

# WALKING THE TRAILS

at



**HOFWYL-**

**BROADFIELD**

**PLANTATION**

Glynn Co., Georgia

WELCOME TO HOFWYL BROADFIELD PLANTATION. This antebellum rice plantation was begun in 1806 and has remained in the same family for five generations until it was willed to the state of Georgia in 1973 by the last surviving family member, Miss Ophelia Troup Dent.

The trail system at Hofwyl consists of a self-guided one mile loop trail with a guided tour given of the plantation house.

*Before you begin the tour, please take a few precautions. During the summer months, you may wish to apply an insect repellent before touring the site. The tour is about one mile long, and those not accustomed to exercise in semi-tropical heat should walk slowly and take frequent rest stops. Fire ant hills or snakes may be encountered. Please keep an eye out for them and keep your distance from all animals, domestic or wild. Stay clear of the cattle on the site and keep all dogs leashed.*

From the VISITOR CENTER, proceed straight ahead along to the large REDWOOD TRAIL MAP SIGN. Continue straight ahead off the curve in the sidewalk following the lane of red-topped posts to the short path to the plantation house. The lane marked with red-topped posts to your left at the sign is the long path to the plantation house via the rice dike walk and nature trail. This trail brochure is written for site guests taking the short path to the house.

Pass through a small dodgeway, cross the pasture following the markers and pass through another dodgeway. You will encounter some out-buildings before reaching the plantation house. Take time to look at them and read the interpretive signs describing their use.

The first buildings seen will be the BOTTLING HOUSE and the DAIRY BARN. When rice production at the plantation died out about 1915, a dairy was begun lasting until 1942. The circular cement foundation nearby is the remains of a SILO in which silage was stored to feed the small dairy herd of Guernsey and Jersey cows.

Follow the brick footpath to the COMMISSARY or PLANTATION STORE used now for storing old farm machinery and tools. The bell on the commissary served a purpose similar to that of a factory whistle signaling to workers to take their lunch break. The PAY SHED opposite the Commissary was built after the Civil War and is physical evidence of the transition for black servants from slavery to freedom.

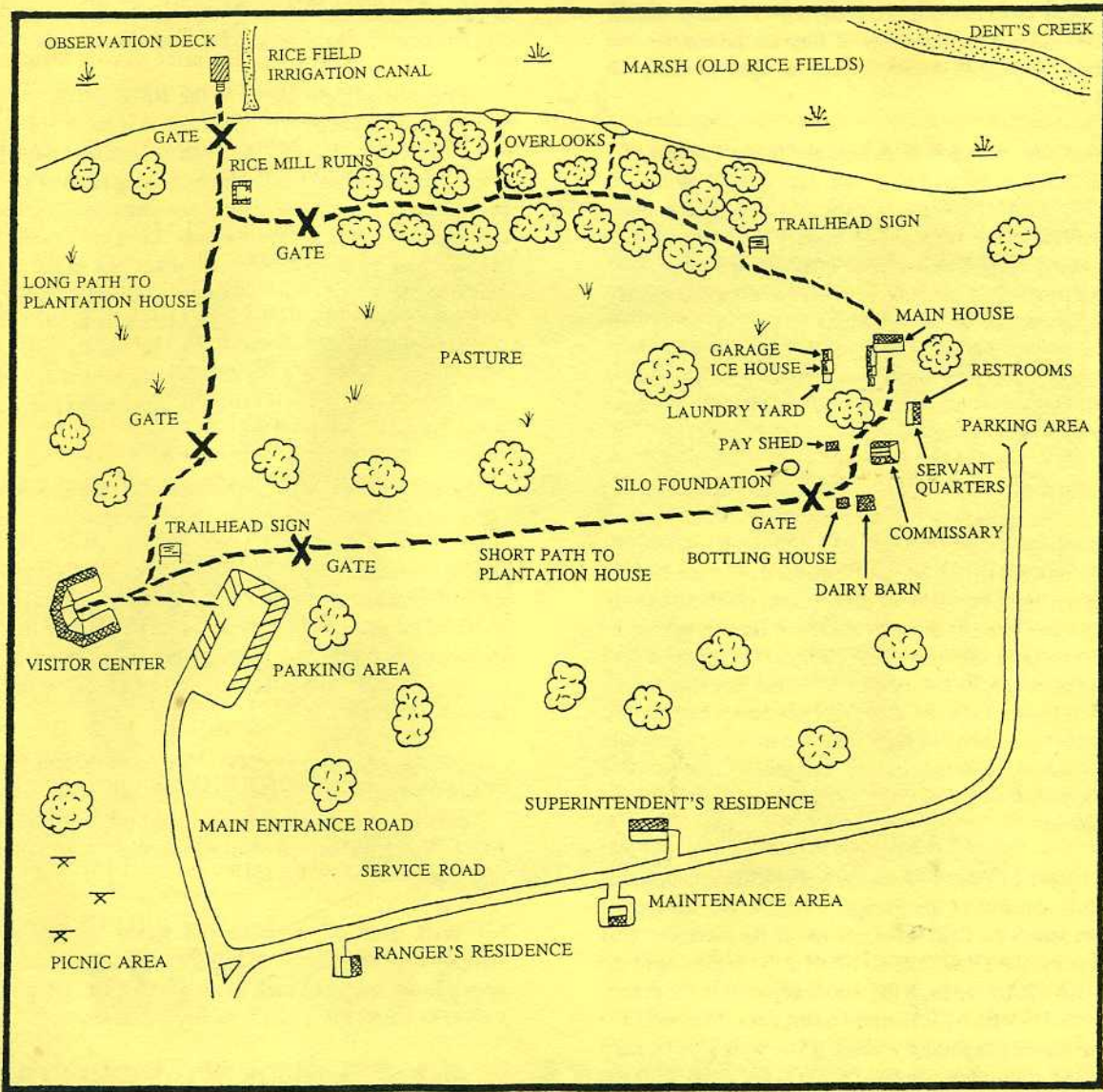
Enter the backyard of the plantation house and follow the red-topped markers around the house to your right. Notice the HOUSE SERVANTS QUARTERS located to your right in the backyard. Slave quarters for field hands were generally designed in the same duplex style with occupants on either side sharing a common chimney constructed with a fireplace and hearth built back-to-back. Half of this facility has been converted into a PUBLIC RESTROOM for your convenience.

Notice the large and very old LIVE OAK (*Quercus virginiana*) growing alongside the house with its wide-spreading, twisted limbs hanging with SPANISH MOSS. In the front yard are two stately SOUTHERN MAGNOLIAS (*Magnolia grandiflora*) whose large, fragrant, creamy-white summer flowers, colorful fall seed capsules, and shiny ever-green foliage make it a favorite southern ornament. The exotic SAGO PALM growing between them was planted by the family in the late 1800's. In front of it is embedded an old RICE MILL GRINDING STONE.

Look off the end of the front yard and enjoy the panoramic view of the OLD RICE FIELDS, now a freshwater marsh, to the tree lined DENT'S CREEK and the ALTAMAHA RIVER beyond. Proceed now to the PLANTATION HOUSE for your guided tour.

The house is a modest structure built in 1851 and modified over the years. In 1903, Dr. James Troup Dent screened the front and back porches, the windows, and the fireplaces to prevent MOSQUITO infestation. Prior to that time, plantation families had generally abandoned the coast during the warmer months to live in more elaborate houses, because they associated what we know as MALARIA today with the MIASMA of the swamps back then, and not with the virus carrying ANOPHELINE MOSQUITOES. Slaves were generally immune to contracting malaria.

The house was constructed with high ceilings and specially modified double sash windows to enhance circulation. The exterior was renovated in the late 1930's. FURNISHINGS in the house date from different periods of the plantation's history. Much of the furniture consists of family heirlooms dating back as early as the 1790's and as late as the 1930's. Many pieces were made by master craftsmen in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Charleston, South Carolina. Pieces of particular interest are the CHARLESTON SECRETARY in the Ladies Parlor and the rare CHARLESTON RICE BED upstairs in the Master Bedroom. Both were made in the 1790's. Notice the rice motif hand carved into the mahogany end posts of the rice bed. Family mementos decorate many rooms.



# HOFWYL-BROADFIELD PLANTATION

After your plantation house tour, you will pass under a **WISTERIA TRELIS** into the backyard. This high vine is over 100 years old. Cascades of fragrant lavender-white blossoms hanging in drupes appear in April to scent the spring air.

The long extension built onto the house consists of a **BREEZEWAY** connecting the **KITCHEN** with the **BUTLER'S PANTRY**, the latter acting as a serving room between the kitchen and dining room. The danger of the house being burned down by a spark jumping out of an unattended cooking fire necessitated building the kitchen apart from the house. Unwanted heat, smoke, and odors were other reasons. Adjacent to the kitchen is a **LAUNDRY ROOM**. Separate from the wing extension at its end is a large **DOG HOUSE** capable of holding several dogs. The Dent family were avid animal lovers.

Turn right at the **NATURE TRAIL SIGN** located between the doghouse and Live Oak adjacent to it, and follow the red-topped markers to the **ICE HOUSE** with **LAUNDRY YARD** and **GARAGE** built onto it. In the days when Hofwyl was a dairy farm, the decorative brick wall was built to keep curious cattle grazing around the house from brushing up against or pulling the laundry off the line. The thick walls of the Ice House kept it cool inside year-round. Ice was usually stored in burlap bags covered with sawdust which kept it from melting. Most of the ice was used in the dairy operation. The **GARAGE** was added on in later years to replace Old Dobbin with his mechanized present day counterpart, the automobile.

**TURN LEFT** at the sign directing you to the nature trail located at the end of the garage. Follow the red-topped markers across the field to the tree line in the distance. This brings you to the **TRAILHEAD SIGN** at the beginning of the **NATURE TRAIL** through the woods adjacent to the marsh. Follow the **RED BLAZES** painted on the trees. You will have a better chance of spotting wildlife if you walk slowly, keep silent, and stop often. Some **LOBLOLLY PINES** (*Pinus taeda*) of great stature can be seen along the trail. A knobby, grey-barked **SWEETBAY TREE**, once considered a state champion, can be seen along the left side of the trail. Notice also the lush green carpets of **CINNAMON** and **NETTED CHAIN FERNS** growing in season.

Upon leaving the woodland trail, pass through a small dodgeway and follow the markers to a sign at the trail intersection. **TURN LEFT** and follow the markers to go back to the **MUSEUM**. **TURN RIGHT** and follow the markers to take the **RICEDIKE WALK**. Behind the **RICEMILL RUINS**

**SIGN** on your right is the foundation remains of an old **RICE POUNDING MILL** made of **TABBY**. Tabby is an equal mixture of oyster shells, sand, water and lime. The machinery of a rice mill separated the tough hulls from the rice grain.

Continue straight ahead to the **RICE DIKE**, passing through another dodgeway. Walk out on it about 100 yards to an **OBSERVATION DECK**. From it can be seen part of the nearly 700 acres of old rice fields comprising Hofwyl's 1,268 acres. In its heyday, this plantation encompassed 7,400 acres with over 350 slaves to work the land. Look closely and you can see trees growing on old rice dikes out in the marsh similar to the one on which you now stand. At high tide, an old **RICE BOAT CANAL** can be seen directly in front of the platform. Rice flats brought rice to the nearby mill to be processed during the harvesting season or carried dirt out to fill breeches in the dike system caused by spring freshets or severe storms.

Today's marsh was once a **VIRGIN CYPRESS SWAMP** when William Brailsford began his rice empire here. Hundreds of slaves cleaned the land and leveled it as flat as possible to ensure proper drainage. Slaves then constructed miles of dikes and ditches by hand. Floodgates or trunks were built into the dikes and let water in to flood the rice fields at various times during the growing season. Foot travel was restricted to paths along the top of the dikes when the rice fields were flooded.

In season, **RIVER OTTER**, peaceful **MANATEES**, destructive **WILD HOGS**, and numerous species of marsh birds and cold-blooded invertebrates, among other creatures, as well as a rich variety of plant life comprise this complex ecosystem. What do you see?

Walk back off the dike and follow the red-topped markers straight past the trail intersection sign, across the open pasture land, and back to the parking lot. Drop by the **VISITOR CENTER** if you have any questions.

We hope your tour of **HOFWYL-BROADFIELD RICE PLANTATION** has been both educational and enjoyable. This historic site is operated by the State of Georgia's Department of Natural Resources, Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division.



**GEORGIA STATE PARKS  
& HISTORIC SITES**