



CHARLESTON • SOUTH CAROLINA

Bonnie Doone History

Timeline Summarizing Ownership

1772 – Royal Grant to William Hopton

Served as Rice Plantation until 1911
Plantation House Burned by Union Troops in 1865

1931 – Bought by New York Stockbroker, A.H. Caspary
Caspary built the existing manor house circa 1932
Renamed the property “Bonnie Doone Plantation”
At one time, current parcel was part of a 14,000-acre property

1965 – Bought by Charleston Presbytery

1978 – Charleston Baptist Association purchased 131± acres

Citation of Historical Excerpts on Pages to Follow:

1. Hurley, Suzanne Cameron Linder. *Historical Atlas of the Rice Plantations of the ACE River Basin--1860*. Published by the South Carolina Dept. of Archives & History for the Archives and History Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, and the Nature Conservancy, 1995.
2. Burke, Nina, and Ron Anton. *Rocz. Plantations of St. Bartholomews Parish, South Carolina*. Turner Pub. Co., 2005.

Bonnie Doone is located in St. Bartholomew Parish on the headwaters of the Ashepoo River—known as Horseshoe Creek. In 1860, the estate of Henry T. Ferguson (1846–1859) owned it. Ferguson received his education at the College of South Carolina, Harvard, and the University of Virginia, married Priscilla C. Corrie (1827–1906) on April 29, 1846,¹ and died of epilepsy on June 6, 1859.² One hundred nineteen slaves worked Ferguson's plantation. It produced 171,000 pounds of rice, 15½ bales of cotton, 200 bushels of peas, 350 bushels of sweet potatoes, and 800 bushels of corn.³

Ferguson bought Bonnie Doone in 1845 from Sampson W. Leith, a physician and planter who served in both the state house and senate.⁴ According to a plat dated 1845,⁵ the plantation covered 2601 acres and was originally owned by Wilmot S. Gibbes, who sold it to Sampson Leith. The plat shows that Dr. Theodore Dehon, an established planter/physician who grew 225,000 pounds of rice in 1850,⁶ owned the adjoining property. Dr. Dehon was the son of the Right Reverend Theodore Dehon, Bishop of the Episcopal Church and priest of St. Michael's Church in Charleston.⁷ Dr. Dehon purchased Bonnie Doone in 1861. Union troops burned it in 1865, and in the disruption following the war, a black man shot Dehon and his son, Theodore. One barrel of a gun loaded with buckshot hit each of them. The doctor's arm was crippled, and his son was hit in the hip and lamed for life. Dr. Dehon moved to Greenville where he lived until 1887.⁸

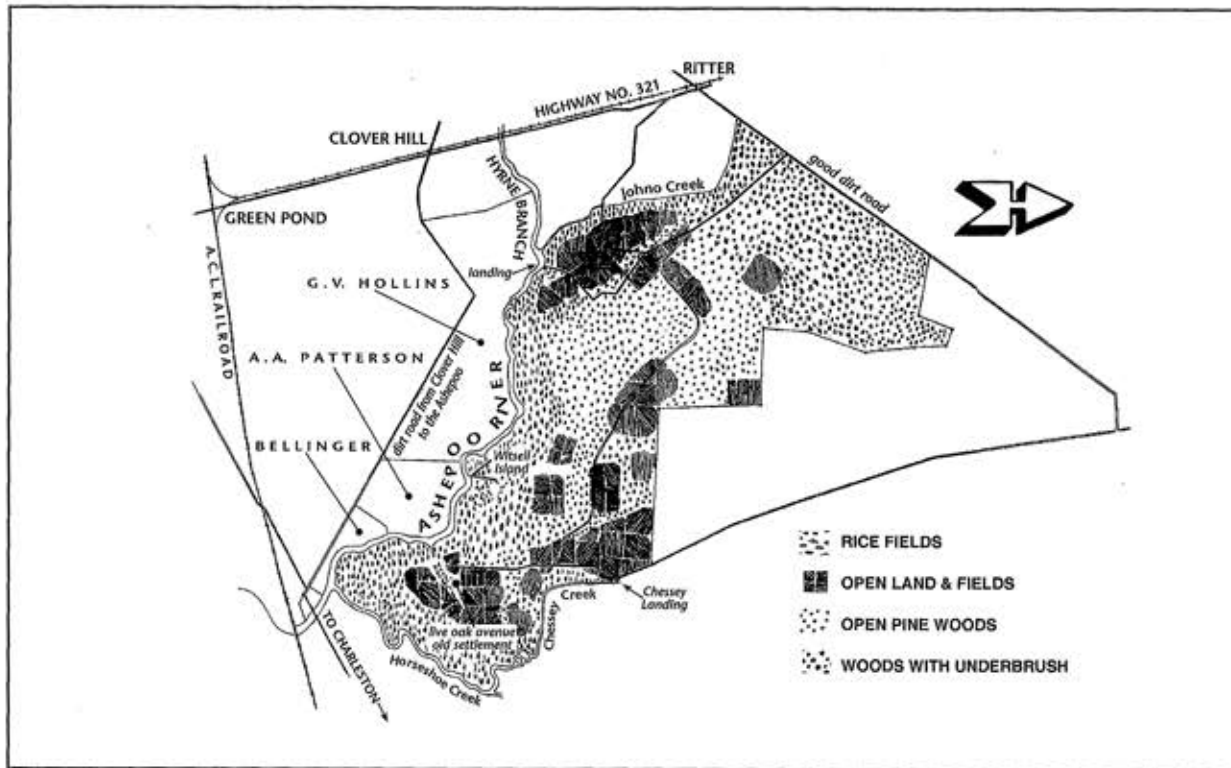
Between 1906 and 1931, title passed back and forth between the Sanders family and Colleton Mercantile.⁹ Paul Sanders bought Bonnie Doone and Dehon plantations—a total of 5081 acres—from the Colleton Mercantile and Manufacturing Company on April 8, 1931.¹⁰

On April 27, 1931, A. H. Caspary purchased Bonnie Doone from Paul Sanders and created an extensive and artistically-planned garden. In his book, *Carolina Gardens*, E. T. H. Shaffer said the house was reached by a winding drive of some six miles from the entrance gates through protected



forests and open meadows, which formed a veritable deer park. A fine live oak avenue led to the house, and serpentine walls of weathered brick flanked the house and enclosed a collection of rare and beautiful camellia japonica. Benito Innocenti, a noted New York landscape architect, designed the garden overlooking the old ricefields and marshes of the Ashepoo River.¹¹

The Charleston Presbytery purchased Bonnie Doone in 1965 for use as a church camp and conference center. The Presbytery sold the land and the 10,000-square-foot house to the Charleston Association of the Baptist Church in 1978.¹²



Bonnie Doone, 1930. (Colleton County R.M.C. Plat 220-10.)



NOTES

1. Chalmers Davidson, *Last Foray* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1971), 197.
2. 1860 Mortality Census, St. Bartholomew, 001.
3. 1860 Slave Schedule, St. Bartholomew, 313-14; 1860 Agricultural Schedule, St. Bartholomew, p. 520, line 28.
4. BDSCS, 2: 911-12; BDHR, 4: 350.
5. McCrady Plats ,#6324.
6. 1850 Agricultural Schedule, St. Bartholomew, p. 483, line 2.
7. Frederick Dalcho, *Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina* (Charleston: E. Thayer, 1820), 223.
8. SCHM, 65: 110; Daniel E. H. Smith, Alice R. H. Smith, and Arney R. Childs, *Mason Smith Family Letters, 1860-1868* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950), 237.
9. Colleton Co. Deeds 27: 348; 57: 14; Colleton Co. Plat Book S: 44; 1.
10. Colleton Co. Deeds 65: 516.
11. Colleton Co. Deeds 65: 574; E. T. H. Shaffer, *Carolina Gardens* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1963), 109; Lowcountry Council of Governments, *Historic Resources of the Lowcountry* (Yemassee, South Carolina, 1979), 122.
12. *Historic Resources of the Lowcountry*, 122.

Bonnie Doone



The 1930's gates at Bonnie Doone retain the Caspary name.



BONNIE DOONE CAN BE TRACED BACK TO A royal land grant from George I of England to William Hopton in 1722. Although the rice fields were relatively small, rice was grown there along the Ashepoo River until 1911. Owned during antebellum times by Dr. Theodore Dehon, Bonnie Doone was known as Dehon Plantation and it was in 1865 that the original house was burned by General Sherman's Union forces.

The property passed through several owners before becoming part of a 14,000 acre tract assembled in the early 1930's by A. H. Caspary of New York. One of the many northern sportsmen interested in restoring old estates, Mr. Caspary had the present classic Georgian house constructed in

1932, at the end of the original old live oak avenue. Designed by architect Willis Irving of Augusta, Georgia, the house was featured in the 1958 book, *100 Most Beautiful Rooms in America*. Moss-covered Serpentine brick walls enclose a camellia garden designed by famed landscape architect, Benito Innocenti of New York.

At Caspary's death, Bonnie Doone was sold, re-sold and subdivided. Most of the vast acreage now belongs to timber companies; the house, gardens and grounds are maintained as a church retreat and conference center. In 1999, Bonnie Doone received the Colleton County Historical and Preservation society's Landgrave Edmund Bellinger Award for Plantation Preservation.