

Cassada, A More Detailed History of ~

In 1772, Peter Gourdin (1741-1774) (my 4th great-granduncle) began to put together a large tract of land in Upper St. John's. He had his lands surveyed, which formed a plantation of 1,448 acres known as Cassada Pond / Spring Plains Plantation.¹ A Plat from 1772 showed a manor house, reservoir, indigo vats, dam, and Cassada Pond, all signs of a prosperous enterprise (plat xx). Peter Gourdin built his "mansion" in 1772 and was probably operating his plantation in full at his death in 1774.

Next to the mansion is labeled "spring," more than likely an artesian spring, common throughout Upper St. John's Parish. The spring no longer flows, since no signs of a water flow were found anywhere in the general area where the plat shows a spring having been. Nevertheless, this is where the original Spring Plains name for the 1,448 tract came from, although it is not certain why the term "Plains" was added. The other part of the original name came from the Cassada Pond, seen on plat xx.

Peter married first, Esther Sullivan in 1765. They had a son, Louis, who died along with his mother in 1766. Peter married secondly, Ann Seaton in 1770. They had a child in 1773. Ann died shortly (about a month) after the child's birth, and the child died young. Peter Gourdin died in 1774 at Cassada Pond / Spring Plains.

Theodore Gourdin I (1733-1773) (my 4th great-grandfather), Peter's brother, married Esther Newman and they had two sons, Theodore Gourdin II (my 3rd great-grandfather) and Samuel Gourdin (my 3rd great-granduncle), before Esther's death in 1761 and Theodore's death in 1773. The two young boys would go to live with their Uncle Peter Gourdin II at Cassada Pond/Spring Plains. After their uncle's death in 1774, both young Gourdin boys were sent to live with the wealthy merchant and planter Theodore Gaillard I in Charleston, who was the active executor for all the Gourdin estates as well as a prosperous merchant in Charleston. Cassada Pond / Spring Plains estate was held together until the boys reached legal age.

No mention is made again of the mansion Peter built until Theodore Gourdin II and Samuel Gourdin came of legal age (in 1786 and 1787 respectively). Theodore Gourdin II, Peter's nephew, inherited Cassada Pond/Spring Plains upon Peter's death in 1774. Theodore Gourdin II and his wife Elizabeth Gaillard lived at Cassada Pond/Spring Plains Plantation until 1786, where they occupied the Cassada

¹ The original tract of 1,448 acres was called either Cassada Pond/Spring Plains Plantation or Cassada Spring Plains. When the eastern section was cut off the large tract, it was called Spring Plains and the remaining western tract called Cassada Pond. Later the "Pond" was dropped, and the plantation became just Cassada.

Mansion. Theodore II found more lucrative ventures in adjacent Williamsburg County and ultimately left St. John's by 1786.

At some point the 1,448 acres were divided into the plantations of Cassada Pond and Spring Plains (plat xx). This division must have occurred between 1792 when Theodore Gourdin II bought 307 acres from Joseph Palmer, which were adjacent to his plantation Cassada Pond/Spring Plains, and the year 1826, when Catherine Cordes Porcher, widow of Philip Porcher of the Oldfield in Middle St. John's, bought Spring Plains [see discussion of Spring Plains later].

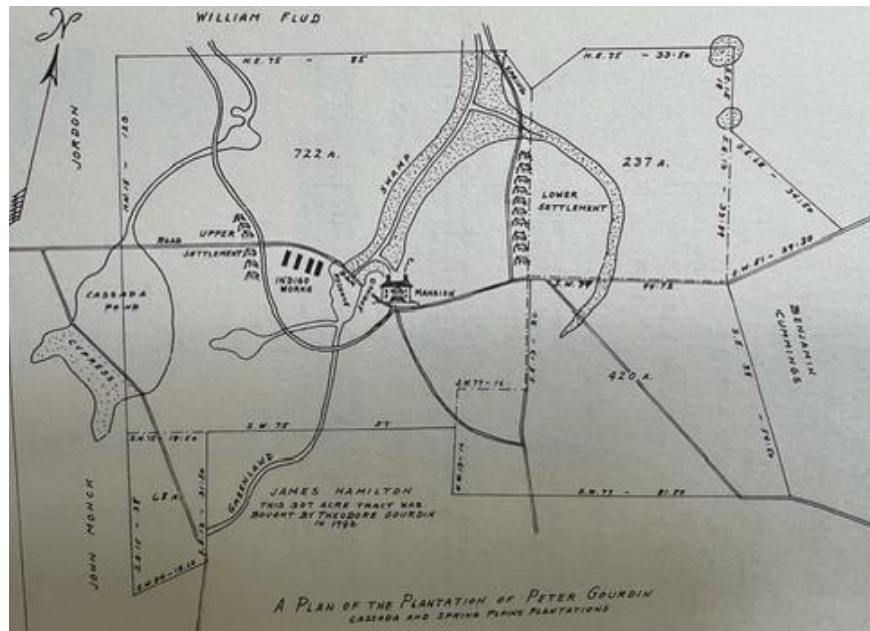
Mrs. [Martha] Warley, widow of Major Paul Warley Sr., bought Cassada. She was stepmother to Paul Warley's sons, who had bought Mt. Hope and Bluefield. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Warley was first married to Patrick Roche, and secondly to Major Warley. Mrs. Warley was the daughter of Benjamin Marion. Mrs. Warley left Cassada to Dr. Peter Patrick Porcher Palmer (my 2nd great-grandfather), son of Joseph Palmer (my 3rd great-grandfather) of Springfield, who was married to her sister. Dr. Palmer's mother built a residence there about 1840 (fig. xx). No record was found as to what happened to the original mansion house (burned?). Whether the wooden house was built on the site of the former mansion is unknown, but seems likely. He and his family occupied the 1840 house until he moved to Poplar Hill. Dr. Palmer then sold Cassada to Dr. Peter G. Snowden.

As a sidenote, it is evident from the chain of title and from the general description of the place, that Cassada Plantation is the same as the "Woodpond" mentioned by Professor Frederick A. Porcher in his "Upper Beat of St. John's."² He describes Woodpond as adjoining Spring Plains on the west and as being the property of Dr. Peter G. Snowden. According to F. A. Porcher, both these statements are true of Cassada.

Cassada was sold by the Snowden family after the Civil War. It was divided up into several small farms. The Cassada house (fig. xx) was occupied by an African descendant's family until the 1930s when it burned. Kirk's *Antediluvian St. John's* and *SCFL*.

² F. A. Porcher, "Upper Beat of St. John's, Berkeley." *Transactions of the Huguenot Society of South Carolina* 8 (1906): 31-78.

A Plan of the Plantation, 1772



Plat xx. “A Plan of the Plantation of Peter Gourdin: Cassada and Spring Plains Plantations, 1772.” Note the four Indigo vats, Cassada Mansion, Lower Settlement, Greenland Swamp next to the mansion, spring (almost illegible just left of the mansion), and Cassada Pond. Note the size of the house. The east section of Cassada would be split off to form Spring Plains. The prominent road running east-west would later be named Spring Plains Road (fig. xx).

Gourdin Genealogy

Louis Gourdin I (d.1716)

1. Louis Gourdin II
2. Peter Gourdin (-lost at sea before 1727)

Louis Gourdin II (d. ~~1716~~ 1755)

1. William Gourdin (d.1760), left no family
2. Peter Gourdin (1741-1774)
3. Theodore Gourdin I (1733-1773) married Esther Newman, of Newman Plantation in Williamsburg County
4. Isaac Gourdin (1736-1757) died with no family

Theodore Gourdin I (1733-1773) married Esther Newman, of Newman Plantation in Williamsburg County

1. ~~William Gourdin~~ Esther Newman Gourdin (1762-1765)
2. ~~Peter Gourdin~~ Theodore Gourdin II (1764-1826)
3. ~~Theodore Gourdin II (1764-1826)~~ Samuel Gourdin, Major (1766-1821)

Hon. Theodore Gourdin II (1764-1826) married Elizabeth Gaillard; moved to Red Clay Plantation in Williamsburg County

1. Elizabeth Gourdin (1786-~~after 1829~~ 1836) married in 1805 Capt. Peter Gaillard II, relocated to Heydon Hill from Williamsburg County.
2. Theodore Louis Gourdin (1790-1866); never married.
3. Henrietta Gourdin (1794-1860); married first Dr. James Ravenel; married second James Gaillard of Walnut Grove.
4. Peter Gaillard Gourdin I (1795-1837); married Susannah (nee Singleton) Cante; practiced law in Kingstree.
5. Samuel Thomas Gourdin (1797-1854); did not marry and planted Richmond Plantation near Pineville.
6. Dr. Robert Marion Gourdin (1799-1876); practiced medicine from Lenud's Ferry Plantation on Santee River.
7. John Gaillard Keith Gourdin (1801-1830); never married.

Theodore II and Elizabeth Gaillard Gourdin had three other children not listed above.

Cassada House, 1840

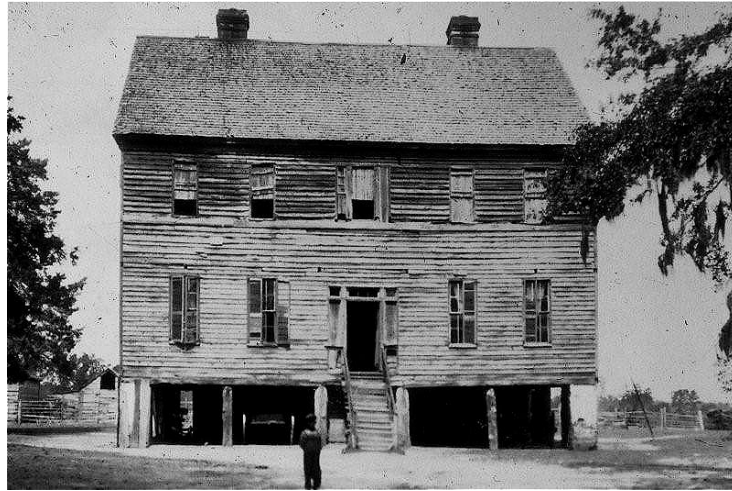


Figure 86

Cassada House, built 1840, burned about 1930. Photograph from the archives of James Jervey Ravenel, MD (1890-1984), late of Charleston, SC. The photograph contained no information as to the location of the house. Ravenel's collection of photographs has been lost by the family; however, copies were made before they were lost and are in the archives of Richard Dwight Porcher Jr. The house is typical of St. John's architecture. The house burned before Waterman began his survey of St. John's plantation houses prior to Santee Cooper.

Post-Santee Cooper

Cassada today (fig. xx) is rural with very little representing plantation days. No lands of Cassada were flooded by Lake Marion. What was originally Cassada Plantation lies along Spires Landing Road, Spring Plains Road, Sanders Road, and north and south of Old Highway 6/Highway 45. Only Sanders Cemetery³ and the highly disturbed Lower Settlement hint of Old St. John's. Woods, fields, house trailers, and small houses clumped generally into settlements, greet one traveling through the former Cassada Plantation.

³ Sanders Cemetery (Black) is identified on some sources as Cassada Plantation Cemetery. It was probably originally listed as this, but as time passed the Sanders family of later years in the area preferred to rename the cemetery Sanders Cemetery.

Section of Cassada Plantation from Google Earth, 2024



Figure xx.

Section of Cassada Plantation from Google Earth image. The following labels were added: Sanders Cemetery (1), swamp (2), approximate location of Cassada Mansion (3), Lower Settlement (4), and three roads. Sites 2, 3, and 4 determined from fig. xx.

Many thanks to cousin Richard D. Porcher, Jr., and my most bestess, favorite researcher friend, Cecy Guerry Davis, for this report on Cassada. I have edited and made a few corrections. Many thanks to you both!

Keith Gourdin May 2026