James Francis Gignilliat resided approximately one mile south of the sanctuary and served as a minister for the French Assembly. Titled "clark [clerk]" he kept the church records, such as burials, marriages and baptisms. He may have been the only official of the frontier sanctuary.

14 Transactions of the Huguenot Society of South Carolina, Supplement number 110, The Jean Boyd Map and Letters, Charles Towne, Charleston, South Carolina, 2006.

However, others faithfully supported the little congregation. For example, Antoine Prudhomme bequeathed a foundation for the support of the poor, "which assembles at Gouscrick [sic]."[15] He devised:

> a cow with a heifer calf following her, and another heifer about two years old, making in all three head, and in order that the said cattle may increase to the greater benefit of said poor, I declare my will to be that the said cow and heifer and other females …shall be….for the greater benefit of the said poor.[16]

In spite of their efforts to support the French church, members assimilated quickly into the English dominated colony, and within 30 years of Fleury's arrival, the Ladson Huguenots joined the nearby St. James, Goose Creek Parish congregation who met near the Goose Creek Bridge. Francis LeJau, a French - born Anglican minister, led that congregation and invited the attendance of the Ladson Protestants.

15 Works Project Administration (WPA), Last will and Testament of Antoine Prudhomme, July 1695, WPA will book 1, pages 56 and 57, recoded in original will book 1692-93, page 227, Charleston County Courthouse, Charleston, South Carolina.

16 Ibid. For this publication, the author employed an English translation of the French language used in Prudhomme's last will and testament.

Settlements Flourish

Notwithstanding their early assimilation, French settlers dominated the Ladson community for 100 years, and descendants of those families contributed to the colonial management and later to the republican affairs of South Carolina. French immigrant Jean Boisseau received a small grant of 210 acres next to Abraham Fleury in 1696. There he erected a small cabin and raised cattle and sheep for nine years before he acquired a much larger grant of 2,700 acres that reached near present-day Summerville. He was influential in frontier affairs and was one of the largest planters in the colony.[17] After he died, his widow Marie married James Gignilliat, the clerk. Eventually, Mary and James Gignilliat sold half of their land to Frenchman Isaac Porcher and the remaining half to Jonathan Fitch before they relocated to the emerging French settlement on the Santee River. Peter Porcher, son of Isaac, inherited the family estate, resided there for decades and became an important government figure who served as tax inquirer and representative to the 16th Royal Assembly in 1747.[18] He and his wife, Charlotte Marianne, reared five children, each of who played important roles in the early colony, and whose descendants contributed to South Carolina into the modern era. Benjamin Marion conveyed his property to Ralph Izard, owner of the neighboring Elms Plantation, and the Marion family relocated to the upper Cooper and the French Santee.

During the short winters Fleury's "family," including an increasing number of Africans, baked sufficient bricks to replace the little pine cabin with a substantial two-story edifice. Over the years, he expanded the home until it resembled the abodes of his English neighbors. Similar to his Crowfield Plantation colleague, he lined his approach avenue with oak trees for shade and beauty and slave cabins that sheltered at least 12 bound families. He grazed sheep to shear the large front lawn and arranged a formal pleasure garden with an orchard behind his home. The Elms Plantation to his south, as well as at the Bloomfield, Button Hall and Springfield Plantations to the east, featured bathhouses and brick-lined springs. By the turn of the century, he erected a wooden bathhouse, 100 yards downstream from a spring that emptied into his reliable creek.

17 Transactions of Huguenot Society, V.16: p. 43.
18 Edgar 1974, V. II: p. 532.

As the new century dawned, the multi-talented Huguenot owned a well-accommodated plantation of dimension and design, unimaginable for him in the distant homeland he forsook merely 20 years before. However, unlike the second sons and other English and Barbadian immigrant landowners in Carolina, he did not name his home after a grand estate in Europe, but tagged his sir name to it. This was the practice of almost all places owned by Huguenots except a few such as Cherry Hill Plantation, contiguous on the north of the Land of Abraham.

Peter Bacot acquired Cherry Hill Plantation in 1720, one year before the demise of Abraham Fleury,[19] and his descendants remained tied to it until it merged with the Fleury tract 130 years later. His grandson, also Peter, was born on the property and resided there until his death in 1781. He annexed 500 acres of the original Boisseau tract and commonly referred to the entire plantation as "Cherry Hill."[20] Similarly to the neighboring Fleury estate, Bacot kept a two-story brick home that he called his"mant[s] ion." Nonetheless, he preferred to spend most of his days in his town quarters near his mercantile business in Charleston[21] where he and his brother-in-law Charles Dewar shared ownership in the seafaring schooner, Pallaton that carried fur, peltries and African slaves to Atlantic markets. Bacot supported the patriots during the Revolutionary War; in reprisal, the British banished him from Charleston during their occupancy. He returned to serve in the Provincial Congress, and later in the General Assembly. Undoubtedly, his service helped the new republic throw off the yoke of Great Britain, but with victory came formidable challenges to the new nation that caused the little Ladson neighborhood to recoil.

19 Transactions of Huguenot Society V.16: p. 44. Also see will of Peter Bacot, will book 1729-1731, v. 2, p. 6, and see the will of Peter Bacot II, will book 1733-37, v. 3, p. 150 and see the will of Peter Bacot III, book 1786-1793, v. 22, p. 173.

20 S.C. Archives Plat S213184, V: 2, p. 278, Item 1.

21 Edgar, 1974, V. 3: p. 46. Also, see the Will and Last Testament of Peter Bacot, Works Project Administration (WPA), v. 22, p. 173.

Decline

The inland rice production that brought great wealth to industrious Goose Creek planters during much of the 18th century slowed significantly after the Revolutionary War. The British Empire no longer guaranteed American access to world rice markets, and scarce investment capital and labor shifted away from the exhausted inland fields to the more productive land along tidal influenced rivers. Consequently, Ladson rice production waned and the cash strapped landowners along the Road to Dorchester neglected the labor intensive bridging and shoring necessary to keep the byway passable. Over time, that passage became unusable and the value of the bordering properties fell precipitously. Some estates devolved into non-productive rural retreats for the wealthy, while other tracts changed hands often as Charleston merchants bartered and speculated.[22]

Abraham Fleury died in 1721, at the age of 66, during the heady days of inland rice culture. He devised his two-story brick home, settlement and all 830 acres "Whereon I now live," to his brother Isaac, and he ordered that upon the death of Isaac, the land would convey to Abraham's only daughter, Marianne. She resided with him in Ladson during the earliest years and later wed Peter Bacot of neighboring Cherry Hill, but reared no children with him. Nonetheless, Marianne left one child, also named Marianne, by her first marriage. Daughter Marianne wed Tobias Fitch and with him reared a son Stephen and a daughter Mary. Mary acquired the Fleury properties and brought it to her marriage to Isaac Perroneau.[23] When Mary died, the ancient land conveyed out of the French family to a family of Charleston merchants.[24]

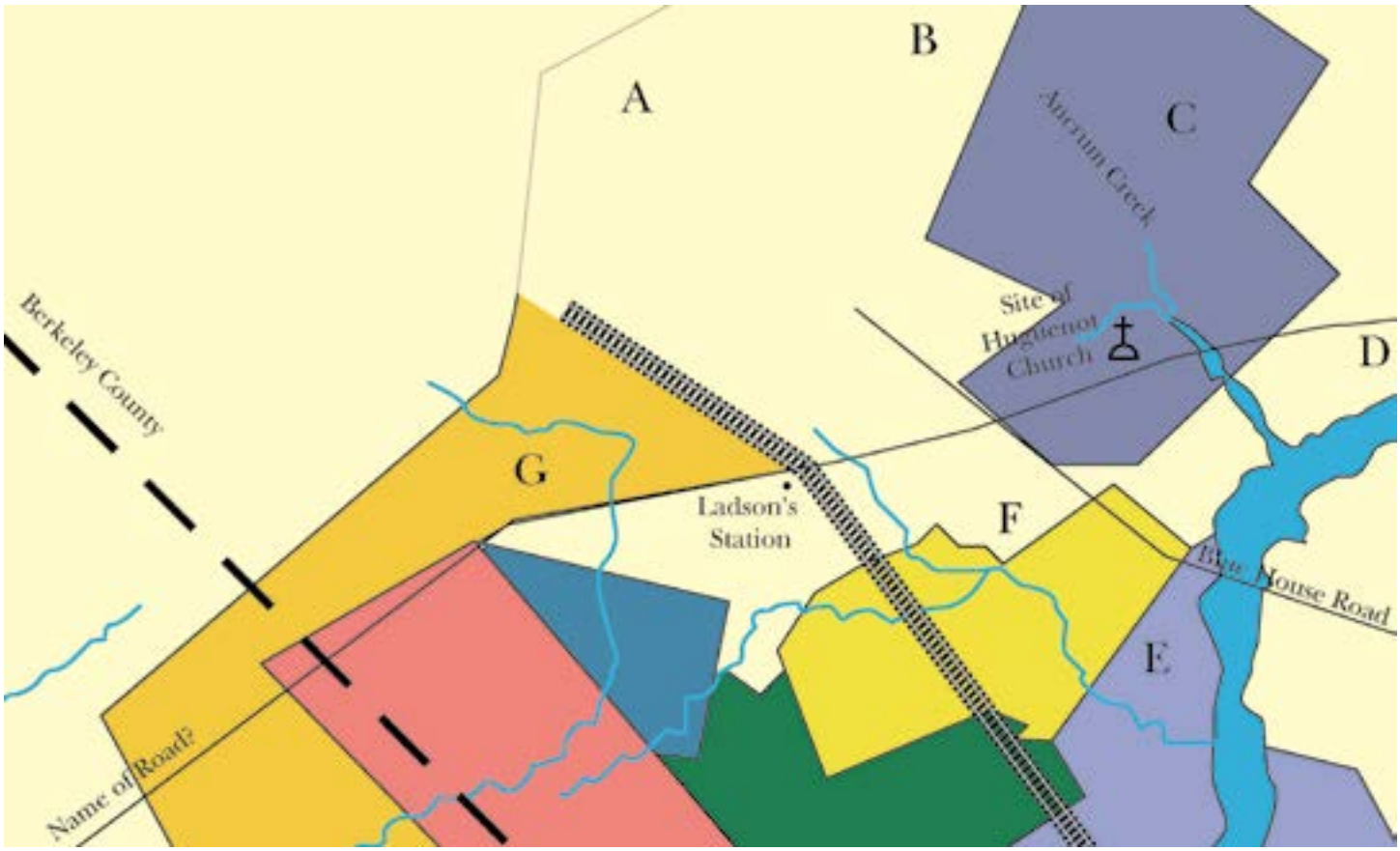
Many Charleston merchants managed farms from afar and employed overseers to eke profits from the enslaved labor and exhausted soils. Predictably, a Charleston merchant acquired the Fleury lands, but the acquisition emerged from love and marriage rather than profits alone, when Anne, daughter of Mary, wed George Parker,

22 Westview Boulevard and a power line easement parallel the old Road to Dorchester route from the 18-mile stone to Ladson. The road is no longer discernible. Crowfield, and Bloomfield Plantations were contiguous to Fleury along the Road to Dorchester. Both reverted to rural retreats and stopped sending items to market.

23 Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel, Charleston, The Place and the People (New York, McMillan, 1912), p. 8. Perroneau Plantation was the rendezvous for the colonial militia for many years. The plantation was strategically located between the Goose Creek Bridge and Fort Dorchester and featured a popular racetrack, where the equestrians trained. Also, see Hirsch, p. 184.

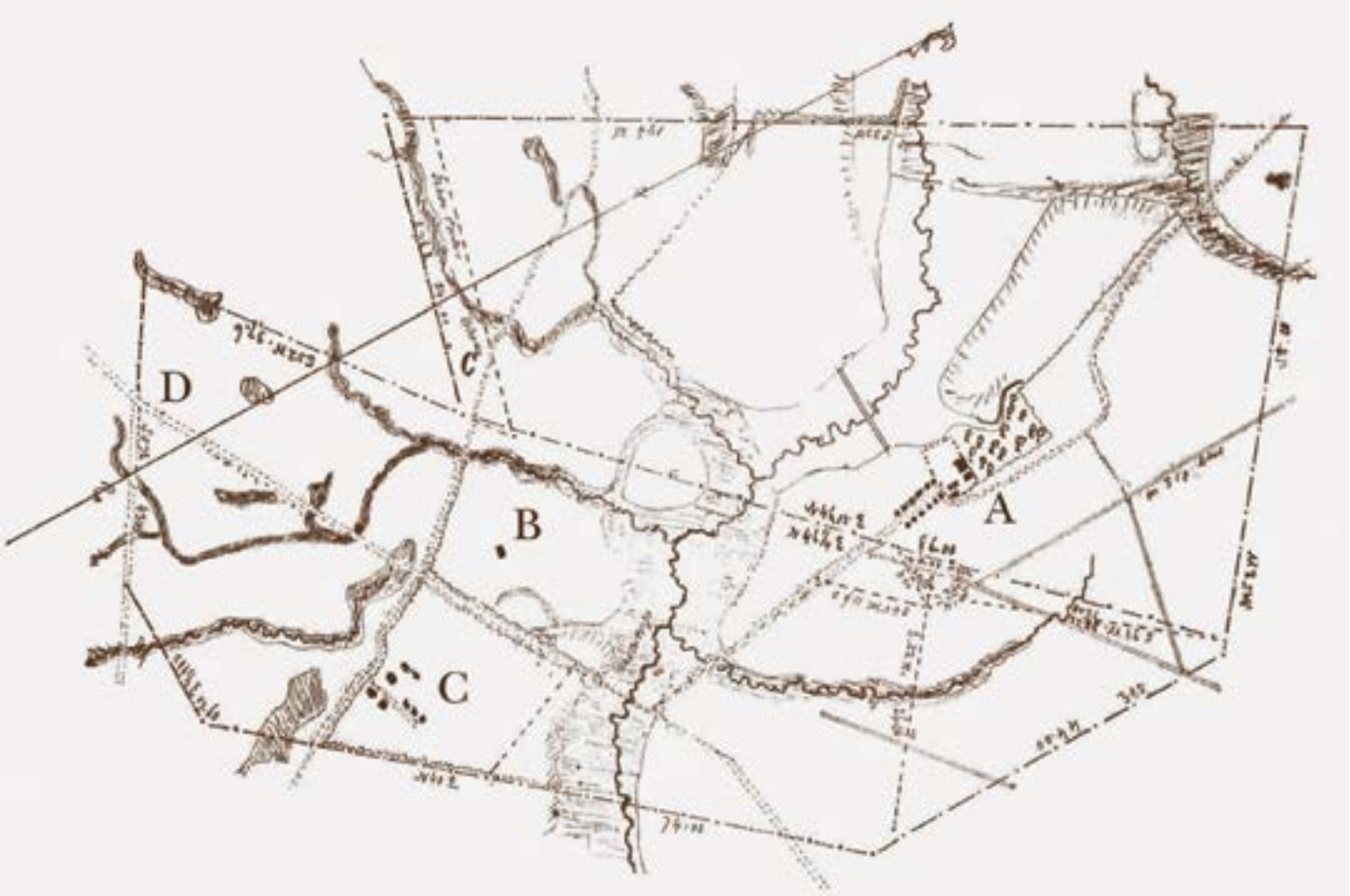
24 Smith, Rivers and Regions, p. 312. The Fleury land descended to his brother Isaac, granddaughter Marianne and to her daughter Mary Fitch who married Isaac Perroneau. She died in 1772, devising the Fleury tract equally to her two daughters Mary Ann Dugay Perroneau and Ann Parker. In a manner, not clearly ascertained the land conveyed to George Parker, the husband of Ann Dugay Perroneau.

a merchant. As the winds of revolution stirred in Charleston, the Fleury Plantation was a welcomed retreat rivaling others in Goose Creek. The mature lawn and gardens presented a spectacle every season, and the tall oak trees lining the main avenue reached for 200 yards toward cool waters before they surrendered to a mixed forest canopy that continued a mile-long shady promenade during the hottest months. Sheep grazed aside the approach path, and the aging two-story brick edifice with a full portico and wide entrance stairs invited all to enter. Adding to the appealing vision of the ancient mansion, the mature apple, peach and pear orchard afforded shady walks and diversion in the spacious "pleasure garden" behind the home. Understandably, at Anne's earnest behest, Parker purchased the family tract in 1772 and moved into the old place, where they resided until he died four years later.



This is a recreation of a rendering (above) produced by William Henry Johnson showing the outline of early plantations in Ladson. The original drawing is among items in the William Henry Johnson Scrapbook produced during the early 20th century. The scrapbook is among the collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

Manuscript letters were added to the rendering to indicate locations of early French settlements:
A-Dr. Isaac Porcher's Settlement, B- Bacot, Cherry Hill, C-Abraham Fleury De La Plaine, D- Benjamin Marion, E- Jean Francis de Gignilliat (Alias James Francis Gignilliat, F- Dr. Isaac Porcher, G - John Boisseau's Grant.



John Purcell drew this plat (above) of the Fleury Plantation from a 1785 survey. William Parker owned the 797-acre estate when surveyors measured the tract. The manuscript letters, added for this publication indicates the location of "A" the Main House and Gardens, "B" the Remains of the French Church, "C" an unidentified settlement, and "D" the Public Road from Dorchester and its merger with the Road to Ladson. H.A.M. Smith traced the original plat. The tracing is among the collections of The South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

A closer view of the Parker plat (right) shows the "Remains of the French Church" separated by the Public Road to Dorchester from an unidentified settlement. The cluster of buildings composing the unidentified settlement features an avenue and eight structures on a "clear field' in the southwest quadrant of the tract. Brick construction of at least the main houses replaced most log cabins by the middle of the 18th century. Split log structures with clay chinking persisted for most slave quarters and outbuildings such as barns. This unidentified settlement may have been home to an overseer.

George Parker devised the 830-acre Fleury/Parker tract to his brother William and entailed it after William's death to his brother's sons, "so as to prevent it from going out of the family."[25] His earnest desire to preserve the family land also included intentions to keep it whole in perpetuity. Nevertheless, the family divided the tract between William Parker's two sons after William died in 1791 and the two parcels remained separate until Sarah Peronneau Parker, widow of William McKensie Parker purchased both sections. Through that purchase, she reconstituted the original plantation once again in 1832.

25 The will and last testament of George Parker, 1776 in the 1776-1784 will book. Works Project Administration (WPA) v. 18, pp. 252 and 253.

A section of the 1791 plat (above) shows an avenue leading to the main house. Twelve slave quarters line the approach road and a wide lawn frames the main house near three outbuildings. A large formal garden with shade trees spread from the back of the home. The approach avenue continued past the settlement, skirting the house and gardens and proceeding to the northern border of the estate.

The poor economies of that era debilitated many lowcountry plantations and challenged the wish of the Parker household to keep the ancient land in the family. That dream unraveled during the 1830s, when property including slaves, field equipment, household items and all of the land sold in a series of auctions. In 1835, nine slaves transferred to Joseph Hanscome, a neighboring merchant turned cotton planter.[26] More items conveyed at subsequent sales until the executors of Mrs. Sarah Peronneau Parker sold all that remained, including the land, in 1837 to another merchant from Charleston, William Washington Ancrum.[27]

William Washington Ancrum was the son of a prominent Charleston merchant and investor, and as did his successful father, he used overseers and slaves to work the fields while he remained close to the family mercantile business in town. The speculative status of the land persisted when he sold it in 1849 to another merchant, A.V. Dawson of Charleston, but circumstances dramatically shifted when an unusual farmer arrived in Ladson, the following year.

26 Larry Koger, Black Slave Masters in South Carolina 1790-1860, (University of South Carolina Press), 1985, p. 133. Joseph Hanscome was a wealthy mulatto who purchased nearby Woodland Plantation, moved his wife and children as well as six of his "city slaves" from their Charleston home on Green Hill Street to Ladson, in hopes of raising cotton. Immediately he sought bound help who understood agriculture and purchased nine of the Parker family servants.
27 MCO Book G #6 p. 96. Also, see the will of Sarah Peronneau Parker in will book 1845-1851 at the Charleston Probate Court Building and see WPA will book v. 44, pp. 183, 184. In addition, the 1790 census shows George Parker, head of a family of two with 48 slaves.

The New Farmer in Town

Lamb Stevens was an unusually dark-skinned African American farmer born into slavery in North Carolina in 1763. His uncanny talents shone early in life as he mastered agriculture, but moreover he acquired exceptional interpersonal skills and the nuances of southern property laws relevant to slave ownership. One story hints of his proclivity for charming women, young and old and another tale alludes to a woman who, enamored with him, used her husband's manumission papers to set Stevens free. Notwithstanding the implausibility and unsubstantiated nature of these tales, Stevens acquired his freedom and wisely fled the unsavory circumstances in North Carolina for the deeper south, arriving as a free man in St. George Parish, South Carolina prior to 1800. There he applied his hard work and personal talents toward amassing considerable wealth.[28]

Stevens purchased his first slaves when, at the age of 47, he attracted a teenage slave beauty named Elizabeth. Shortly after their marriage, he purchased her and her two small children with his savings and assigned himself as the legal master of three slaves. This unseemly practice was common among freedmen for numerous reasons, sometimes simply because the husband could not afford to purchase all the individuals from their "rightful" owners at the same time. Some shrewd husbands intentionally delayed manumitting the bride to test the marital state and to retain the right to sell the "human chattel" if circumstances warranted, or to use as collateral for loans. Thus, some freedman kept the new wife on a type of probation, and in one instance, a husband sold a recent bride for a $50.00 profit after an inordinately short betrothal.[29] Notwithstanding the legal standards of the day, it appears as if such legal maneuverings never entered Stevens' relationship with his bride. He and younger Elizabeth lived together for more than 50 years. Nevertheless, the bizarre context of property laws within the peculiar institution of slavery in South Carolina plagued Stevens all of his life, even as he grew increasingly wealthy and resurrected the lands of Fleury.

28 United States Census, St. George Parish, South Carolina, Enumeration Census counted Lamb Stevens as a free non-white.

29 Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830, Research Department of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 1924), p.41.

Stevens amassed wealth throughout his long life, accumulating as many as seven bound souls by 1830. This was a remarkable count considering that only two percent of South Carolina white males were wealthy enough to own slaves. His slave count increased to as many as 30 prior to 1850. Nonetheless, the numbers were not always indicative of his wealth alone, but sometimes were a better measure of family commitment.[30] For example, in 1831 Lamb Stevens[31] purchased his own son, Jerry Stevens, from Dennis and Elizabeth Cain for $700 and made an unknown number of similar familial acquisitions in subsequent years. In 1845, he purchased his daughter, Judy, and her two children (his grandchildren) Rachel and Robert.[32] His children lived as "free persons of color" but his nominal slaves remained his property, and as such were subject to confiscation or garnishee.[33] Stevens sold all three to John Bemar for the nominal sum of one dollar in a convoluted scheme to keep his family members from slavery as payment for a debt.[34] Nevertheless, all considered him a wealthy man despite the fact that his valuable chattel sometimes included members of his family.

At least twice these legal realities resulted in dangerous circumstances for Lamb's family. In one instance Jerry Stevens, son of Lamb, traveled to Orangeburg County, and attempted to establish himself as a free black person in 1833. Without proper documents to prove his status, the sheriff arrested him as a run-a-way.[35] Remarkably, Jerry convinced the sympathetic sheriff to place an advertisement in the Charleston Mercury newspaper because he feared that without his freedman documentation someone could buy him and ship him away to obscurity. Consequently, the following notice appeared on May 28, 1833:

> **Committed to the Gaol[36] of Orangeburg this day a Negro man of dark complexion 5 feet 10 ½ inches high; calls his name Jerry, and says that he belong to his father, a free Negro, living in Charleston by the name of Lamb Stevens; and that his father bought him from Dennis Cain. He also states that a Mr. Riggs living near Cyprus is the guardian of his father, Lamb Stevens. William Murrow, Sheriff** [37]

30 United States Enumeration Census for St. George Parish, Charleston District 1820, and 1830, and St. James, Goose Creek, Charles-ton District, 1840, 1850, 1860.

31 Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830, Research Department of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 1924), pp. 41-85.

32 S.C. Archives S213050. V. 6 A: p. 497.

33 Koger, pp. 67, 76, 77. The 1860 Enumeration Census for the Mount Holly District in South Carolina noted that 97 year-old Lamb Stevens was married to 65 year-old Elizabeth and Samuel was their thirteen year-old son. The age engraved on the stone (102 years old in 1868) does not agree with the age of 97 years old in 1860 recorded in the enumeration census. No explanation for the discrepancy is available.

34 Bills of Sale, volume 6A 1843-1846 State of South Carolina, p. 497. Also, see US Census 1850: Schedule, St. James, Goose Creek, Charleston County, p. 427 and Schedule II, p.407 (Slave Schedule).

35 Koger, pp. 76, 77.

36 The Ballad of Reading Gaol, a poem (1898) by British writer Oscar Wilde. An unusual but appropriate alternate spelling for "jail."

37 Charleston Mercury Newspaper, May 28, 1833, Charleston, South Carolina.

Jerry returned home safely, never fell into slavery, and most likely remained close to familial faces of Charleston until emancipation 30 years hence, but problems persisted for his father. In June 1851, the Court of Equity heard the case of Lamb Stevens verses Christian Alf, a castor oil manufacturer in Charleston. Lamb Stevens accused Alf of falsely enslaving his granddaughter and great-granddaughter. After hearing testimony, the Judge granted freedom to Phoebe, the granddaughter and her child Sally, the great granddaughter, and chastised Christian Alf's misguidance.[38] Lamb Stevens bought the Cherry Hill Plantation prior to 1850 and the number of slaves he worked fluctuated as the Civil War approached, mirroring the statistics of many white South Carolinians. Dire economic conditions drove the profits skimmed from bound labor ever lower, and by 1850, he owned only 13 servants of who an untold number were family members.[39]

38 Koger, p. 56 and Masters of Equity, Bills of Complaint 1851, Record Number 75 (Charleston County).
39 United States Enumeration Census for the St. James, Goose Creek, Parish, Charleston District, 1850.

Notwithstanding his personal travails, at the age of 80 a vigorous Lamb Stevens was one of the wealthiest landowners in Carolina with an estate valued at $12,118, including 30 slaves.[40] He continued to grow his wealth by purchasing land until the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1858, he purchased the 800-acre neighboring Fleury/Parker's estate, and melded it with his 500-acre Cherry Hill property, thus emerging as one of the largest landowners in the St. James, Goose Creek Parish.[41]

Some described Stevens as "nearly coal black," to dispel any indication that the freedman was mulatto which to some may justify his business acumen. Regardless, his neighbors greatly respected him and appreciated his discipline, work ethic, farming and management talents.[42] His 1,300 acres of land was valued at $3,000 in 1860, and no one in Ladson planted more improved property than Stevens planted. He cleared 200 irrigated acres and cultivated hay, sweet potatoes, corn, peas, beans, peaches, pears, and other varieties of garden produce such as tomatoes and cabbage. He raised horses, milk cows, beef cattle, swine and sheep, and sold garden produce and slaughtered animal products.

40 Koger, pp. 169,170.
41 United States Census, Slave Schedule, Charleston District, 1860, p. 334.
42 SCHGM V. 29: p. 180.

He did not trust the marketplace and consequently produced no cash crops such as cotton, rice, or wool as did many of his colleagues.[43] Lamb Stevens' estate shrank when he lost his real and nominal slaves after the Civil War, but his neighbors also suffered, and consequently, he remained a relatively wealthy landowner in the Charleston hinterland until the day he died.[44]

43 L. Stevens, pages 11 and 12, United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, Census of the United States, Schedule 4, Products of Agriculture in St. James, Goose Creek Parish, Mt. Holly Post Office, Charleston District, 1860.
44 Lamb Stevens owned fewer slaves as the war years approached partially explaining the decrease in the value of his estate. He owned 13 slaves in 1860. See U.S. Census St. James, Goose Creek Parish Charleston District, p.45.

The cemetery stone (above) with an engraved weeping willow marks the grave of Lamb Stevens. It stands in the Cherry Hill Cemetery near the Ladson Exchange Park at South Carolina Interstate Highway, Exit 203. The stone engraving states: In Memory of Lamb Stevens, Died 23 Sept. 1868, Aged 102 Years.

The image (left) shows the granite cross standing five feet tall at the French Church and cemetery in Ladson. The monument is 571 feet from the public road within a gated fence. A three-foot square granite stand supports the cross. The inscription on the front reads: "Site of the ancient and extinct French Church of Goose Creek, with its surrounding burying ground. Established about 1694 by French Protestants." The back reads: " Erected A.D. 1910, by the Huguenot Society of South Carolina, on God's Acre, donated to the Society in Trust, 8th July, 1909." The author made this photograph on December 20, 2006.

Lamb Stevens died in 1868 at his home on Cherry Hill, leaving his property to his 72-year-old wife, Elizabeth and several children.[45] Elizabeth Stevens remained at Cherry Hill while ownership of the property passed to her children and grandchildren and finally conveyed out of the family. The heirs harbored no desire to work the Ladson farms and eventually sold all of the parcels of both combined tracts, including the French Church and cemetery.

45 Ibid. Slave Schedule, United States Enumeration Census, St. James, Goose Creek Parish, Mount Holly, Charleston District, 1860. This census reported that Stevens owned 13 slaves in 1859. The census listed Lamb Stevens at age 97, Elizabeth Stevens at age 67, and Samuel Stevens at age 13.

Historian, Henry A. M. Smith visited the Fleury/Parker properties near the turn of the 20th century and found a few broken bricks above Ancrum Creek, hinting at the location of the settlement. Squatters and tenants carried off most of the clay blocks to erect foundations and chimneys for their cabins, and local farm families used the large oaks that shaded the home and lined the avenue for lumber and firewood until few of the trees survived. Smith located the remnants of a chimney marking the location of the African's Cherry Hill home, but years before thieves similarly disassembled that ancient place. Nonetheless, the Cherry Hill Cemetery remains, protecting the final resting place of Lamb Stevens. He reposes beneath a fir tree near his home site.

Gone but not Forgotten

By the turn of the 20th century, the old French church grounds were barely discernible. The South Carolina Colored Orphan Aid Society owned the property that surrounded and protected the sacred site and Henry Smith purchased one acre of land upon which the old church stood, further buffering the church grounds and surrounding cemetery. He subsequently donated that acre to the South Carolina Huguenot Society, which erected a cross of granite that marks the location today.[46]

As the 18th century waned, the old Huguenot Plantations in Ladson devolved into small farms worked by owners, tenants and sharecroppers. Liberated African Americans dominated the countryside in the obsolete St. James, Goose Creek Parish, but European-Ameican families retained control of strategic properties, especially the tiny commercial centers near the rail depots. Ladson farm families depended on the rolling stock to trade with Charleston merchants, thus most of the land on the old French plantations in Ladson remained in the hands of white families who used the Woodstock and Ladson rail depots to conduct business. This situation persisted during the first half of the 20th century, and by 1930, the old Fleury Plantation remained subdivided into five farming tracts while Cherry Hill expanded into a 2,130-acre timberland. There, the owner depended upon the Summerville Lumber mills and rail lines to transport the cut and sawed boards to distribution and retail centers.

Some timberlands developed into residential and commercial subdivisions during the second half of the 20th century. The West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company owned 2,500 acres of timber-land including sections of the old Fleury tract. They formed a subsidiary company tagged, the West Virginia Development Company that created the carefully planned Crowfield Plantation for thousands of modern homes and businesses, upon sections of the Fleury/Parker tract. Today, South Carolina Interstate Highway 26 bisects the ancient land. Residential and commercial nodules characterize Cherry Hill Plantation and the western half of the old Fleury place. The comfortable Hamlet Subdivision and the western links of the Crowfield Golf and Country Club occupy most of the eastern section, and the small Caromi Village residential area obscures the site of the ancient main house and settlement that vanished long ago.[47]

46 Transactions of the Huguenot Society, V.16: pp. 39 and 43.

47 Smith, p. 315. Henry A.M. Smith noted near the turn of the 20th century that a few broken bricks marked the Fleury/Parker home site and that the live oaks that once shaded the settlement "have been all destroyed and its whole aspect is that of total destruction."

Conclusion

The Land of Abraham, settled by Abraham Fluery Sieur De La Plaine and his family during the frontier era was one of many insignificant European outposts in North America. Spain, France and England competed for dominance of that continent during the next century but those great empire builders finally relinquished the grand prize to upstart American patriots who installed a democratic republic, unmatched in the world. French refugees and others like them sowed the seeds of rebellion in thousands of small farms and plantations at first along the coastal plain and later in the foothills of the untapped continent. A stubborn resistance to foreign dominance and an ingrained sense of self-reliance accompanied those families into the wilderness and sprung forth in their hearts and souls as they cultured the new world forests and fields. Without a doubt, the Land of Abraham was among the places that birthed and nurtured those ideas and from which a new humanity emerged upon the face of the earth. Today modern suburbia obscures the boundary lines that defined the Land of Abraham and the road that tied the isolated plantation to the kingdoms of Europe is vanished, but its story persists. Property files, immigration tallies, census reports, tax scrolls and recorded testimonies of the occupants preserve the memory of the locale. More importantly, its legacy persists among the heirs of the continent where the novel ideas of land ownership, property rights, democracy, independence, and freedom persists in a place called America.

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