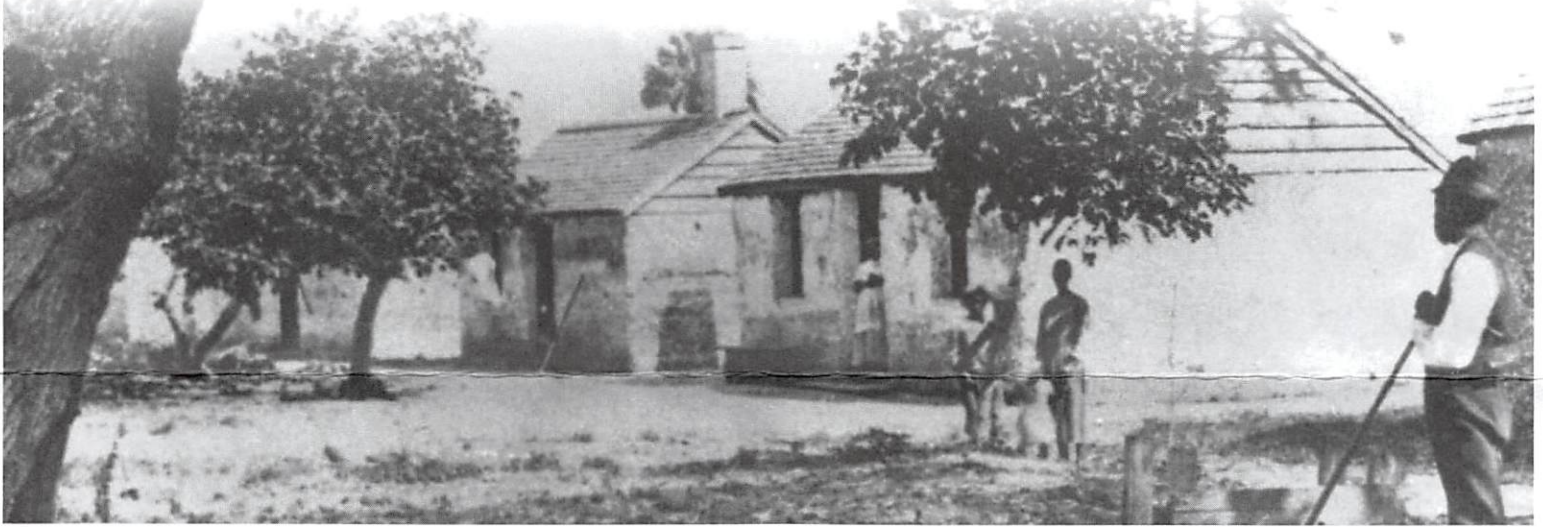




Grounds Tour



Kingsley Plantation represents a tumultuous time in Florida's past. The ever-changing political, social, and economic climate affected the lives of both free and slave. Failed crops could bankrupt the owner, which often resulted in slave families being sold apart. Despite the harsh conditions of bondage, slaves not only persevered, but developed a richly diverse culture. It is hard to imagine that this 1,000-acre island was used for growing crops during the plantation period. Agricultural use ended around 1900 and since then the fields have reverted back to forest.

This tour begins at the slave quarters. The buildings are fragile - please do not touch or climb on them.

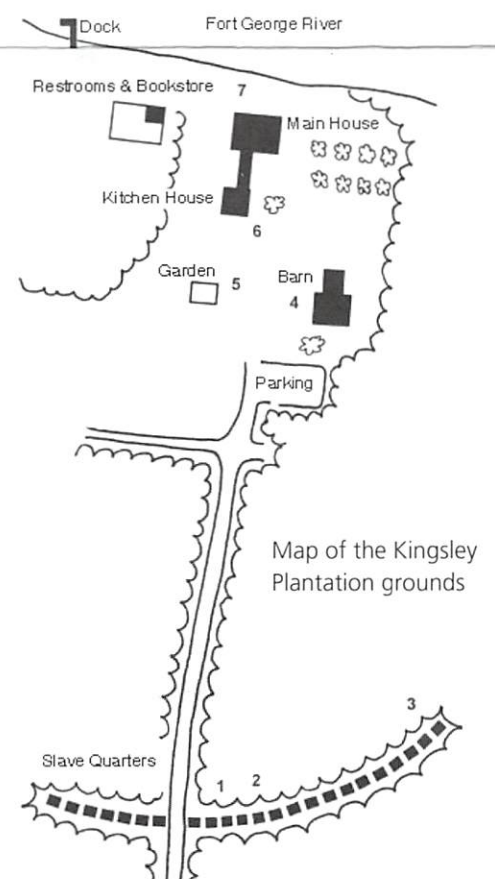
Stops 1 & 2: Slave Quarters and Restored Cabin

Many slaves worked in the fields, which were located along the dirt road leading into the slave quarters. The main cash crop here was Sea Island cotton. Other crops included sugar cane, corn, beans, and potatoes.

On this Sea Island plantation, slaves were assigned according to the task system. A task was a specific amount of work required for each slave to finish daily. While many slaves worked in the fields, other daily tasks included house work or skilled tasks such as carpentry or blacksmithing. When the task was finished, slaves used whatever remained of the day to hunt, fish, garden, or tend to other personal needs.

The slave quarters were the homes for sixty to eighty enslaved men, women and children. Each home had a fireplace for a "kitchen," where slave families prepared their nightly meals, as well as a room for sleeping.

The homes were built with a material called tabby. Skilled slaves cooked oyster shells in a kiln for lime. These cooked shells dissolved in water, and sand was mixed in to make cement. This "concrete" was poured into forms, layer by layer, to make the walls.



Stop 3: East End of Slave Quarters

The slave quarters at Kingsley Plantation are laid out in a unique way. Instead of a straight line, the houses form a semi-circle. This pattern is similar to village design in some areas of West Africa.

Notice that the buildings are not all the same size. One of the larger ones, at the end of the row, were given to the "Driver" and his family for the extra responsibility of managing the daily work assignments and reporting to the

owner. The other large cabins were either shared for community activities such as cooking, or were given to skilled slave craftsmen as a show of status.

Before continuing to Stop 4, take a moment and look in the direction of the plantation house. During the plantation period this wooded area would have been an open field, with a clear view of the other plantation buildings.

**Stop 4:
Barn**

Like the slave quarters, the walls of the barn are made of tabby. The oldest part of the barn is the north end, which is made out of tabby brick. This barn had multiple uses such as storage, housing for animals, a work place for slaves, or even living quarters.

In this area, cows, pigs and chickens were raised for food. Horses, mules, and oxen pulled plows and wagons, and provided power to operate mills.

**Stop 5:
Garden**

During the spring, summer and fall the garden provides a first hand look at plantation period cash crops such as Sea Island cotton, indigo, and sugar cane, and daily food crops like peanuts, peas, pumpkins, potatoes, and okra.

By the 1790s, Sea Island cotton was the main cash crop. This cotton grew best on the islands along the coast of South Carolina, Georgia, and north Florida. Its strong fibers are long and silky, making it very valuable.

The cotton plants grow as high as seven feet, and the cotton was picked daily from late July

to December. Slaves also were given the tasks of removing the seeds by hand and packing bales for shipment to market. During the peak of the cotton harvest (October), a task could last all day.

The four marked posts between the garden area and the kitchen house lay out a ¼ acre. Plantation tasks (see Stop 1) for field workers were measured in increments of the ¼ acre.

**Stop 6:
Kitchen**

Cooking for the plantation owner and his family was done in a separate building because of heat, noise, smells, and the danger of a fire.

The kitchen was a meeting point between African and European cultures. Slave cooks prepared foods traditionally, altering recipes passed down from African ancestors and mixing in local ingredients and new recipes from the owner's family.

After slave cooks prepared meals they carried them to the owner's house to be served. Water was brought from the well or the cistern near this building. The latticed walkway was added in the 1870s.

**Stop 7:
Waterfront and
Owner's Home**

The front of the plantation owner's house faces the Fort George River. Most plantations were located along waterways because transportation by ship or boat was the easiest way to get crops to market or to bring in supplies.

The plantation house dates to 1798 and is the oldest plantation house still standing in the state of Florida. It was built for comfort, with four corner rooms and the central two-story section. The stairs to the second floor were located outside on the back porch. The house was designed so that windows on all sides of the rooms would allow breezes to cross-ventilate. Unusual features of the house include the full basement and the widow's walk on top of the house.



Plantation House, ca. 1870s
Florida State Archives

Kingsley Family

Zephaniah Kingsley relocated to Spanish Florida in 1803 and became a successful merchant and planter. His African wife, Anta Madgigine Jai, was from Senegal. Kingsley purchased her as a slave in Havana, Cuba in 1806. He freed Anna (as she became known) and their children in 1811. In 1814 he moved his family to Fort George Island. Anna took advantage of Spanish views on race and society, which enabled her to own her own plantation and slaves. She also was her husband's business partner.

When Spain lost control of Florida in 1821, legislators in the new United States Territory quickly enacted laws that greatly reduced the civil liberties of free blacks, such as Kingsley's family members. His campaign to keep a system of society where people were judged by class, and not by color, was largely ignored. By 1832 the harsh laws restricting the rights of all

“persons of color” became intolerable. Faced with the reality of his family losing their freedom upon his death, he began looking for a country where they could live without restrictions.

By 1837, Kingsley moved Anna, their two sons, and 50 of his now freed slaves to Haiti, a free black republic. Their two daughters remained in Jacksonville, married to wealthy white men. Zephaniah Kingsley died in 1843 knowing that his family was secure.

The Kingsley story is a window into a period of sweeping change in Florida's history. The new territorial laws forced free and enslaved people to adapt to reforms in which some gained, but many lost, personal liberties.

Learn more at <http://www.nps.gov/timu>

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Slave cabins photograph courtesy of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.