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REAL ESTATE NEWS

This SC plantation is listed at \$3.5 million. The home was once a school for freedmen

BY LANA FERGUSON
NOVEMBER 08, 2021 2:18 PM



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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Another historic Lowcountry plantation is on the market.

[Tombee Plantation on St. Helena Island](#) in Beaufort County is listed for \$3.5 million. The 23.96-acre property is less than 20 minutes from downtown Beaufort, Fripp Island and Hunting Island.

Sitting along the Tombee Creek, the land 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.

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The main house and guest house are surrounded by live oaks, massive pines, palms and ancient magnolias. The main house was originally built in the 1790s by Thomas Benjamin "Tom B." Chaplin and is a Georgia-style construction. It was among the first residences on the island, according to the listing. It sits atop a tabby foundation and has a large sitting and dining room, modern kitchen, three bedrooms, three bathrooms, and an expansive basement.

The guest house includes a large great room, kitchen, two bedrooms, three bathrooms, and screened porches.

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In front of the houses is a fire pit sitting under a large live oak.

"This is truly a four-season property and a very manageable historic estate," this listing says, noting the screened verandas and covered porches among other features.

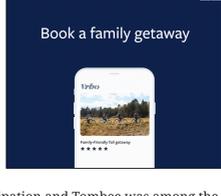


Tombee Plantation on St. Helena Island Brown Land + Plantation Advisors PROVIDED

The plantation has a launching pad into Station Creek that feeds into the Saint Helena Sound and Atlantic Ocean. Secluded waters also provide an opportunity to harvest oysters, crabs, flounder and redfish.

The original plantation was 376 acres and a hub for shipping sea island cotton to Charleston, utilizing slave labor. One [report says the plantation](#) had 65 enslaved workers in 1790 and 25 in 1850. The same report noted the federal government purchased the plantation in 1863 as part of the [Port Royal Experiment](#) and the property was divided into tracts, "with much of the land being owned by the descendants of freed slaves until 1971."

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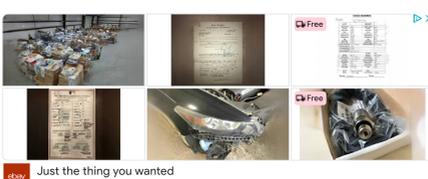
"St. Helena Island was the epicenter of emancipation and Tombee was among the first to do so," the listing says. "Tombee home was kept by the government and used as an agricultural school to educate Freedmen. The 750+ square-foot basement of the grand home was a local 'juke joint' for the Gullah Geechee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

The residence is one of the few remaining Antebellum structures still standing in the Lowcountry today.

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

Years later the house was in need of repair and the current owners, who are also acclaimed restorers, completely renovated and restored it.

They "spared no expense modernizing and bringing back to life this special place," the listing says.



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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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