

18th-century SC plantation home, used to educate Freedmen, sold for \$3.1M



Tombee Plantation on St. Helena Island in Beaufort County dates back to around 1795. The property survived the Civil War and became an agricultural school for Freedman. The historic property recently sold for \$3.1 million. Brown Land + Plantation Advisors/Provided

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Tombee Plantation on St. Helena Island was on the market for \$3.5 million

An 18th-century South Carolina Lowcountry plantation that remained in the

hands of descendants of former enslaved people for more than a century recently sold for \$3.1 million after being on the market for about three months.

It was previously listed for \$3.5 million. The new [home](#) owners are Steven A. Madden and Katherine D. Madden of Columbia, according to Beaufort County land records.

Believed to have been built after 1795, the two-story Tombee Plantation home near Beaufort is one of the few surviving plantation houses constructed before the Civil War on St. Helena Island.

The site's name comes from the cotton planter who had it built, Thomas Benjamin Chaplin or "Tom B," though other accounts say it could have been named for his grandson of the same name. The 24-acre property includes the main [house](#), guest house and dock.

The original 376-acre plantation served as a hub for shipping sea island cotton to Charleston.

When Union troops seized the sea island in 1861, the owners of Tombee fled as did many other plantation owners.

As part of what was called the "Port Royal Experiment" from 1862-1865, abandoned plantation acreage was divided among former enslaved people, who could buy land for \$1.25 an acre, according to [BlackPast.org](#).

The Tombee home was kept by the government and used as an agricultural school to educate Freedmen, according to a history of the property by Brown Land + Plantation Advisors and Wise Batten Inc., which handled the listing.

In 1971, James Williams bought the former plantation property and restored it. The site was previously owned by a Nashville, Tenn.-based firm called Tombee LLC, which bought the [island property](#) in September 2020 for \$1.3

million, according to Beaufort County land records. The property listing said the previous owners had been restoring the house.

Raised on a tabby foundation, the T-shaped dwelling includes three windows in each of six major rooms, a characteristic of construction in the area by the 1790s, according to South Carolina Encyclopedia. The house faces Station Creek with a wide, two-tiered veranda.

It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.