




Redcliffe Plantation State Park

A Visitor's Guide



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REDCLIFFE PLANTATION STATE PARK

A VISITORS GUIDE



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Front stairway to Redcliffe, 1939. (Photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt, former photographer for Life Magazine)

INTRODUCTION

Located near the banks of the Savannah River at Beech Island, Redcliffe stands as a century-old structural legacy to the lives of South Carolina Governor James Henry Hammond and his descendants. From its construction in 1859 until 1975, Redcliffe was owned and occupied by four generations of the colorful Hammond family. Its residents included a South Carolina Governor and U.S. Senator, an editor of *Time* and *Life* Magazines, and a line of strong, enduring women. Generations of Hammonds were bonded, not only by a common heritage, but by their intense attachment to the family home place, Redcliffe.



Painting by George Hammond, depicting Redcliffe as it appeared prior to the porch renovations in 1886.



Rear view of Redcliffe in 1900 with observatory still intact.

The house, the household furnishings and art work, and the surrounding grounds have changed through the years, reflecting the different economies and the varied tastes and lifestyles of successive generations. While these changes attest to the continuing occupancy of Redcliffe, they have not significantly diminished the architectural integrity of this remarkable ante-bellum plantation home. In 1973 Redcliffe was added to the National Register of Historic Places for its historic and architectural distinctiveness.



Redcliffe after 1930 restoration by John Shaw Billings.

THE HAMMONDS OF REDCLIFFE

JAMES HENRY HAMMOND (1807-1864)

The eldest of five children, James Henry Hammond was born on November 15, 1807, at Stoney Battery in the Newberry District. His father, Elisha Hammond (1774-1829), held a variety of jobs, but was primarily an educator. Born in Massachusetts, he attended Dartmouth College and later held posts at Mount Bethel Methodist Academy in Newberry and at the South Carolina College (later the University of South Carolina). In 1806 he married Catherine Fox Spann (1785-1864) of Edgefield.

James Henry attended the South Carolina College where he was president of the Euphradian Society, a literary and debating club. Following graduation, Hammond held a succession of teaching positions, none of which he enjoyed. After a few years he began the study of law, was admitted to practice in December 1828, and the following month opened his law office in Columbia.

James Henry Hammond, U. S. Senator, Southern Planter, and leading proponent of states rights. The founder of the Hammonds of Redcliffe.



Intelligent, well-read, articulate, highly ambitious, and somewhat brash, Hammond rapidly became a recognized spokesman for southern nationalism, or “states rights.” An early supporter of southern secession, he perceived that the North and South constituted two increasingly diverse societies. Hammond contended that slavery was the essential cornerstone of the agrarian south and should be defended, even at the cost of southern lives.

An admirer of John C. Calhoun, Hammond supported the Senator’s premise of nullification--the theory that a state had the right to nullify (void) any act of the federal government which it considered unconstitutional. Applying this theory, Hammond argued that the federal tariffs of 1828 and 1832 had unfairly disrupted the South’s cotton trade with Britain; therefore, he advocated nullification of the laws. Beginning in January 1830, he edited The Southern Times, an anti-tariff, pro-nullification newspaper. His outspoken printed opinions nearly led to a duel between him and South Carolina Congressman James Blair of Camden. Hammond attacked the Congressman’s alleged moderate stand on nullification, Blair countered the remarks, and Hammond called for a duel--an accepted procedure for defending honor in the ante-bellum South. Fortunately, on the eve of the duel, friends of the antagonists settled the affair amicably and prevented the duel.

In 1830 Hammond began courting Catherine Elizabeth Fitzsimons (1814-1896), the youngest child of Christopher and Catherine Pritchard Fitzsimons of Charleston. An emigrant from Ireland, Christopher Fitzsimons had become a wealthy shipowner, merchant, and planter. His death in 1825 left Catherine a sizeable inheritance. The courtship progressed uneasily as Catherine’s mother and brothers felt the

sixteen year old was too young for marriage. The Fitzsimons also feared that Catherine’s fortune had unduly influenced Hammond’s interest. At Catherine’s urgings, however, her family reluctantly relented and the two became engaged in April 1831.



Catherine E. Fitzsimons (Hammond) with her mother, Catherine Pritchard Fitzsimons. Portrait by Charles Willson Peale (about 1815).

To avoid Hammond's control of the inheritance, the Fitzsimons advocated a marriage settlement that would permit Catherine to hold the property in her own name. The suggestion raised Hammond's wrath, but the family only conceded after an arbitration panel assured them a settlement was unnecessary. The marriage took place on June 23, 1831, and the couple travelled in western South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia. After their return to Columbia in October, Hammond immediately retired from The Southern Times and his law practice. The former attorney now planned to devote full time to managing Catherine's estate -- 147 slaves and 7,500 acres at Silver Bluff, a plantation along the Savannah River in the Barnwell District. Marriage had projected Hammond from his relatively obscure social position and limited financial means to the ranks of the elite aristocracy of South Carolina society--the slaveholding planters.

Three years later James Henry won his first elective office -- the U. S. House of Representatives. In his initial speech before Congress, Hammond declared that secession held no terrors for him and was, he thought, inevitable. Throughout his life, Hammond was concerned with health and plagued by illnesses, especially stomach disorders. In 1836 these perceived illnesses forced him to resign his Congressional seat, and he, Catherine, and their son, Harry, left for an extended tour of Europe. While in Italy, Hammond busied himself building an art collection of sculptures, paintings, engravings, and porcelains. He commissioned five watercolors of Naples's Bay, a portrait of Catherine, and sat for a bust of himself. These works were the beginning of a collection that remains at the home today. More than a year later the family returned to Silver Bluff, and Hammond immersed himself again in farming.

In 1840 he ran unsuccessfully for governor, but was elected in 1842 and served two terms. Hammond had long hoped to succeed John C. Calhoun in the Senate; however, his illicit behavior during his second term cast a lingering pall over these political aspirations. In 1844 Wade Hampton II denounced the governor for his attempted seduction of Hampton's daughter, Catherine. The Hampton girls were Hammond's nieces--their mother and Hammond's wife were sisters. James Henry later recorded the indiscretions in his diary:

The charges that Hampton might truly bring against me are susceptible of the highest colouring, and it would doubtless be given to them not only by him but by a large portion of the public. Here was, it might be said, a systematic attempt to train up pure and innocent young girls to debauchery, commencing from their tender years, by one who should have [been] their guide and protector, who was the husband of their mother's only sister, their Father's friend, in whom every confidence was implicitly reposed.

Continuing, Hammond attempted to rationalize his actions, but finally concluded:

The truth is that after all the consideration I have given to the matter, I cannot pretend to justify myself. Still I cannot conceal from myself that I have done wrong, grievously wrong and I dare not vindicate it. May God forgive me.

Whatever the extent of the involvement, the affair became well-known in the capitol city and bitterly severed relationships between Hammond and the politically powerful Hampton family. As a result of the embarrassment, acrimony, and potential danger that Columbia held for Hammond, he returned to Silver Bluff at the close of his second term, resolved to abandon politics.

Despite his physical withdrawal, Hammond's interest in the political arena remained keen. By 1846 he was considered the likely successor to ailing U. S. Senator, George McDuffie. When Hammond's name was presented to the legislature, however, Wade Hampton indicated that he possessed documents that proved Hammond's unfitness for the senatorial post. Although few read the documents, the cloud of impropriety hung over Hammond, and he lost the election. Hammond had long hoped to succeed John C. Calhoun in the Senate. This dream was denied, however, when Governor Whitmarsh Seabrook appointed Robert Barnwell to the post left vacant by Calhoun's death in 1850.

Hammond's earlier urgings toward secession were replaced in the 1850s by a more conservative approach; he now pressed for caution. Although still committed to Southern independence, Hammond opposed what he considered extremist views such as those advocated by Robert Barnwell Rhett. In late 1850 he ran against Rhett for Calhoun's permanent Senate seat. Despite strong public support for Hammond, the legislature elected Rhett. Despondent from the loss, Hammond wrote to his long-time friend, William Gilmore Simms, *"This blow is fatal."*

Hammond's difficulties with personal relationships extended beyond the political arena. In his immediate household, his arrogance and egocentric views, particularly in relation to women, generated discord. Women, Hammond expounded to his son, were *"made to breed,"* to serve as *"toys for recreation,"* or to bring men *"wealth and position."* Only *"one woman in ten thousand--not one more,"* he alleged, *"has mind enough to be a true 'help-mate' to a man of mind."* His own wife, he said, *"has no art of administering any real comfort."* Marrying for *"wealth and position,"* Hammond concluded, created *"still greater ultimate difficulties."*

These *"ultimate difficulties"* had expressed themselves in the Hampton scandal during the 1840s. They surfaced again in the 1850s when Catherine discovered her husband's liaison with two slave women. In 1830 Hammond had bought Sally, an eighteen year old seamstress, and her one year old daughter Louisa. Soon after the purchase, Hammond made Sally his mistress and had children by her. When Louisa was twelve, he had relations with her and subsequently had several children by her. Aware of the ongoing liaisons, Catherine left Hammond in 1850 and took their two younger daughters to Charleston for a separation that stretched into several years. Hammond, exhibiting regret, but not remorse, wrote of his problems:

I feel like burying myself in the deepest recesses of Cowden or flying off to the utter-most parts of the Earth. The fact is difficulties of the most serious character have again arisen in my family. Difficulties betwixt my wife and me. I am wholly to blame, not so much, as I view matters, for what I have done as for what I left undone, for want of caution that led to discoveries.

Hammond's relationship with his children was likewise affected by his controlling and domineering personality. In 1858 Catherine Hammond wrote that Hammond was *"... the most liberal of fathers--but when he is irritated he does not spare words not of reproof but of sarcasm and abuse."* At another time, she remarked, *"With everything to make us happy there are few families that are less so."*

In 1855, with his wife still living away from Silver Bluff, Hammond purchased some 400 acres at Beech Island, about six miles north of Silver Bluff. Hammond intended to make this the family home; however, in 1857 he finally realized his long-held goal of election to the U. S. Senate. In his absence, Hammond's sons supervised the house construction, and in 1859, the new home, Redcliffe, was completed.

On March 4, 1858, Hammond delivered his most noted address to the Senate. If the South chose confrontation in response to Northern agitation, he warned, her power would be strong. *"No, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares to make war on it. Cotton is king."* Hammond returned to Redcliffe at the close of the congressional session in June 1860 expecting to stand for re-election in December. In the presidential campaign he supported the Democratic nominee, John Breckinridge. Two days after Lincoln's election, Hammond resigned his Senate seat. Although he preferred a cautious, deliberative approach, Hammond vowed to support the newly formed Confederacy *"with all the strength I have."*



Catherine
Fitzsimons
Hammond, wife of
James Henry
Hammond.

Soon, however, Hammond grew critical of the new southern government. In June 1861 he presented an economic plan to Confederate officials in Richmond, but his words went unheeded. Angry, he returned to Redcliffe and continued throughout the war to protest against Confederate taxes, impressment of his slaves and crops, and the conscription of his sons. As the war continued, its magnitude and devastation disturbed Hammond. In April 1862 he recorded in his journal, *"I feel very, very sad more so than I have felt in many years."*

Redcliffe was not meant to be a working plantation, but more a showplace, a personal agricultural experiment station for Hammond. A leading proponent of scientific agriculture, he kept meticulous records in his *Plantation Journal*, *Orchard Book*, and *Wine and Vineyard Journal*. A founding member of the noted Beech Island Agricultural Society, Hammond took pleasure in impressing members with his cultivation of unusual and out-of-season foodstuffs. In March 1862 he commented in his *Plantation Journal*, *"Very pleasant club day . . . I gave them yesterday . . . what few of them had seen or heard of before--a fine cauliflower which was delightful."* Hammond also grew parsnips, beets, broccoli, and asparagus and cultivated a variety of fruits including apricots, cherries, peaches, grapes, pears, nectarines, figs, plums, and strawberries. Due to Hammond's foresight and skill, his crop and livestock production exceeded his own plantation needs during the early years of the war. The excess was sold to neighbors and the Confederate Army. By early 1864, however, his reserves were gone. In April he wrote, *"Went to Augusta to sell something having no money. Found that there was no current money there and everything down and dull and utter want of confidence in government finances."* On July 31 he wrote:

War news very bad from every quarter. A portion of the fortifications at Petersburg blown up and Sherman's raiders dashing through the heart of Georgia. The Oconee bridge on Central R. R.--a mile long--burnt. Communication from Atlanta to Augusta and to Macon cut off entirely. They meet no opposition. It is also reported that Atlanta is virtually surrounded.

Hammond owned over 300 slaves--the 1860 Census recorded 21 slaves at Redcliffe and 294 at Silver Bluff. He carefully watched his slaves to determine their reactions to the war news. On May 12, 1862, he recorded, *"These are terrible times. All our young in the armies, not men left to suppress a negro insurrection, of which however there are no symptoms yet."* By late August 1864, seven months before the surrender at Appomattox, Hammond despaired, *"I must turn my negroes loose and will there then be soon a raiding by them of me and mine--ruin to me and what is worse ruin to our Cause and Country."*

His health and hopes rapidly failing, Hammond instructed his son Spann about his burial. He chose a site near the top of a hill where *"there will be a fine view of Augusta and the Sand Hills."* *"As to a monument,"* he said, *"I have nothing to say of that; you boys do as you think best. But mind if we are subjugated, run a plow over my grave."* Hammond died at Redcliffe on November 13, 1864, at the age of fifty-seven.



Catherine and James Henry Hammond and many of their decedents are buried in the old Hammond Cemetery, now the Beech Island Cemetery.

James Henry (Harry) Hammond (1832-1916)

When James Henry Hammond died in 1864, control of Redcliffe passed to his eldest son, James Henry Hammond II, who was known as Harry. Harry was born in Columbia and spent his childhood on the plantation complex at Silver Bluff with summer vacations in the North Carolina mountains. He earned degrees from the South Carolina College and the University of Pennsylvania. During his Grand Tour of Europe in 1855, Harry purchased pieces now in the Redcliffe art collection including a number of plaster busts and a copy of Raphael's "The Transfiguration." Upon his return, he studied at Harvard and later taught natural sciences at the University of Georgia. During his father's absences, Harry



Major James Henry (Harry) Hammond, C.S.A., son of Catherine and James Henry Hammond. Harry supervised the construction of Redcliffe and lived there until his death in 1916.

Harry joined the Confederate forces in September 1861 and earned the rank of major, serving with Generals Maxcey Gregg and Samuel McGowan. Serving the duration of the war, he surrendered with the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

His father's life had been largely devoted to the acquisition and management of the 300 slaves and 14,000-acre plantation complex. Harry's task--to preserve the holdings--was no less formidable. Years later he recalled that when he returned to Redcliffe from the war, he owned "a pipe, some tobacco, and literally nothing else."

managed the Silver Bluff plantations and, with his brother Spann, directed the construction of Redcliffe. In 1859 he married Emily Cumming (1834-1911), the only child of Julia Bryan and Henry Harford Cumming, of Augusta, Georgia.

To prevent the estate's sale to outsiders, Hammond divided most of the property among the family. His mother, Catherine, held ownership of Redcliffe and nearly 400 surrounding acres. Catherine wrote of her post-war situation in September 1865:

I often can scarce restrain a burst of complaint at my change of circumstances--but as I compare my lot with many others, I see only cause for thankfulness. As to the future, if I could, I would scarce lift the curtain. We are in God's hands who alone has brought about this wonderful state of affairs and who only can unravel it.

Catherine indicated in September 1865 that most of the former slaves remained with them:

We have not lost many negroes. . . 300 mouths to feed is no small charge--meat and corn both low, but the new crop coming in.



Julia Bryan Cumming and her daughter Emily Cumming

In 1897 Harry's son, Henry Cumming Hammond, remarked of the dramatic changes the war had brought to his father:

Often the thought is brought home to me of the hardships and disappointments, in a material way at least,

which have befallen you and the generation and class of which you were a member. Born to comfort, ease and luxury; with every reasonable expectation that they would be continued during this lifetime to suddenly become the target of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune was a shock the withstanding of which required the fortitude of a hero. The poverty, the narrowed field of action, the anxiety and the care which without warning environed your life in its prime was made tolerable, I should think, only by these considerations: Your lot was the common lot; fairly good

health, food, clothes and a shelter; a family that promised not to disgrace you and which up to this time has kept that promise; but above all things together added, squared and cubed you have had the best woman in the world for a companion, for a friend, for a coworker, for a cosufferer, for a wife.

In 1873 Catherine F. Hammond moved into "Old Yard," the original Galphin house at Redcliffe, and turned the plantation home over to Harry, Emily, and their five children. Despite Harry's resolve and hard work, finances at Redcliffe were continually strained. Cotton prices remained low, and in 1875 he declared to the Beech Island Agricultural Society, "*Cotton will never be called King again.*"

Repeatedly, gifts and inheritances from Emily's wealthy family saved them from economic ruin. Described as sweet-tempered and frail with an iron will, Emily provided emotional as well as financial strength for her family. In 1909 friends from throughout South Carolina and Georgia came to Redcliffe to celebrate the Hammonds' 50th wedding anniversary. Both Emily and Catherine Hammond's wedding dresses were displayed, and The State newspaper reported that tables were "*loaded with every known delicacy and the old-time family servants waited on the tables, completing the scene of bygone days.*"

Their three sons (Henry Cumming, Christopher Cashel Fitzsimons, and Alfred Cumming) did not attend college; however, Harry Hammond advocated college for both his daughters, Julia Bryan (1860-1935) and Katharine Fitzsimons (1867-1925). In 1881 he accompanied twenty-one year old Julia as she enrolled at the Harvard Annex, later to become Radcliffe College.



Emily Cumming Hammond. Emily married Harry Hammond and brought to Redcliffe many furnishings and portraits from the Cumming's family.

Although delighted with her studies and new surroundings, Julia wrote home to her sister, Katharine:

... but while Redcliffe stands and you are there willing to have me with you, to love me and to be loved by me, I could never tarry away, there is never a land as fair as our dear home.

After three months, the loneliness of the separation, especially from her mother, caused Julia to return home. She lived the remainder of her life at Redcliffe, not marrying until the age of fifty-one.

Although he never sought political office, Harry Hammond made other noteworthy public contributions. In 1880 he served as Director of the National Census for South Carolina. More importantly, in 1883 he edited a 726-page handbook entitled South Carolina. Resources and Population. Institutions and Industries. This reference book, commonly known as "Hammond's Handbook," remains a valuable historical resource on the state's economy following the Civil War.



Harry Hammond at about sixty years of age.

By 1902 Harry had placed his daughter, Julia, in charge of Redcliffe and the work force. In 1907 an agreement was signed by all five Hammond children that the home would go to Julia and Henry within one year after the deaths of their parents. During the next decade both parents died, Emily in 1911 and Harry in 1916. Soon after her mother's death, Julia married James P. Richards. Although a happy marriage, Jim's financial ineptness and the depression of the 1920s reduced them to a meager existence maintained through the sale of milk, eggs, and vegetables. James Henry Hammond's 14,000 acre holdings had dwindled to 500 acres at Silver Bluff and 373 acres at Redcliffe. Jim Richards died in 1934 and Julia in 1935.

**KATHARINE HAMMOND BILLINGS
(1867-1925)**

Katharine Fitzsimons Hammond, the second daughter of Harry and Emily Cumming Hammond, was described as attractive, lively, a bit flirtatious, and slightly spoiled. A cousin suggested Katharine had "two selves"-- "*one a tall upright goddess, merciful (though perhaps a little scornful) to the world, to her other self-- stern, austere merciless.*"

Pursued by a string of male admirers since the age of thirteen, she became quite serious about a suitor in the early 1890s. Partly to separate the two, her father convinced her to attend the Johns Hopkins Training School for Nurses in Boston. Six weeks after arriving, Katharine wrote despairingly of her self-doubts:

All my life I have done nothing else--I have been swayed by every passing passion--and now when I need self control--and strength--I have nothing that I can count on--and would weakly call on others for help. How can people say that they will do this or that--and then do it--you know Mother that I never can be counted upon--that I have no character.

Her father's separation plan eventually worked. At Johns Hopkins, Katharine met Dr. John Sedgwick Billings (1869-1928), a resident physician whose social background was more compatible with the Hammond's. Billings' father, John Shaw Billings, had served in the Union Army, consulted on the building of Johns Hopkins Hospital, and later became the first Director of the New York Public Library. At his death in 1913, Billings left an estate of \$200,000. John Sedgwick had received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1892. Although a cosmopolitan and good looking young man, Katharine compared his accomplishments rather unfavorably with those of her older brother, Henry:

I was just thinking how much smarter Henry was than Dr. Billings--Henry has done so much more for himself--and there has been so much less spent on him and giving him the chance to do. There must have been quite a small fortune spent on this young man if I am not mistaken he will make it show some day too--but he is only beginning to work for himself as Harry is doing.



Katharine Fitzsimons Hammond,
daughter of Emily and Harry
Hammond, as a young woman.

The passing months at school failed to diminish Katharine's homesickness for family and Redcliffe. She wrote her mother in 1894:

The letters you all write me are the only things that can keep my spirits up at all. I have been so homesick and depressed of late. Each morning it is a dreadful struggle to start out for the ward--instead of making a bolt for home.

In August 1894 Katharine quit training and returned to Redcliffe, only six months short of graduation. She and John maintained a somewhat ambivalent and turbulent courtship by mail over the next two years. The recurring misunderstandings between the two were partly ignited, no doubt, by their strong personalities and further complicated by regional differences and divergent views on women. In a playful, but testy letter, Katharine wrote John in 1895:

I fully appreciate all that you and Dr. Norton felt and said about southern women. It certainly requires all the blindness that being in love brings to make a hard headed northern man overlook the glaring imperfections of southern women. The two breathe a different atmosphere of thought, sentiment and actions.

In September 1896, however, Billings visited Redcliffe and the two became engaged.

Their wedding at Redcliffe on April 20, 1897, began a 28-year tumultuous marriage beset by financial difficulties. Katharine continually longed for family and Redcliffe, and John entered into repeated extra-marital relationships. John Shaw Billings, their first child, was born at Redcliffe in 1898. Two more sons were born in the next six years, one of whom died in childhood. Throughout their marriage, the return visits to Redcliffe were high points for Katharine and her children. During one of those trips, John wrote to her, *"I am afraid of Redcliffe, it always comes between us."* As early as 1903 Katharine wrote her brother, Henry, of the unhappiness in her marriage and her desire to come home. By 1912 she told her older sister, Julia:

Every spark of feeling I ever had for Dr. Billings has long been dead. He has killed it with his cruel hard treatment, his neglect of me, his utter selfishness. Nothing would hold me for a day, to the semblance of a tie to him, but for the boys.



The Wedding Party. The marriage of Katharine Hammond and John Sedgwick Billings at Redcliffe in 1897.

Beginning in 1907 Katharine suffered from chronic thyroid and heart conditions. She died at Woodstock in July 1925 at the age of fifty-eight and was buried beside her mother in the Redcliffe cemetery. For some time John had been openly involved with a nurse, Josephine Long Toering, and five months after Katharine's death, he married her. Devastated by his father's actions, John Shaw wrote:

Mother not dead six months and father goes off and married the woman who wrecked her life and happiness, Lord how I hate them. . . This awful union breaks the last link between father and myself.

John Sedgwick Billings died in 1928.



Katharine Hammond Billings at Redcliffe.

JOHN SHAW BILLINGS (1898-1975)

Noted American journalist, John Shaw Billings, was the last Hammond descendent to live at Redcliffe. This eldest child of John Sedgwick and Katharine Hammond Billings maintained close links to the ancestral home. Although most of his life was spent elsewhere, Billings was born and died at Redcliffe and frequently visited the plantation during his childhood. Following an early education in New England schools, Billings entered



The young matron. Katharine H. Billings, and her son, John Shaw Billings. John Shaw was born at Redcliffe in 1898.

Harvard, but withdrew during World War I to join the aviation corps. Although he re-enrolled in 1919, he dropped out the following year. After a brief stint with the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Billings accepted an offer from the editor of Time to manage the magazine's national affairs section.

During a visit in 1922, Billings expressed his attachment to Redcliffe in a letter to his mother:

I got out to Redcliffe Monday noon; was there until Thursday; am going back today, with the secret vow not to leave it until I go down to the station Sunday afternoon of next week to take the Coast Line back to Washington. There is happiness at Redcliffe. It is the corporate Present symbolizing the Past--and I don't want to leave it! Of course I had been carefully warned of the changes of time at the dear old place in the last six years . . . but when I saw the house rising up in all its old-time grandeur, supremely indifferent to the queer little narrow-visioned mortals who lived in it, I felt a catch in my throat, and thanked God that I had such a secure association with the place.

During this visit, Billings met Frederica Washburn Wade (1901-1963), daughter of Gussie Black and Peyton Wade. The couple was married in 1924 at the Beech Island Presbyterian Church, and

Billings' Aunt Julia hosted the reception at Redcliffe. The following year John and Frederica returned to Redcliffe, this time for a sad occasion--the funeral of his mother, Katharine.



Frederica Wade Billings, only child of Frederica Wade and John Shaw Billings.

John wrote in his diary, "thus another chapter ends." "Oh this fine old house, with its great arms open impartially to life and to death." The Billings only child, Frederica Wade Billings, whom they affectionately called "Skeeter," contracted meningitis during a trip to Georgia in 1929 and died in Atlanta at the age of three.

In 1935 Julia Hammond Richards died, and the Billings attended the funeral at Redcliffe. Julia and her brother Henry had jointly owned the house, but Henry did not want to assume full ownership, and neither of his two brothers could afford to purchase the old plantation. Henry offered the seventy-seven year old home, including the furnishings, to Billings for \$15,000. Torn between his work responsibilities in New York and his Redcliffe roots, Billings noted in his diary, "God knows I want it more than anything else in the world." Upon his return to New York, Billings wrote Henry about the proposed purchase:

It is to be definitely understood . . . that I am buying Redcliffe because no one else will or can take it and otherwise it might well pass out of the family or be left to rot down.



Julia Hammond and Henry Cumming Hammond at Redcliffe.

From the purchase in 1935 until 1938, the Billings worked on restoring Redcliffe which had been neglected since the early 1900s. To celebrate the completed work, they gave a ball in April 1938 for Billings' cousin, Mary Gwynn Hammond. The main hall floor was polished for dancing, plants from the grounds—kalmia, magnolias, and long-leaf pine—decorated the rooms, and lights flooded the magnolia-lined drive and house. Billings wrote that the lights made “the house look like a great white frosted wedding cake or a spectacular movie set.” The Augusta Herald noted the event:

From the moment you drove through the avenue of huge magnolia trees and caught a glimpse of the three-story home, resplendent in the bright lights, you felt transported back to the days when the beaux and the belles of the sixties gathered there for gay parties and waltzed in the high ceilinged rooms.

The two hundred guests enjoyed themselves until the morning hours when Billings suddenly halted the dancing. Mary Gwynn had started the “Big Apple,” and Billings “feared this dance lest its vibration shake Redcliffe disastrously.”

Meanwhile, Billings' journalism career in New York moved rapidly. In 1934 Henry Luce made Billings the managing editor of Time, and in 1936 Luce asked him to take over as managing editor of Life, Time Inc.'s new photo-journalism magazine. Life was an instant success; the magazine had captured the perfect blending of pictures and the written word. In 1944 Luce appointed Billings editorial director of Time, Inc. Despite his continued career success, Billings increasingly talked of leaving his Fifth Avenue home and settling at Redcliffe. As early as 1935, he wrote, “I long to chuck my job and go to Redcliffe for good.” He and Frederica spent as much time at Redcliffe as possible, and in 1943 Henry Luce included a visit to Redcliffe on a tour of the south.

Finally, in 1954 Billings retired from Time. Over the next few years he and Frederica restored Redcliffe and the grounds, visited family, and entertained. Billings devoted almost twenty years to collecting the correspondence of the extended Hammond family. In March 1962, Frederica died from a stroke and was buried at Arlington Cemetery next to their daughter.



John Shaw Billings, the last descendent of James Henry Hammond to live at Redcliffe. Billings was an editor of Time and Life magazines.

The following year, Billings married Elise Lake Chase, a native of South Carolina and a long-time family friend. By the early 1970s Billings was concerned about the future of Redcliffe after his death. Earlier he had written, “I have no heirs; no dynasty will follow me to enjoy its grace and traditions.” Billings offered the property

to the state of South Carolina, and the gift was accepted by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism in 1973. John Billings retained a life tenancy, and a state park ranger moved to Redcliffe to manage the property. On August 27, 1975, John Billings died, culminating almost 120 continuous years of Hammond family ownership of Redcliffe.

STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF REDCLIFFE

After their marriage in 1831, Catherine and James Henry Hammond lived on the 7,500 acre tract she had inherited at Silver Bluff. By the 1850s Hammond wanted a home more fitting his political and social aspirations. On March 22, 1855, he wrote in his plantation journal, *"On my way down purchased Dr. Galphin's residence on Beech Island in Edgefield County for \$3500 cash."* Hammond decided to name the Galphin place, *"Redcliffe,"* for *"the red bluff in front of it"* and on May 12, 1855, the Hammonds spent their first night in the new home. Hammond wrote of the property:

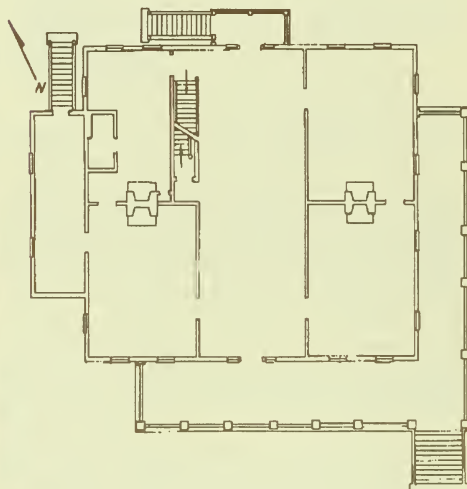
It is a beautiful situation, susceptible to magnificent improvements and has the finest view in the middle country. . . . If I live and prosper I will improve the place--lay my bones there and leave it for a family mansion.



Rear view of the original "Redcliffe" home purchased by Jame Henry Hammond from Dr. Milledge Galphin in 1855. The Hammonds lived here until the new Redcliffe was completed. This house then came to be known as "Old Yard;" the structure burned in 1917.

Although the Galphin house was adequate, Hammond soon began selecting a site and laying out plans for a more prestigious home. He boasted that the new house site afforded him a view of every house in Augusta, over five miles away. Hammond apparently designed the house as he wrote his son, Harry, that the house would be *"like all I have built in plan. Rooms above and below all 26 by 20 ft. and 8 ft. high -- all windows. Shall have gas."* The following year, however, Hammond's house plans were stalled by a drought which had *"cut off the entire surplus of my next years income and the struggle will be to make both ends meet -- little prospect of improving Redcliffe."*

Actual construction began in December 1857 and was completed 1859. Elected to the U.S. Senate, Hammond left for Washington after only two weeks work, delegating most of the construction supervision to his son Harry. The contractor, William Henry Goodrich (1808-1866), had established a carpentry-furniture shop in Augusta, Georgia, during the late 1820s, employing German craftsmen as furniture makers. As the business expanded, Goodrich mass-manufactured doors, sashes, blinds, and shingles. He built several commercial and public buildings as well as private residences in Augusta including the Brahe House (c.1850), the First Christian Church (1877), the National Exchange Bank (1871), and St. John's Methodist Church (1844).



Redcliffe, from measured drawing of first floor.

Hammond paid Goodrich \$22,000 for the construction of Redcliffe; this figure excluded the bricks, lumber, and labor--all of which were produced or supplied from the plantation. A letter from Goodrich indicates that, although in Washington, Hammond continued to make the major design decisions:

Augusta, Georgia
April 3, 1858

Hon. H.H. Hammond
Dear Sir:

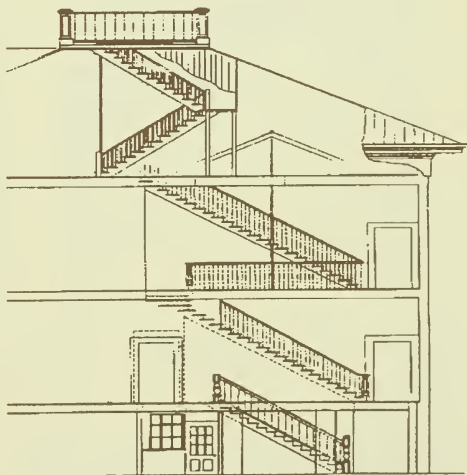
Since last writing you, I have almost finished the House for plastering. I have the windows and doors all cased and sash boards all down. Stair case up, and yet have to smoothe off the floors, put up hand Rail and Banisters to inside stairs, sash to put into windows doors to make and hang and Chimneypieces to make, the sycamore lumber is so badly warped and sprung that I am afrade (sic) I shall not be able to make moore (sic) than the principal Story Doors and mantlepieces handrail and banisters, but I will make the most of it. I think I would have the lathing done the lathes will be much better nailed to those places then be laying out in the ground, I have had applications to it at 5 cents per yard, for the rest I wait your orders...the attic (sic) story I have done nothing but lay the floor, and case the windows, it is all in one large room if you should wish it divided off into rooms ready for plastering pleas (sic) inform me, the observatory I have finished off, seated it, all around. I have done nothing to the Stair case from the basement to first Story floor. I did not know your plan about this, if you can give me any orders about this please write them, I should be glad to hear from you. Please give me all you can, that you want done. I know you cannot tell as well as if you was here to see.

*Respectfully yours,
Wm. H. Goodrich*

The two-story Georgian style house sat on a knoll atop nine foot brick piers. Two-tiered porches were built on all sides with stairways from the front and rear (north and south) sides and large 11' x 5' French windows opening onto the porches. An observatory crowned the hip roof, sitting between twin chimneys. Each floor had four large rooms and a spectacular center hall, 53' long and 20' wide. The doors, mantles, banisters and library shelves were carved from native sycamore, and the doors were hung with silver hinges.

The fourteen foot high ceilings were of plaster and the flooring was heart pine. Gas pipes were installed throughout the house. The first floor contained a parlor, library, dining room, and Hammond's bedroom and the second floor had four bedrooms. A kitchen and four slave cabins stood behind the main house. Louis Berckmann, a Belgian landscape architect living in Augusta, consulted on the landscaping. An avenue of southern magnolias, almost a mile long, connected Redcliffe and Glen Loula, the home of Hammond's son, Paul. These magnolias remain today as one of Redcliffe's most dramatic features.

Alterations began almost as soon as Redcliffe was completed. The Hammonds quickly learned that the nine foot open space beneath the house made heating impractical. Consequently, this area was enclosed with brick, creating a ground level basement. The next major alteration was the removal of the two-tiered porches. Apparently constructed with insufficient drainage, they had begun to rot by the 1880s. In 1886 James Henry Hammond's son, Harry, had all the porches removed and replaced with a one-story 12' wide L-shaped porch that extended along the south and east sides of the house. The single stairway was placed at the eastern end of the south porch. This 1886 modification has remained to the present.



Redcliffe, from measured drawing of interior stairways.

When Catherine moved back to the Galphin place, or "Old Yard," in 1873 she carried much of the original Redcliffe furniture; at her death, her daughters received most of the family pieces. Consequently, when Harry and Emily Hammond moved into Redcliffe the furnishings were sparse. Emily, an only child, received furniture from her parents, Julia and Henry Harford Cumming of Augusta, and at their death, all the family furnishings went to her. Portraits of the Cumming family were mingled with the Hammond portraits and the art works that Harry and his father had acquired on their European tours.

The final major alteration to Redcliffe was the removal of the observatory in 1901. Badly rotted, the structure had begun to threaten the roof timbers. Harry Hammond had it replaced with the present-day widow's walk. Later that year additional repairs were undertaken. The first indoor water system was established--a windmill was constructed behind the house and a holding tank placed in the attic to collect water which was piped to the rooms below. A battery powered electrical system was installed throughout the house, and exterior and interior painting, carpentry, and new roofing were completed. In August 1901 Harry wrote to Emily who was visiting their daughter Katharine in New York:

The carpenter is gone only the painters here Calsomining. The lower hall a deep salmon, the upper hall white, the boys room white, Katherine's green the SE room pale buff. Julia's room being scraped the Calsomine having failed where the plasterer filled in the cracks. The outside remains about as you saw it. . . . The wind mill is all that could be expected in a week of very little wind, the house, the kitchen and Stable, and cow lot have been abundantly supplied and a surplus left of 2,500 gallons, and the mill shut off a good deal of the time.

Harry Hammond described the Redcliffe property in 1906 as about 330 acres of which, "I estimate that only 80 or 90 are cleared; of the 80 or 90 only about 40 is good land--that it is rolling--the balance being very ordinary to poor." The following year, nine year old John Shaw Billings drew a map of Redcliffe which depicted the Sand Bar Ferry on the Savannah, a flower garden in front of Redcliffe, the kitchen, stable, cistern, and carriage house at the rear. "Old Yard" was placed to the side of Redcliffe.

This map and other records indicate that the outbuildings also included a wine cellar, corn crib, an L-shaped stable with eleven box stables (c. 1908), four slave cabins, and a three-acre, spring-fed pond which Henry Cumming Hammond, son of Harry and Emily Hammond, kept stocked with bream.



Sharecroppers outside original slave cabin at Redcliffe, 1890 s.

During the years that Julia Hammond Richards managed Redcliffe, no major structural changes were made and maintenance was minimal. The family's dire financial situation prohibited anything other than the most imperative repairs. When Billings bought Redcliffe in 1935, the house had not been painted since 1901--the exterior had turned a dark dingy grey, almost black in places. Billings had the



Library with original sycamore bookcases and plaster busts bought by Harry Hammond during his European tour in 1855.

entire house scraped and painted a flat white and a standing seam metal roof installed. The sycamore bookcases, mantles, and doors were scraped and waxed showing their natural grain. Augusta architect F. Arthur Hazard constructed three bathrooms, the first indoor facilities at Redcliffe. Hazard also replaced the 1901 electrical wiring and converted the basement to four rooms--kitchen, dining room, bedroom, and sitting room.

The following year an outdoor electric pump was installed to supply water. Billings also had a pair of corner cupboards and a dumb waiter installed in the dining room and over a dozen light fixtures put in the house. One of the slave cabins received a new chimney, fireplaces and a copper steel roof to match Redcliffe's.

Time, nature, and man took their toll at Redcliffe. Fire destroyed "Old Yard" in 1917 and a barn in 1934. In the late 1930s, Billings filled in the wine cellar, razed the corn crib, demolished a slave house that had collapsed, and removed one wing of the stable. Redcliffe lost some land when a road to the new nuclear weapons plant was cut through the bottom edge of the estate during the 1950s. When Billings officially retired to Redcliffe he began a series of remodeling projects designed to make the house more liveable. In the basement, windows were enlarged, new rooms designed, and the wooden flooring was replaced with cement. The ground area beneath the porch was also cemented. Because of the Billings' declining health, an elevator was installed in 1960. Frederica and John brought furniture from their New York home and portraits of the Wade and Billings families joined the Redcliffe collection.

James Henry Hammond had donated land west of Redcliffe for the Beech Island Cemetery (Hammond Cemetery). In 1953 Billings gave some additional land, and the brick enclosure wall was enlarged to include this area. Among those buried here are: Elisha Hammond, Governor James Henry Hammond, Catherine Fitzsimons Hammond, James Henry (Harry) Hammond, Katharine Hammond Billings, Julia Hammond Richards, and John Shaw Billings.

Today Redcliffe remains largely unchanged from its original construction in the mid-nineteenth century. The furnishings include pieces from Catherine Fitzsimons and James Henry Hammond, Emily Cumming and Harry Hammond, and Frederica Wade and John Shaw Billings--they are as Billings left them. Notably, the five paintings of Naples purchased by James Henry Hammond hang in the main hall, the plaster busts which Harry Hammond brought from Italy remain atop the library bookshelves, and the copy of "The Transfiguration" bought by Harry still hangs in the parlor. Three nineteenth century buildings remain--the main plantation house, the present-day garage, and a slave cabin.

Three buildings--a boiler house, shop, and superintendent's residence--have been added to the 370-acre property since the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism acquired it in 1973.

Various original landscaping features have vanished with the passage of years. The Governor's orchard and vineyard, which he carefully planned and detailed in his Orchard Book and Wine and Vineyard Journal, are no longer distinguishable. Several diseased oaks, which Billings considered "older than Redcliffe," were removed in 1950. Additional trees were lost when the fringes of Hurricane Gracie swept the area on September 9, 1959. However, many of the thirty-six different trees now found at Redcliffe are unusual exotic species planted by James Henry Hammond and John Shaw Billings. These include the Japanese Evergreen Oak, Cork Oak, Japanese Parasol, Chinese Juniper, Chinese Pistachio, and Chinese Parasol tree. The deodora cedars, planted by Billings in about 1940, still line the public road to Redcliffe, and the magnificent magnolia avenue planted by Governor Hammond remains to welcome visitors to Redcliffe.



Map of Aiken County showing location of Redcliffe, adapted from 1873 Geological and Agricultural Map by Williams and Chism.

THE HAMMONDS OF REDCLIFFE*

First Generation

James Henry Hammond (1807-1864) Married (1831)

Catherine Elizabeth Fitzsimons (1814-1896).

Second Generation

James Henry (Harry) Hammond (1832-1916) married (1859)

Emily Cumming (1834-1911).

Third Generation

Katharine Hammond (1867-1925) married (1897)

John Sedgwick Billings (1869-1928).

Fourth Generation

John Shaw Billings (1898-1975) married (1924)

Frederica Washburn Wade (1901-1963)

He later married (1963)

Elise Lake Chase (1893-).

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READING

Carol Bleser, ed. *THE HAMMONDS OF REDCLIFFE*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

The story of four generations of Hammonds at Redcliffe, from the 1850's to the 1930's. Compellingly written and based primarily on the vast personal correspondence of the extended Hammond family.

Carol Bleser, ed. *SECRET AND SACRED*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

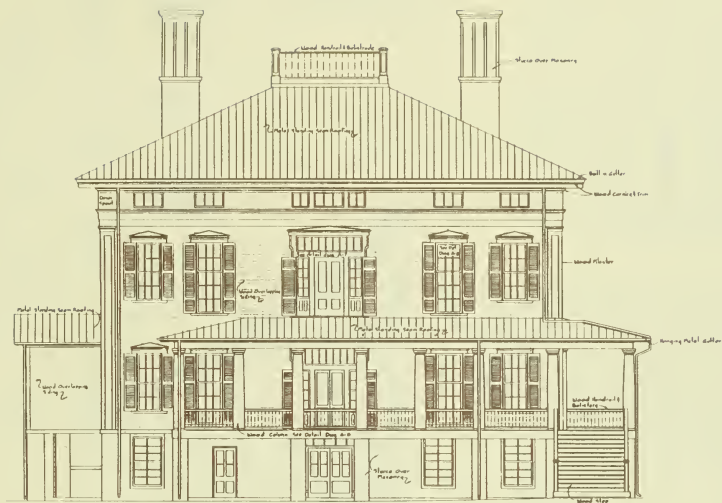
The "secret and sacred" diaries of James Henry Hammond, as edited by Carol Bleser, strikingly reveal the complexities of character that kept Hammond from the greatness to which he aspired.

Drew Gilpin Faust. *JAMES HENRY HAMMOND AND THE OLD SOUTH*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1982.

Recounts and analyzes Hammond's multi-faceted life as a scientific planter, a political leader, and an intellectual. The author uses a wide range of sources to measure Hammond's goals against his actual achievements.

The South Caroliniana Library on the campus of the University of South Carolina in Columbia has a number of manuscript collections containing personal letters, journals, diaries, and scrapbooks that reveal additional information about the Hammonds and Redcliffe. These collections include the James Henry Hammond Papers, the Hammond-Bryan-Cumming Family Papers, and the John Shaw Billings Papers.

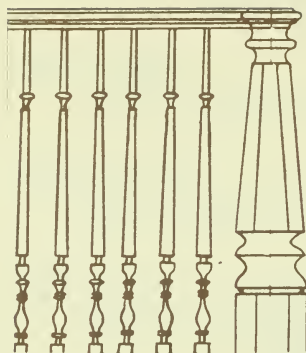
*Adapted from Carol Bleser, ed., *THE HAMMONDS OF REDCLIFFE*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981



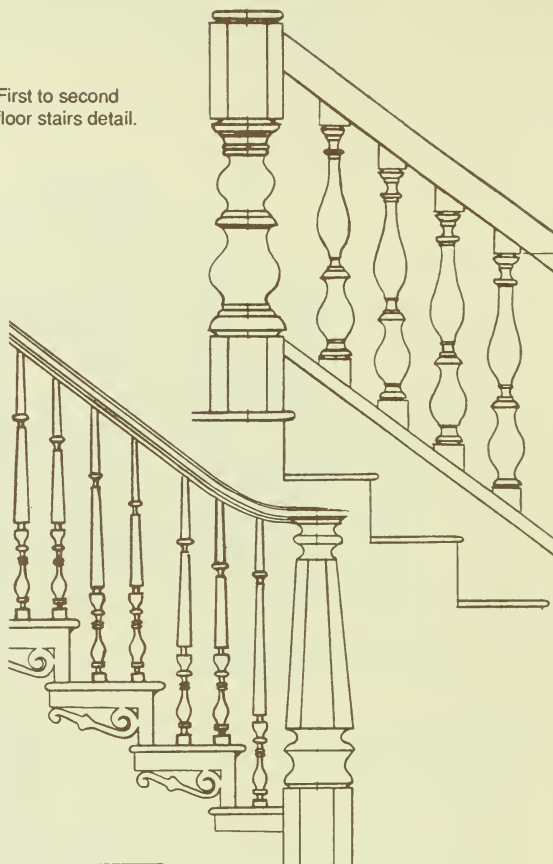
Redcliffe, South-West Elevation



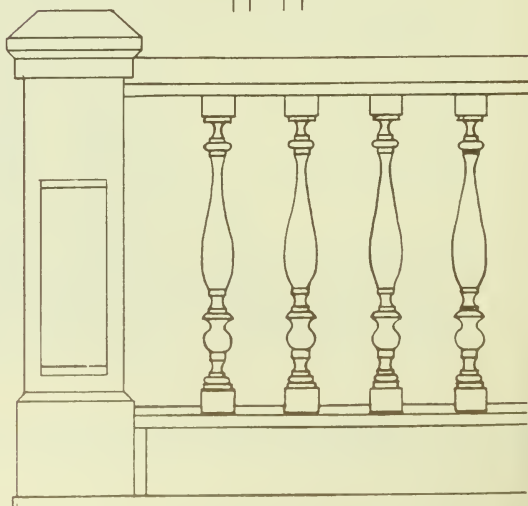
Redcliffe, South-East Elevation



First to second
floor stairs detail.



Corner Cabinet Elevation.



Widow's Walk Railing Detail

