

REDCLIFFE PLANTATION
181 REDCLIFFE RD
BEECH ISLAND, SC 29842
(803) 827-1473

UPCOMING EVENTS
AT REDCLIFFE

Mrs. Clay at Redcliffe
& the African-
American Experience
March 07 @ 4:00 p.m.
\$8/Adult, \$6.50/SC Senior
Tour & presentation.

Redcliffe's Evolving
Landscape
April 11 from 10 - Noon
FREE & Family-Friendly
Activities on the grounds.

For more information on these
programs please contact the park.

Park Staff

Park Manager
Joy Raintree

Park Interpreter
Elizabeth Laney

Park Technician
Doug Kratz

Assistant Ranger
Theresa Hipps

From the diary of
James H. Hammond,
Mar 02, 1841...

"Passed the morning
reading English news-
papers and other trash
and the evening...most
stupidly at Clark's
playing Backgammon
with bad luck, smoking
segars [sic] which al-
ways make me sick and
in dull twaddling con-
versation..."

Redcliffe Southern Times

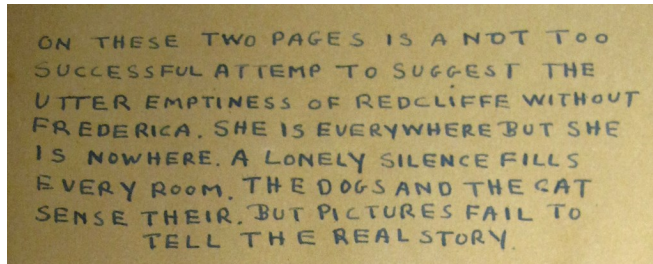
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MARCH 2015

On March 03, 1963 Frederica Wade Billings died leaving her husband John Shaw Billings alone at their home at Redcliffe...

Lonely Spaces

John and Frederica Billings were married for thirty-nine years. Frederica's death left John feeling quite lonely. He later admitted that there were many "terrible days of loneliness in this big empty house." John's loss can be seen most keenly in a series of photographs he took and labeled two weeks after Frederica's death. The photographs are a part of the only Billings Scrapbook currently in the Redcliffe Plantation SHS Collection. The rest are at the Caroliniana Library in Columbia, SC.



ROBIN PERRY'S TURKEY BUZZARD DANCE

"Senator Hammond gives a barbecue to the slaves every Fourth of July and Christmas, and the dances of the negroes are very amusing. There is a tall black man, called Robin, on this plantation, who has originated a dance which he calls the turkey-buzzard dance. He holds his hands under his coat-tails, which he flirts out as he jumps, first to one side, and then to the other, and looks exactly like the ugly bird he imitates." Loula Comer Hammond wrote this description of enslaved field laborer Robin Perry in 1859. Robin was purchased by the Hammonds in 1851 and worked as a field laborer at Silver Bluff and Cowden plantations. While we know many more details about Robin's life it is this simple description that gives us a bit of insight to Robin's personality. You can learn more about Robin Perry and his turkey buzzard dance during Redcliffe's "Mrs. Clay at Redcliffe & the African-American Experience" this Saturday, March 7th at 4 pm. Please register in advance by calling 803-827-1473. Tickets \$8.00 per adult, \$6.50 for SC seniors.

Preservation Note: The Basement

When Redcliffe was originally constructed in 1859, its floor plan consisted of 3 identical levels with a large attic on top. These levels consisted of a front to back hallway, measuring approximately 20' wide by 60' long, with two smaller rooms on either side at the rear of the house and two larger rooms on either side at the front of the house (see floorplan, bottom right).

Our current focus is restoring the lowest level, or basement, back to its original construction. There is conflicting, often confusing, historical information on the use of the basement throughout the years 1859-1975. Staff has been researching the pieces of this puzzle for quite some time.

It appears that very early on the Southwest room was used as an informal dining room by the family and the Northwest room was perhaps used as a prep kitchen or pantry given its proximity to the outdoor kitchen, eventually housing the Billings' modern kitchen by 1935.

The entire East side of the basement has us scratching our heads. There are few historical references to this side of the



This photo of Patience Crawford, 1939, shows a brick pillar and staircase that will be visible to public once the basement renovations are complete.



Basement looking from front of house to rear of house, March 2015.

basement and a few photographs dating from early 1900 that show the Southeast room being used as a bedroom. To date, we have found no records to indicate the use of the Northeast room prior to Billings' ownership in 1935. At that time, we do know that a portion of that Northeast room was converted into a bathroom for servants.

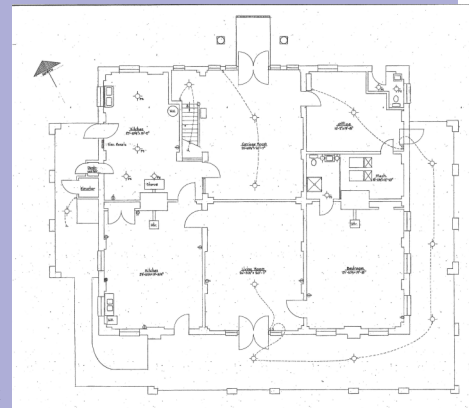
The front to back hallway appears to have initially had a brick floor and been used more as an indoor porch than a hallway. With Billings' occupation came a concrete slab covering the brick (1957), along with photographs showing the hallway used for stacking wood and storing water.

Park Service ownership in 1975 brought false walls, drop ceilings and modern bathrooms to the basement. The basement's central hallway became the Visitor Center and restrooms, completely masking its original front-to-back appearance. The Northeast room began functioning as the staff office. The Southeast room, along with the front half of the hallway, and the Southwest room became an apartment for a Park Ranger.

In 2002, staff occupation of the apartment ended and by 2004 most of the apartment was demolished, once again exposing the

original brick and wood ceiling beams. In 2013, with the building of a new Visitor's Center, the restrooms, office, and visitor spaces within the hallway were abandoned. This next phase of tear-out is exposing more woodwork and brickwork (which is being repointed during the deconstruction).

The ultimate goal is to produce an exhibit space that will add another dimension of interpretation to the fascinating history of this site. If you have not been on a "Behind the Scenes" tour yet, you may want to sign up and get a glimpse of this renovation before it is officially "open to the public!"



1979 basement floor plan, SCPRT.