

The History of Goodwood Museum and Gardens

In the 1800's, the United States was a young country with only sixteen states. Many of its citizens hoped to expand into new lands, including the Florida **territory**, to pursue valuable resources and opportunity. Lawyer and planter Hardy Croom purchased land in what we now know as Tallahassee. In 1837, Mr. Croom left Saratoga, New York, with his wife and three children, but a hurricane off the coast of North Carolina ravaged the ship, taking the lives of everyone on board.

Hardy's grieving brother, Bryan, inherited the land Hardy Croom had purchased and constructed a home that became known as Goodwood Plantation. During that time in the South, white land owners used slave labor to construct buildings, farm the land, and maintain households. Bryan Croom was no exception. Enslaved people labored over a period of years to construct the big house where Mr. Croom and his family lived.

At its largest, Goodwood was approximately 8,000 acres in size with a workforce of around 200. Bryan Croom went on to create an **extravagant** home for his family, shipping the finest wood, fabric, artwork, and housewares from England. Mr. Croom also added other buildings to the property, including the kitchen and several cottages.



After a long legal dispute with his **deceased** brother's mother-in-law Henrietta Smith, Bryan Croom lost Goodwood and relocated to Alabama. Mrs. Smith sold most of the property to Tallahassee merchant, Susan Branch Hopkins, in 1858.

Like many other southerners during that period, Mrs. Hopkins supported the **Confederate army** by making uniforms and flags, preparing food, and raising money. When the **Civil War** ended in 1864, Mrs. Hopkins could no longer maintain the extravagant lifestyle she once enjoyed. Without slave labor for cotton production, Mrs. Hopkins struggled to meet the mortgage and was forced to sell most of the property to Dr. and Mrs. William Lamb Arrowsmith from England.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, enslaved African-American people who had worked at Goodwood left to pursue free lives of their own. Like other African-Americans living at Goodwood Plantation at that time, Moses and his wife Daphne assumed the last name of the owner, Mr. Croom, adding an "s" to establish themselves and their new identities. After the couple left Goodwood, they helped create an African-American community named Jamestown near Orlando. Their children and grandchildren went on to become successful citizens, working as ministers, a carpenter, and an educator. While slavery was a reality for many African-Americans during Goodwood's early years, the determination, strong will, and character of former enslaved people like Moses and Daphne shaped and defined Florida in years to come.

Goodwood changed owners many times over the years, but it was Fanny Tiers who **transformed** Goodwood from a **plantation** of the Old South to a country **estate**. She frequently invited her northern friends to join her for extended visits to escape the cold winters in New Jersey. When Mrs. Tiers first purchased the property, it was 160 acres of vegetable gardens, chicken yards, pecan groves, and woodland. Fanny, who was enormously wealthy, modernized Goodwood by adding bathrooms, electricity, a new kitchen, a butler's pantry, and a screened side porch. Her other projects included the construction of a carriage house, laundry building, swimming pool, tennis courts, skating rink, pool house and Jubilee Cottage. She also added a water tower to better supply the needs of the various cottages that made up the Goodwood estate. All of these original structures remain on the property today.

When Fanny began her massive makeover of the Goodwood Estate, local people seeing the vast sums of money being spent, began calling her the "Richest Woman in America." It was not an accurate statement, but her fortune did make it possible to create a **lavish** manor. In 1924, Fanny Tiers sold Goodwood and moved to Paris. There were other owners after Fanny, but she is considered the most influential in modernizing the property.

It was owner Tom Hood whose work resulted in Goodwood earning a place on the **National Register of Historic Places**. He often said that Goodwood was "too precious to sell, too expensive to keep." Thanks to his efforts, Goodwood is now a museum. A visit to Goodwood today provides guests with a unique glimpse of history and the people who made their mark in Tallahassee's local history.

