

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

UPCOMING EVENTS
AT REDCLIFFE

Scandals & Gossip

Saturday, Feb 13th
4:30 p.m.
\$10 per person
Adults only!

For more information
on these programs
please contact the
park.

Park Staff

Park Manager
Joy Raintree

Park Interpreter
Elizabeth Laney

Park Technician
Doug Kratz

Asst. Park Ranger
Theresa Hips

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The GREAT RAIN of 1844

Even with the start of the new year the state of South Carolina is still recovering from a tumultuous year. With various lakes and rivers flooding from holiday rains, it is no wonder that the incredible rain event experienced by the state back in October is still fresh in our minds. Will anyone remember this historic deluge 150+ years from now?

How well do you remember the historic rain of 1844?

The rain fell in torrents last night...

James Henry Hammond's diary records a epic rain event that lasted roughly four days from March 09 to March 12, 1844 and not only threatened his saw and grist mills at Silver Bluff but flooded fields, roads, broke dams and carried away numerous bridges.

About six o'clock the watch gave the alarm that the water was rising. We hurried down. I saw at a glance that the danger was imminent for the pond had filled 2 feet

and, I soon ascertained, was rising an inch every 5 minutes. The rain which had scarcely slacked all day, now came down in a deluge.

Despite the best efforts of Hammond, his slaves, and his overseer the flooding did a lot of damage to the dam, pond and mills at Silver Bluff as well as ruining his recently planted corn crop.

But the rain still falls as steadily as ever and the lightening flashes vividly, the streams and rills from every little hollow are pouring in a heavy tribute, and six miles above are emptying their floods upon us.

Hammond also records that the event in early March was a part of a much larger pattern that winter.

Never was such a season known. It began to rain on 1st of January and there have been but few, very few, fair days since. The ground has never been ordinarily dry in all that time.

How much rain actually fell, at least during the four days in March of 1844? There are no statewide

records for that year but Hammond recorded on March 11 that: *It seems incredible but the rain had fallen to a depth of 12 inches this morning. There is a pot standing in the open yard... which all declare was empty before the rain. It holds at least ten gallons, probably 12 and was brim full this morning.*

Again on the following day, March 12, Hammond relates: *The pot which was half emptied yesterday afternoon is nearly full, and the cook affirms that it was emptied entirely, after the first night's rain. If this be true it has been as good as twice filled in the last 60 hours.*

Hammond's words feel as if they could be recalling an event months old rather than 172 years ago. How did it all end?

It ceased yesterday at noon [Mar 12], and last night both the pond and river fell. It is evident the rains have not been near so heavy in the up country...



Bust of Hammond from Redcliffe Library.

The Napoleon Complex

James Henry Hammond was a great admirer of Napoleon Bonaparte. One of the busts that he purchased and later exhibited in his home at Redcliffe was of the well-known French military and political leader. Friend of the Hammond family, Mrs. Virginia Clay, made several comparisons between the two men. When she had a chance to view Mr. Hammond following his death in 1864 she wrote her husband that she "gazed & gazed upon his fine marble-like face & could scarce believe it was not N. Bonaparte, the resemblance was so striking." This may have been the inspiration for a passage of her memoir, "Belle of the Fifties," written in 1904, when she described Hammond as "the Napoleon of the Senate," a title not given to him by his contemporaries.



Bust of Napoleon from Redcliffe Library.

The Old Hammond Grist Mill

A newspaper article published in the Augusta Chronicle in 1936 wrote of the “old Hammond mill” as a 120-year-old industry in the area, but according to records kept by James Henry Hammond there were mills operating at the same site along Hollow Creek since George Galphin owned the property back in the 1780s - making the Kathwood mills more like 160-years-old in 1936. Hammond mentions a slave named Jacob that reported ‘*his old master (Galphin) ran 8 saws and 2 sets of stones on this stream before the Revolution.*’ Hammond’s miller was a slave named Johnny Shubrick who died in March of 1841. Johnny was listed in many of Hammond’s earliest slave records as the miller and was valued at \$200.00.

Virginia Clay, who saw the mills when she stayed at Redcliffe during the Civil War, wrote the following description: “*On the plantation was a large grist-mill... a big, heavy timbered building, grey even then with age, and run by water. Here the corn was crushed between the upper and lower mill stones, and so skillful was the miller that each could have his hominy ground as course or as fine as his fancy dictated... The miller could neither read nor write, but he needed no aid to his memory. For years he had known whose mealbag it was that had the red patch in the corner... .*”

The Kathwood Grist Mill and Ginnery, as it was called in 1936, was a new structure built by the Hammond family in the 1890s very near the site of the older 1840s grist mill. The article relates that modern mill had five modern gins, two presses, two elevators and a daytime capacity of 60 bales. It was run at that time by two of Hammond’s grandsons Alfred and Christopher “Kit”.



Modern photo of the old mill pond at Kathwood.

Old Hammond Mill Operates As 120-Year-Old Industry

Augusta Chronicle, August 30, 1936

Artifact of the Month

This small French Glass and Bronze Perfume Bottle measures 4 1/8" tall and 2 1/2" in diameter and dates to the 3rd quarter 19th century. The color has been professionally described as “Pigeon’s Blood” and the bottle is cased in a bronze frame with a diamond lattice design. The hinged bronze cap has an inset eglomise panel depicting the Champs-Elysees in Paris, France. All bronze parts were originally gilded (most now missing) and the eglomise panel is flaking. Although part of the Hammond family collection donated along with the mansion to the SC Park Service in 1975, it is unknown to which Hammond family member this small treasure belonged.



Verre églomisé, French term meaning gilded glass, refers to a decorative technique by which the back side of glass is gilded (or painted) with a thin coating of gold or metal leaf as demonstrated in the photograph, left.



Tip: Antique dealers often refer to these types of perfume bottles as “Grand Tour” bottles.