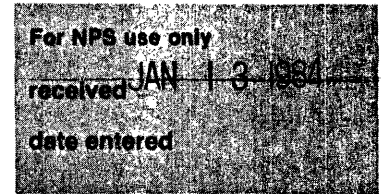


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

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RAYFIELD ARCHEOLOGICAL DISTRICT

6. JWS. 1001

Description:

The Rayfield archeological district consists of the ruins of 16 slave cabins dating from the earlier Rayfield plantation. The above ground remains include chimney bases, mounds of rubble, and one standing chimney. Located to the southeast of the Brickhill River on the west side of the Main Road, the ruins form two parallel rows and are obscured by heavy forest growth.

Significance:

Rayfield was part of the plantation lands owned by Catherine Greene Miller. Ownership passed to her daughter, Louisa Shaw, who deeded the administration of Rayfield to her brother, Nathanael Ray Greene. In 1834 Greene sold the plantation including 53 slaves, to Robert Stafford, Jr., a large property and slave owner on Cumberland Island. Remnants of slave cabins are found today at Rayfield and Stafford Place. With Rayfield and other properties, Stafford became the largest landowner on the island. He divided his holdings into two separate plantations, one managed from Rayfield, and the other from Stafford Place. By stimulating competition between the two plantations he was able to produce large and excellent cotton crops. The plantation era on Cumberland Island ended with the devastation of the cotton fields during the Civil War, although Stafford returned to his property after the war and remained until his death in 1877.

Rayfield is significant in the areas of historical archeology and agriculture. Further archival and archeological investigation may provide evidence concerning the establishment of the slave settlement at Rayfield, its operation, and day-to-day concerns. This settlement provides a unique opportunity to furnish substantive data about chattel culture in the sea islands during the first half of the nineteenth century. Research potential exists in the areas of site interpretation, overall village layout, developmental sequences, slave behavior patterns, and intra-cabin/village variability. The availability of this complex of buildings with associated wells, trash dumps, etc., can provide worthwhile data to our knowledge of slave subsistence economics and slaves' relationship to the plantation.

Although the archeological district does not include any of the Rayfield plantation fields, the reason for the existence of the cabins was to provide labor for cotton cultivation. The property is associated with two of the major cotton-growing families on the island—the Greenes and Robert Stafford. The cabins may have been built during either ownership, but it was under Robert Stafford that the greatest potential for cotton cultivation on Rayfield plantation was reached.