

SOUTH CAROLINA

## SC plantation with ties to ‘Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil’ book sells for \$3M

BY LANA FERGUSON

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Tombee Plantation sits along Tombee Creek and features a waterfront, Georgia-style house, built in the 1790s. BY BROWN LAND + PLANTATION ADVISORS



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A centuries-old Beaufort County plantation, once a hub for shipping sea island cotton to Charleston, then home to a school for Freedmen after Emancipation, has sold to a private buyer.

Tombee Plantation on St. Helena Island, which has ties to the book “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil” and was [listed for \\$3.5 million](#), is one of the few remaining Antebellum structures still standing in the Lowcountry.

The sale closed Thursday for \$3,012,500, according to CJ Brown, broker and founder of Brown Land + Plantation Advisors. Brown said the buyers are private individuals from in state but declined to comment further.

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The 24-acre plantation, estimated to have been built around 1795, is less than 20 minutes from downtown Beaufort, Fripp Island and Hunting Island. Sitting along the Tombee Creek, it overlooks nearby St. Philips Island that was once media mogul [Ted Turner's private island](#) retreat but is now owned by South Carolina and available for nature tours.

The land includes a main house and guest house surrounded by live oaks, massive pines, palms and magnolias. The plantation's name is derived from Thomas Benjamin "Tom B." Chaplin, who built the original main home in Georgia-style construction. The house was among the first homes on St. Helena at the time and still sits on a tabby foundation.



Tombee Plantation on St. Helena Island Brown Land + Plantation Advisors *PROVIDED*

The original plantation was much larger at roughly 376 acres, serving as a location to ship cotton north to Charleston. It utilized slave labor before the federal government purchased the land in the 1860s as part of the Port Royal Experiment. The land was then divided into tracts, "with much of the land being owned by the

descendants of freed slaves until 1971.”

“St. Helena Island was the epicenter of emancipation and Tombee was among the first to do so,” the listing said. “Tombee home was kept by the government and used as an agricultural school to educate Freedmen. The 750+ square-foot basement of the grand home was a local ‘juke joint’ for the Gullah Geechee (community) for many years.”

Nationally recognized restorer James Williams, whose life is documented in the book “Midnight in The Garden of Good and Evil” by John Berendt about Savannah, Georgia, purchased the property and began restoring the home to its “original grandeur” later in the 1970s. His efforts to restore historic buildings, including Tombee, was written about in Dorothy Williams Kingery’s book “More Than Mercer House: Savannah’s Jim Williams & His Southern Houses.”

The previous owners who just sold the home, and are acclaimed restorers, completely renovated and restored the house years later.

“Tombee is one of those extra special places that has been meticulously restored and selflessly cared for to a level that exceeds all expectations,” Brown said. “The combination of restored historic improvements, gorgeous coastal acreage and incredible intrinsic values put Tombee in a class of its own.”

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Lana Ferguson typically covers stories in northern Beaufort County, Jasper County and Hampton County. She joined The Island Packet & Beaufort Gazette in 2018 as a crime/breaking news reporter. Before coming to the Lowcountry, she worked for publications in her home state of Virginia and graduated from the University of Mississippi, where she was editor-in-chief of the daily student newspaper. Lana was also a fellow at the University of South Carolina’s Media Law School in 2019.

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