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By Warren L. Wise and Andrew Miller

Built in the 1690s, historic Middleburg Plantation sells for nearly \$4.5M in Berkeley County

HUGER — Six years after selling for \$3.5 million, a historic Berkeley County rice plantation has changed hands again with a 30 percent markup.

The owner of Middleburg Plantation, which dates back to the late 1690s, sold the 326-acre property off Cainhoj Road in Huger on Sept. 27 for \$4.49 million, according to Berkeley County land records.

The new owner is Whitewater Middleburg LLC, a firm registered to Jeffrey T. Wise, the CEO of the National Whitewater Center in Charlotte, according to North Carolina business records.

Wise did not immediately respond for comment on the recent purchase.

The former owner was Middleburg Plantation LLC, also of the Queen City. It is registered to Howard Martin Sprock III, founder of Moe's Southwest Grill and Planet Smoothie. He bought the property in 2015 from longtime owners Max and Jane Hill.

The plantation property, about 30 miles north of Charleston, includes a 2,500-square-foot, three-bedroom house, an old commissary and the remains of what is believed to be the nation's first steam-engine rice mill.

The existing house at Middleburg was built in 1697 by planter Benjamin Simons, who named the plantation after the ancient capital of Zeeland Province in Holland.

Overlooking the East Branch of the Cooper River, the main residence is considered the oldest surviving wooden plantation dwelling in South Carolina. It reflects the grand Georgian style construction method and has undergone complete restoration, including outbuildings and guest houses.

The property is listed as a National Historic Landmark by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Many of the main house's windows are original and still have a greenish tint. The stateroom features a marble fireplace that was imported from Italy.

The plantation has been a private residence and not a tourism stop. An easement through the Lowcountry Land Trust was placed on the property "to protect it for the future" by the Hill family, the previous owners who restored the site and possessed it from 1981 until 2015 as a weekend getaway.

"Middleburg's ancient live oak entrance is second to none, and the improvements are some of the finest examples of early Colonial construction," said C.J. Brown, a real estate agent with Brown Land + Plantation Advisors who handled the sale with real estate firm Wise Batten Inc.

Brown called it one of the "most historic properties" in the U.S.

"We're excited that it will continue to be in good hands for years to come," he said.