



# TWICKENHAM PLANTATION

A Whole Lot of Heaven

BY ROGER PINCKNEY





Old growth woodlands and grassy uplands provide essential habitat for whitetails, wild turkeys and bobwhite quail.

**Y**ou've likely never heard of Twickenham Plantation and that's a shame. It's a little east of Yemassee, a little north of Tulifinny, on the south side of Combahee River, not far from Ashepoo, South Carolina.

Twickenham is not a little bit of heaven. At 2,500 acres, it's a whole lot of it.

If you never heard of it, let me tell you what I know.

Rice impoundments full of ducks, woodlands busting with wild turkeys and big bruiser whitetail bucks, fields for doves and bobwhite quail, a stocked fishing pond, a covered dock on a mile of riverfront . . . who could ask for more?

More?

How about an 1870s Federal style home, two guest cottages, a caretaker's cottage, horse barn, dog kennels, machinery shed, formal gardens designed by the team that did the grounds at Augusta National Golf Club?

And, oh yes, a 3,500-foot private airstrip. And it's all for sale.

For maybe less than you might expect.

Shuck out the shekels, loose the moolah, call Wall Street, tell 'em to sell.

You ought to, really.

Nothing quite like Twickenham.

**THE TWICKENHAM STORY** begins in 1733 with a royal land grant from King George II to one Walter Izard for the cultivation of rice. They called that rice Carolina Gold, not for its color, but for the money made growing it. In Colonial America, this coast produced 95 percent of the colonies' rice, plus literally millions of tons exported to Europe. High times, indeed.

Izard subdivided the property among his children in 1752, his son John receiving the portion that would become Twickenham. When John Izard died only two years later, the land was inherited by his infant child, a girl, almost unheard of at the time. She grew up and married well, the son of the governor of Georgia.

So much history here, the ground would cry out if it could.

In 1779, British troops, local Tories and their Indian allies burned out this whole country, including Twickenham and the nearby parish church. It took 80 years to recover and then Sherman's army burned it again in 1865. Twickenham was ruined and sold at a sheriff's auction in 1879 to Thomas Screven, who in a pique, replicated the twice-burned house upon the original footings.

That house still stands, but Twickenham's days as a working plantation were coming to an end. In 1893, The Great Sea Island Storm, a monstrous hurricane with a 22-foot tidal surge, blew ashore with scant warning, breaching the dikes and drowning 2,000. By the time the dead were buried, dikes

Twickenham Planatation has more than a mile of frontage along the storied Combahee River.



More than 300 acres of controlled rice fields and river-front support big flocks of waterfowl and wading birds.



This restored guest cottage is among many buildings on the property including a lodge, stables, tractor shed and manager's house.







The 4,000-square-foot historic Federal-style plantation house was extensively remodeled over a three-year period ending in 2018.

repaired and the fields flushed with fresh water, agriculture was becoming mechanized and local pungo mud would not support the first gargantuan, steam-powered, steel-wheeled tractors, which more resembled locomotives than farm equipment. Rice cultivation moved to firmer ground in Arkansas and East Texas where it remains today.

But Twickenham and adjacent plantations were rescued from the dustbin of history by an unlikely savior—ducks.

Ducks? Yes, ducks.

In the early 1900s, northern sportsmen began buying up derelict islands and ruined plantations for pennies on the dollar. Captains of industry and finance, the robber barons, Henry Ford, Bernard Baruch, Andrew Carnegie, assorted Guggenheims—they all came. So complete was the changeover that by 1920 hardly any estate in coastal South Carolina or Georgia remained in local hands. But this time, the Yankees brought redemption.

There was just no end to it. Dikes, water-control trunks repaired, canals and ditches re-dug, gamebirds brooded and released, rice fields planted and

left unharvested, dogs, horses and mules bred, all brought to the gun. Britches and shotguns ordered custom fit, land bought and sold, wives and mistresses estranged, entire fortunes squandered for the love of sport.

And so it remains.

But back up a couple hundred years, back to when George II issued that grant to Walter Izard. In those days, deeds extended to the low-water mark. “Modern” deeds, those post-dating the Revolution, the title extends to the average high tide. In flat country with a seven-foot tide, this could encompass considerable real estate. Trace your land to a royal grant, and you own the marsh, no small matter with mallards involved.

Mallards, teal and wood ducks and always ringbills and sometimes pintails.

An amazing thing: In all these years, nobody ever put a conservation easement on Twickenham. It works like this. Find a plantation all grown up in houses and, sadly, they are easy to find. Compute the financial value of the fully developed land, subtract the Twickenham purchase price and take the difference to the bank. It’s

not quite that simple.

Broker Wise Batten elaborates: “Twickenham remains one of the few, unprotected, historically significant plantations with intact river rice fields in Beaufort County. Its conservation values are huge, and the combination of roughly 750 acres of intact dikes and water-control structures, together with approximately 1,850 acres of uplands, provides for a variety of conservation options. The potential benefits consisting of cash, income tax credits and federal tax deductions range from 30 percent to more than 50 percent of purchase price.”

A half-price plantation!

The only crops coming off Twickenham these days are venison, quail, turkey, doves and wild duck, the most expensive meat on earth. But then there are the memories, worth more than Carolina Gold, the rice that started it all. ■

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,** CALL CJ BROWN AT (803) 480-1260 OR WISE BATTEN AT (803) 943-6983 OR VISIT TWICKENHAMPLANTATIONSALE.COM.



A comfortable patio looks out over the home’s back yard and beyond that, a brackish-water pond filled with gamefish.



Above and opposite: The home boasts many modern features yet still reflects the elegance of 18th century living.

