

KINGSLEY PLANTATION

TIMUCUAN ECOLOGICAL & HISTORIC PRESERVE

FREEDOM AND SLAVERY OF PLANTATION-ERA FLORIDA



Kingsley Plantation, post-Civil War era

In the early years of the nineteenth century many people came to Spanish Florida. Some, like Zephaniah Kingsley, sought to make their fortunes by obtaining land and establishing plantations. Others were forced to come to Florida to work on those plantations, their labor enriching the men who owned them. Some of the enslaved would later become free landowners, struggling to keep their footing in a dangerous time of shifting alliances and politics. All of these people played a part in the history of Kingsley Plantation.

In 1814, Zephaniah Kingsley moved to Fort George Island and what is known today as the Kingsley Plantation. He brought a wife and three children (a fourth would be born at Fort George). His wife, Anna Madgigine Jai, was from Senegal, West Africa, and was purchased by Kingsley as a slave. She actively participated in plantation management, acquiring her own land and slaves when freed by Kingsley in 1811. With an enslaved work force of about 60, the Fort George plantation produced Sea Island cotton, citrus, sugar cane and corn. Kingsley continued to acquire property in north Florida and eventually possessed more than 32,000 acres, including four major plantation complexes and more than 200 slaves.

The United States purchased Florida from Spain in 1821. The Spanish had relatively liberal policies regarding issues of race, but American territorial law brought many

“Power may for a while triumph over weakness and misfortune. But as all nature (from the eternal principle of self) takes part with weakness against power, the re-action finally must be terrible and overwhelming.”

Zephaniah Kingsley, Slaveholder & Inhabitant of Florida
from *A Treatise on ... Slavery*, 1828

changes. At a time when many slaveholders feared slave rebellions, oppressive laws were enacted and conditions for Florida’s black population, free and enslaved, deteriorated. Kingsley was against the restrictive laws, arguing that more humane treatment would ensure peace and the perpetuation of slavery. In 1828, he published his opinions in *A Treatise on The Patriarchal, or Co-operative System of Society As It Exists in Some Governments ...Under the Name of Slavery*.



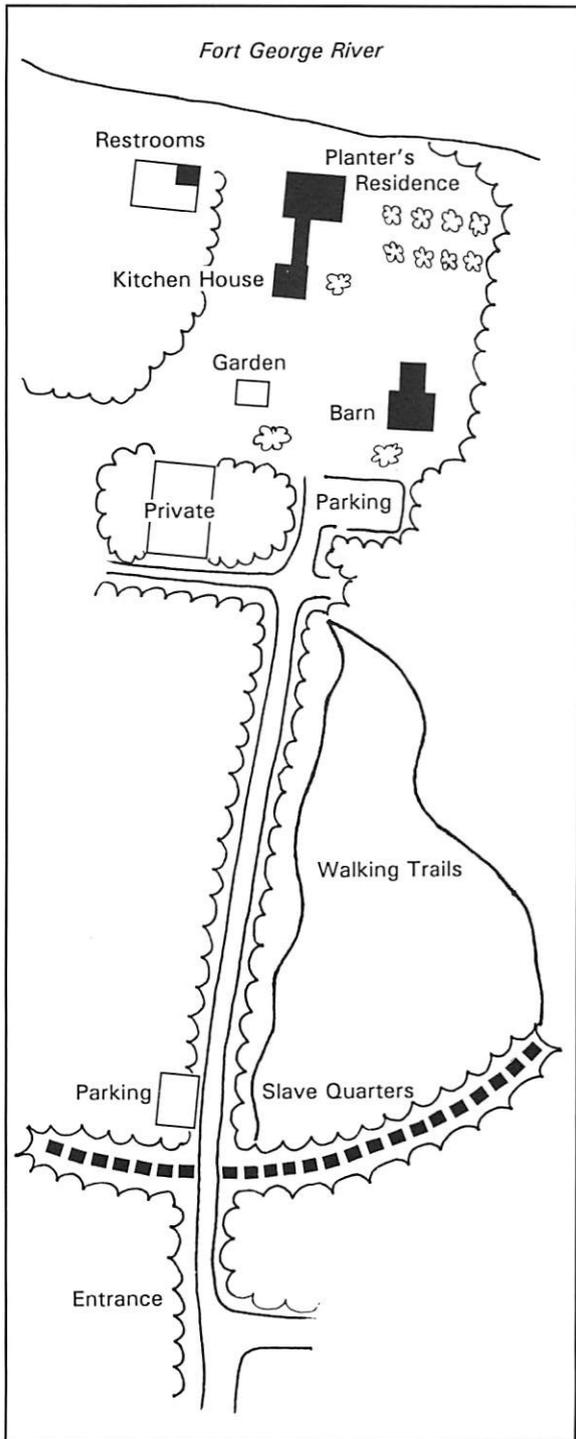
Palmetto Ave., post-Civil War era

To escape what Kingsley called a “spirit of intolerant prejudice,” Anna Jai and their sons moved to Haiti in 1837. There, Kingsley established a colony for his family and some of his former slaves. In 1839, Fort George Island was sold to his nephew Kingsley Beatty Gibbs. Zephaniah Kingsley died in New York City in 1843.

While Kingsley amassed land and wealth, others strove for freedom. In 1806, Kingsley sold an enslaved East African called Gullah Jack, or Jack the Conjuror, in Charleston. Sixteen years later, Jack became famous as an important lieutenant of the Denmark Vesey slave uprising—and was hanged.

Somewhat less dramatic was the life of Abraham Hanahan. Although a slave, Hanahan managed plantation operations and was completely in charge in Kingsley’s absence. When freed by Kingsley, Hanahan became a river pilot, trader, and farmer, who went by the name “Free Abraham Hanahan.” He eventually joined those seeking a better life in Haiti.

Kingsley Plantation symbolizes a time and a place in history. More than that, Kingsley Plantation represents people, free and enslaved, ordinary and extraordinary, and their efforts to survive in a changing land. The stories of these people, often heroic, and their contributions to history can be explored at Kingsley Plantation.



Planter's Residence

Zephaniah Kingsley and other owners lived in this house which may date to 1798. The original floorplan is unusual, consisting of a two-story central area with four square corner rooms. The visitor center and historical exhibits are located in this structure.

Kitchen House

On many plantations cooking was done in a separate building to keep accidental kitchen fires from spreading to other structures. Additional exhibits are located in this house.

Garden

Most of the year visitors can see Sea Island cotton growing in the garden and learn about cultivation of plantation crops. The primary crop of the plantation, Sea Island cotton fields once covered much of Fort George Island.

Barn

Tabby was an oyster shell concrete used on many coastal plantations. Both tabby brick and poured tabby were used in the construction of this barn.

The Slave Quarters

Ruins of twenty-three tabby cabins stand as reminders of the enslaved men, women, and children who once lived and worked on the plantation. One cabin has been restored to its original appearance.



Kingsley Plantation house, post-Civil War era

About Your Visit

Visitors to Kingsley Plantation can see Kingsley's residence (with visitor center and exhibit areas), kitchen house, barn/stable, and the ruins of 23 tabby slave houses. Grounds and exhibit areas are open daily 9-5, except Christmas day. Interpretive programs are available. Phone (904) 251-3537 for more information or write:
 National Park Service Kingsley Plantation
 11676 Palmetto Ave.
 Jacksonville, FL 32226

Kingsley Plantation is located on Fort George Island: north of the Mayport Ferry landing on Route A1A. Turn as directed and follow road 3 miles to the Plantation.

In respect to the history that this site represents, we ask that you do nothing to disturb it. Help us protect it for future generations.

All cultural and natural resources are protected. The possession of metal detectors within the park is prohibited.

