



# Chapter One

The wind blew gently through the live oak trees that lined the banks of Wampancheone Creek. Spanish moss clung to the branches as they gracefully moved in the breeze. A blue heron and egrets walked elegantly along the shoreline snatching fish with quick thrusts of their long necks. Turtles perched on rocks along the shore while others stuck their heads out of the creek and treaded water.

On the bank sat a young girl in a dark blue dress and white apron. She had bright blue eyes and a fair complexion. Dark brown curls fell to her shoulders while a white coif hid the rest of her hair. It was 1780 and Sarah Boone was eleven years old. She was the great granddaughter of Maj. John Boone who arrived in Charles Towne in 1672 aboard the ship the *Three Brothers*.

Major Boone received Boone Hall Plantation in a land grant in 1682. The plantation sits just north of Charles Towne in Christ Church Parish along the South Carolina coast. Major Boone's son, Capt. Thomas Boone, expanded the plantation, growing Sea Island cotton and indigo, which became a very profitable crop in the South. The plantation also raised cattle for the navy. Captain Boone died in 1743 and is buried along the long drive. The plantation was then passed down until Sarah's father, also named John Boone, inherited it. Her father and mother, Sarah Gibbe, have five children including Sarah. The oldest, John, is fifteen, and the three youngest sons are James, nine; George, seven; and Thomas, five. Sarah's mother was expecting again, and Sarah prayed fervently for a sister.

Sarah sat watching the creek as the tide rushed out. She loved the tranquility she found at her favorite spot under a large oak on the creek bank away from the buzz of plantation activity. It was nearly dinnertime, and she knew she would be expected back at the house soon. Sarah drew a deep breath.

The smell of the marsh was strong today. It was one of her favorite scents; she never grew tired of it. She methodically picked off the leaves and grass that clung to her skirt and apron. Sarah then carefully made her way along the creek bank keeping a watchful eye out for snakes and alligators—both could be deadly. Several types of deadly snakes called the South Carolina Lowcountry home, including water moccasins and rattlesnakes. Alligators also lived in the area; however, they generally preferred the pond down the path to the creek.

As Sarah walked closer to the plantation house, she could hear the hum of plantation life. Boone Hall was the home to forty slaves who lived in cabins on the plantation. Most cabins housed an entire family while other cabins might house several single slaves. Gardens were often found next to the cabins. Slaves cultivated vegetables to supplement the meat that was given to them each week, and caught fish and crabs to offer their diets some variety. The slave cabins were quiet now, except for a few young children playing under the watchful eye of an elderly slave too feeble to work on the plantation any longer. Older slave children had chores on the plantation such as cleaning the yard. By the time they were twelve, most slave children were putting in a full day's work in the field along with their parents.

It was wintertime, and the planting season was a few months away. Most slaves were working odd jobs around the plantation, mending fences and taking care of chores that were difficult to include in the busy planting and harvesting schedule throughout the rest of the year. Annual chores such as candle and soap making were also completed at this time of year.

The plantation house was not as grand as some. Resembling a large farmhouse, the house was made of wood and sat at the end of a long drive but close to the creek bank. Plantation houses were often placed near waterways, which were common forms of transportation in the Lowcountry. It was faster to ride the tide out with the creek to where it intersected with Cooper River and follow the river to Charles Towne. The plantation

house was the second house to stand on this spot after the original home that Maj. John Boone had built was lost to fire. Family legend claimed that the house was burned during a French invasion in 1708. It had been rumored that Boone Hall housed local militia's weapons and ammunition so it had been included in the French attack.

Sarah approached the house and climbed the stairs to the back entrance. She could see the slaves preparing the noontime meal in the kitchen building. Kitchens were often kept separate from the main house due to the fear of fire. If a fire started in a kitchen building, it would not burn the whole house down as it would if it were attached.

The aroma of baked bread and roast chicken hung in the air reminding Sarah to hurry up the back stairs to her room to wash up. As she headed up the narrow, wooden stairway, Sarah encountered her older brother John and younger brother James. John was constantly teasing Sarah and their younger brothers. "You are going to be late for dinner," he warned. "You look like a mess. Better not let Mother catch you all dirty." John was a tall boy of fifteen with bright blue eyes and brown hair that just started to curl at the ends. He was dressed very properly in breeches and riding boots. His shirt was tucked in under his vest showing he took his position as oldest son seriously.

James, who resembled their mother with his light brown hair and brown eyes, was dressed similarly although his shirt hung out of his pants. As a second son, he knew he would not inherit Boone Hall, so he was more lackadaisical with his appearance. "Aw, leave her alone John," James defended his sister. "She looks just fine to me." Sarah grinned at her younger brother. James was a much sweeter sibling, and he and Sarah were very close.

"I am not a mess. I was very careful to keep clean," Sarah countered as she hurried past him up the stairs. She entered her room and shut the door behind her. The one benefit of being the only girl was that she had her own room. Her brothers had to share. Sarah loved her room. It was very clean and neat. Her rag

dolls and her only china doll, Maria, sat in little chairs around a little table waiting for tea. Sarah's four-poster bed stood in the corner with the netting hanging over the top. Since mosquitoes and gnats were common pests in the Lowcountry, netting over the bed was a necessity in getting a restful night's sleep.

Sarah's wardrobe stood across from her bed. It held all of Sarah's clothes, including several dresses. Most were everyday dresses made of durable plain cloth. Sarah also had two very fine muslin dresses to wear to church or to Charles Towne. One dress had a yellow overgown worn atop several layers of petticoats. The overgown was drawn up into a polonaise or bustle style. The bodice came to a point in the front, and a wide yellow sash was fastened above the waistline with a yellow flower decoration. A matching hat was worn tilted forward on her head and had a ruching, or gathered, ribbon decoration. Sarah's other fine dress was light purple with a dark purple flower-patterned overgown. A darker purple ribbon crisscrossed the bodice and matched the ribbon on her hat. These dresses were treated carefully, as it was very expensive to get such fine cloth all the way from England. The wardrobe also housed Sarah's aprons, coifs, stockings, and numerous petticoats. A young girl was properly dressed with three or four petticoats under her dress and an apron over the top to keep her dress clean. Proper young girls also wore coifs, or small white hats.

In preparation for dinner, Sarah poured water from the water pitcher into the bowl on the water stand and washed her hands and face. She carefully dried her hands on the towel hanging from the side of the stand and smoothed down her dress and apron to hide any evidence of her trip to the creek. She had completed her chores and lessons hurriedly this morning so she could spend some time in her favorite place. She hoped her mother had not noticed her absence. Sarah was getting older, and her mother kept admonishing her to act like a young lady. Playing by the creek was not what a proper young lady would do.

Sarah readied herself to go downstairs for dinner. Only her

parents, John, and James would be at the table. Her two youngest brothers would eat with their nanny, Maddie, as they were too boisterous to sit for a long time at the dining room table. The main meal of the day was served at noon to give those working hard all morning the nourishment and strength to continue working. In the early evening, a light supper was served as the last meal of the day. As Sarah entered the main hall upstairs, she heard voices coming from below. She knew her family was ready to eat and had better not dawdle any longer.

Sarah entered the dining room to find her parents and older brother already seated at the table. Her mother gave her a reproving look from her seat at the foot of the table as Sarah sat down. Sarah Gibbe was dressed in a mobcap, a soft cloth cap, that covered her light brown hair, which was swept up in back but starting to work itself loose. Sarah loved seeing her mother dressed for parties where she often styled her hair with long curls that flowed onto her shoulder. Her mother also wore an apron and a loose-fitting blue wool gown similar to Sarah's but larger to accommodate the child she was carrying. Sarah Gibbe was thirty-four years old and looked very tired. She was glad the end of her confinement loomed. Being the mother of four boisterous young men, and a daughter who was determined to escape to the woods the moment her mother's back was turned, was tiring. She was also responsible for all the slaves on the plantation, their care and well-being, feeding and clothing them, and making sure the household ran smoothly.

Sarah's father sat at the head of the table. He was a tall man, an older version of Sarah's brother John. His dark brown hair was tied in the back, as was the fashion. He never wore those powdered wigs that many gentlemen in town favored. Like his son, his dress was common on days he spent riding out in the fields checking on the plantation's progress. As it was wintertime, the fields lay still and odd jobs and repairs were on the day's schedule.

Sarah's older brother John grinned at her tardiness, and

Sarah glared at him. The room boasted large windows that were partially opened to let in a slight breeze. The serving tables were weighed down with dishes waiting to be served to the family. The table was set with green baize, a soft fabric resembling felt, under white damask cloths. Glass decanters were arranged neatly on the mahogany sideboard, with silver spoons lining the open space on either side of the display. The table was set with Denmark-Blue china from the Orient. The white china was embellished with delicate blue flowers.

The first course consisted of fish from the creek and she-crab soup. Crabs were abundant on the plantation and could also be easily caught by the creek. The dishes were offered by two young slave girls named Somersett and Daphney, both attired in mobcaps, brown wool gowns, and aprons. They moved quietly about the room as the family ate and Father held court with the latest news of the war. He had just returned from a trip to Charles Towne and was brimming over with information.

“There is fear that the British will continue to gain access to the Southern Region and attack Charles Towne in the spring. Their control of Savannah and Augusta is already infuriating,” Father’s frustration was evident as he sipped his soup “You would have thought they had learned their lesson when we repulsed their advance at Fort Moultrie when the war began.”

Sarah often worried about the direction the war would take and feared it would come near her home. Talk of the Colonies becoming independent had been a topic of discussion for as long as Sarah could remember. She was only seven when the war began, but events had been shaping the beginnings of the war for years before her birth. Charles Towne was always at the forefront of the unpleasantness with Britain—way before the New England states. In protest of the Tea Act of 1773, Charles Townians confiscated tea and stored it in the Exchange and Custom House. This was before the Boston Tea Party on December 16, 1773, where Colonists disguised as Indians boarded a British ship and dumped forty-five tons of tea. Events

escalated after the Tea Party, with the first clash of the war occurring on April 19, 1775.

Since then there had been a series of battles in New England; however, the British began a new campaign aimed at the southern states in 1778 with the capture of Savannah and Augusta. Several times the war had appeared in South Carolina. The most significant battle happened on June 28, 1776. British forces attacked Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island, one of the Sea Islands bordering Christ Church Parish. General Moultrie successfully defended the fort and, therefore, Charles Towne against the naval attack and inflicted heavy damage against the British fleet.

Sarah always grew fearful whenever she heard of the possibility of the British coming to Charles Towne. Her brother, John, however, always grew excited at the possibility of the war coming closer. He was still a bit too young to join the Continental army but talked of nothing else.

"I cannot wait for the British to come to Charles Towne! They will be defeated by our troops once again," exclaimed the excited boy.

"We'll blow 'em up for certain," James echoed his brother's enthusiasm.

Father smiled, amused at his sons' display, "I suppose you will be at the forefront firing the first shots?"

"If only I could Father! How exciting it would be to be in a real battle," John replied fervently.

Casting a quick glance at his wife's worried face, Father settled the matter, "You are far too young, and the war will long be over by the time you are old enough. Besides, setting your mind to your books will help you far more in the future when you participate in the local government." Father, and his ancestors before him, had been apart of the local governing bodies of Christ Church, and Father expected his sons to follow in his footsteps.

Two young boys yelling outside the window suddenly caught

Sarah's attention. George and Thomas had finished with their dinner and had resumed their earlier play of war. They were fighting off the British and made quite a pair as they ran from their imaginary enemies. Like James, both boys resembled Mother with light brown curls and stocky bodies. John and Sarah both inherited their father's height and dark hair. The young boys' shirts hung loosely outside their pants, and they had long since lost their shoes as they played.

Everyone was excited about the war, except Sarah, who ate her dinner in silence. Mother also remained quiet during Father's discourse, letting him tell all the latest news he had heard in town.

Quietly, Somersett and Daphney removed the dishes from the first course and quickly returned with a second course of chicken, vegetables, and meat pies and pudding. Sensing his wife's discomfort with the discussion, Father changed the topic, announcing, "While in town, I purchased a new family. The woman is trained as a seamstress and a midwife. They should arrive with the afternoon tide. I wanted Dr. Ramsey to look them over and make sure they are healthy."

Mother was pleased. It was her job to clothe the slaves and her family. This was an endless task, and she would truly appreciate another pair of hands, especially with a sixth baby on the way. "Thank you, John," she said in her gentle voice.

Father continued, "She also has three children. I purchased them from Cardinal Hill Plantation. Mr. Hughes died, you know. Well, he had quite a few creditors after his estate. Most of the slaves were sold so the family could retain the land."

"I am sorry to hear that. Mrs. Hughes is such a sweet soul," replied Mother.

Sarah grew excited. Life was very uneventful at Boone Hall, so the arrival of a new family would create a nice diversion to her fears of the war. She wondered what the new children would be like. The slave children often played with the master's children; however, George and Thomas would more likely be the recipients of new playmates.

“I will have new clothes readied for their arrival,” added Mother. Care of slaves varied from plantation to plantation. Mother tried to make sure that every slave had one serviceable set of winter and summer clothes. All slaves were given shoes as well, especially in the wintertime. “I will have Peg clean out the empty cabin for them.”

Quietly, the last course of fruit and fruit pies and pudding was brought forth. Dinner conversation turned to the remaining chores that needed to be done at Boone Hall before the planting season begun. Sarah allowed her thoughts to turn to the new family, quietly wondering what they would be like. She often played with several of the slave girls, but there were none just her age—they were either older or younger. It was difficult being the only girl in the family, and Sarah quietly prayed once again for a little sister.