



Coastal Bryan Heritage Trail

Written Narrative

Introduction

Welcome to the Coastal Bryan Heritage Trail. Here, you will embark on a journey where you will learn about many of the fascinating people and stories that make up the rich heritage of south Bryan County. You will imagine life in a Guale (*pronounced "Wa-lee"*) Indian Village, see the site where the founder of the Georgia colony built defenses to protect this land from possible Spanish attack, learn about an unwelcome visit from General William T. Sherman and the Union Army on their famous March to the Sea. Or picture yourself on an Antebellum Rice Plantation- either as a wealthy planter or as an African slave. Learn how our little town of Ways Station changed forever after the arrival of new neighbors, who happened to be automobile industrialist Henry Ford and his wife Clara, and how the Cross Roads became Ways Station, which became Richmond Hill. All of these events took place in an area of great natural beauty on the winding Great Ogeechee (*pronounced "Oh-Gee-Chee"*) River known to generations of planters and their descendants as Bryan Neck.

This driving tour of the Coastal Bryan Heritage Trail will take you along public roads, to the front of private homes and through historical, though still active cemeteries and churches. Please respect each of these places appropriately.

Location Key

1. Courthouse Annex
2. Ways Station
3. Henry Ford
4. J. F. Gregory
5. Rice Cultivation on the Ogeechee River
6. Community House
7. Martha-Mary Chapel
8. Commissary
9. Canaan Church
10. The Bottom
11. Kindergarten Building
12. Burnt Church Cemetery
13. George W. McAllister
14. The Clay Family
15. Bryan Neck Presbyterian Church
16. Kilkenny
17. Bryan Neck Missionary Baptist Church
18. George Washington Carver School
19. Kilpatrick on Bryan Neck
20. Fort McAllister
21. C.S.S. Nashville
Additional markers can be found at Ft. McAllister State Historic Site and Museum
(Entrance fee applies)
FREE Audio walking tour app of Ft. McAllister is available at www.richmondhillvisit.com
22. Gualo Village at Seven Mile Bend
23. Hardwicke
24. Folly Farms
25. Richard James Arnold
26. Strathy Hall
27. Ford Sawmill and Industrial Arts and Trade School
28. Ford Plantation Office
29. Hazen's Division at the Canoochee
30. Ft. Argyle

Stop 1

Our tour will begin at the Courthouse Annex located just east of the intersection of State Route 144 (Ford Avenue) and US Hwy 17. This white frame building was a fixture in the community in the late 1930s, during the Ford era. This area, known as the “crossroads”, has long been considered the heart of Richmond Hill. The legacy of the crossroads goes back to the days when Indians traded at this intersection. When Bryan County was established in 1793, initial meetings of county officials were held at Strathy Hall Plantation, but eventually they were moved to the crossroads, formally known at that time as the intersection of the Darien-Savannah Stage Road and the Bryan Neck Road.

Bryan County was created from Chatham and Effingham Counties, being named in honor of Jonathan Bryan, a planter who played an important role in the colony's quest for independence during the Revolutionary War.

In the early 1800s, the county seat was moved west to the town of Clyde, on the Canoochee River. This building you see was built as a subsidiary courthouse to the Bryan Neck area after the new county seat was moved from Clyde to Pembroke in 1938 and a new courthouse was built there. Because of the distance to Pembroke, this building served as a community meeting place and polling station for the residents in south Bryan County.

The Courthouse Annex building also served as the Richmond Hill City and County offices for many years, before a new Richmond Hill City Hall was built near J. F. Gregory Park and a new County Annex was built on State Route 144 across from Burnt Church Cemetery.

On the brick building to the right of the Courthouse Annex you will see a mural of the “Richmond Hill Iceberg Lettuce” that depicts a label used on the lettuce crates. The house on the label depicts a typical southern antebellum plantation. Iceberg lettuce was grown on Ford’s Richmond Hill plantation on 120 to 145 acres, yielding as many as 8,400 crates each season. Iceberg lettuce became very profitable and employed many people in the community.

Our next stop is the marker for “Ways Station”. Turn right out of the Courthouse Annex and in a quarter mile you will turn right into a commercial area opposite of Cedar St. By the old rail car you will find the “Ways Station” marker.

Stop 2

Stop two, Ways Station. Henry Ford inadvertently had a hand in the name change from “Ways Station” to “Richmond Hill”. It all began when Henry and Clara Ford began planning to build their winter home on Bryan Neck.

Mrs. Ford wanted a southern home with large porches and white columns. The Fords chose the site of the old Richmond rice plantation of the Clay family, which had been burned during the Civil War. It was a beautiful location with an avenue of live oak trees leading to a bluff overlooking the Ogeechee River and the antebellum rice fields. Henry and Clara Ford began making annual extended visits to Richmond Hill during the 1920s and 1930s and, in 1935, they purchased The Hermitage Plantation, an antebellum rice plantation on the Savannah River built in 1830 by Savannah Judge Henry McAlpin. It was built of Savannah gray brick made on the plantation site by slaves. The Hermitage, which had been long abandoned, was dismantled by Mr. Ford and the brick transported 20 miles by boat to the Richmond site.

The Fords planned every detail of their new winter retreat. Clara had a scale model created for the purposes of planning the placement furniture. The model is now on display in the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

“The house at Richmond had a ballroom, dining room, parlor and a large kitchen on the first floor, six upstairs bedrooms and seven baths. Mrs. Ford kept over \$150,000 worth of silver, crystal and china in the pantry. The mansion’s appointments included air conditioning, an elevator, lavish furnishing and ornate chandeliers, one of which reportedly cost \$65,000.” George A. Rogers and R. Frank Saunders in an article written for the Atlanta Journal in 1980 “Henry Ford at Richmond Hill: A Venture in Private Enterprise and Philanthropy”

Henry Ford is reported to have called his new winter home “Richmond Hill” referring to the high bluff overlooking the Ogeechee River. “Anything not a swamp around here is named a hill,” Ford is once said to have commented. Richmond became regarded as one of the finest coastal Georgia residences.

In 1941, a group of local citizens wanted to change the name of the town to Ford Town or Fordville or the like, to which Mr. Ford objected. He did not care for his own name to be used to rename the town. The name Richmond Hill was suggested, in an effort to honor Ford’s many contributions to the people of Ways Station. The US Post Office required a public petition in order to change the town’s name. Over 700 persons on Bryan Neck came forward to sign the petition. The name Ways Station was formally changed to Richmond Hill on May 1, 1941 and in 1962 the town became incorporated by the Georgia Legislature.

Our next stop is “Henry Ford at Richmond Hill”. Turn right back onto Ford Ave and make an immediate left hand turn onto Richard R. Davis Drive and the City of Richmond Hill City Hall complex. At the first building on your right, “City Hall”, you will find our third stop.

Stop 3

Stop 3, Henry Ford at Richmond Hill. Imagine the surprise and curiosity of the local residents when billionaire Henry Ford became the newest resident of the small town of Ways Station, Georgia.

Ford was one of the 19th and 20th century's most influential American innovators. Ford and his colleagues, inventor Thomas Edison and tire maker Harvey Firestone were concerned about a shortage of rubber, should the country go to war. Ford and Firestone presented a challenge to Thomas Edison to discover a domestic supply or a substitute for this vital resource for the manufacture of automobile tires. With rubber prices on the rise, Ford and Firestone offered to finance the project. Ford decided to purchase a large piece of property on which he could experiment with rubber producing plants. He was also interested in finding an area with a more moderate climate for a new winter home than that of south Florida. Henry Ford first considered coastal Georgia in 1917, while on a yachting cruise with his friend, famous author and naturalist, John Burroughs. Burroughs showed Ford the beauty of the Ogeechee River and pointed out climate and soil conditions were right for the new experimental plants. The final decision was made when Clara Ford fell in love with the landscape of the area, particularly the salt marshes, live oak trees and the beauty of the river. In December 1924, Ford sent his private secretary, Frank Campsall to begin looking at property from Charleston to Brunswick. Mr. and Mrs. Ford soon joined him to view property for sale in Bryan County. They decided to purchase plantations and land on the Ogeechee River east of Highway 17. Newspaper articles reported that Ford paid approximately \$20 per acre for the early purchases.

Ways Station, Georgia proved to be an ideal place for Henry Ford and his new proposal. However rubber tree farming proved to be unsuccessful, but nonetheless other crops grew well and Ford began to purchase land along the banks of the Ogeechee River and throughout southern Bryan County. Considering the depressed times, many people were willing to sell their property. Two families decided not to sell their land to Ford. Ford was willing to pay a fair price and therefore acquired about 85,000 over a ten-year period. In addition to 530 smaller parcels, Ford's acquisitions included the abandoned Fort McAllister Civil War site and several plantation properties which he would later restore. He also purchased Saint Catherine's island. In doing so, he began a large agricultural project that resurrected what once was one of the more impoverished areas of coastal Georgia into one of the most thriving. Devastated after Sherman's March to the Sea in 1864 and three major hurricanes, the desperate years of 1865-1925 found nearly 80 percent of county residents living at the poverty level, with malaria and moonshine dominating people's lives and livelihoods.

With the arrival of Henry Ford, employment opportunities for locals rose considerably. Ford's farming operation on Bryan Neck eventually exceeded 3,000 acres, and extensive crops of vegetables were cultivated on the reclaimed rice fields along the Ogeechee. Ford began

employing people to build schools, churches, shopping facilities, the court house, a saw mill, and houses for employees.

A research laboratory was built in 1936, from which much of the knowledge and expertise for the successful operation of Ford's Plantation. Soil testing and analysis was conducted at the lab in addition to the experimentation of the conversion of farm products into materials that could be utilized in the automotive industry. Examples of this included rayon for tire cord made from local sweet gum and black gum trees, plastics made from corn cobs, and sawdust converted to use in the manufacture of engine parts. At one time, socks were made of rayon from sweet gum trees. Henry Ford liked to wear these types of socks to exemplify the experimental work being done at Richmond Hill.

Healthcare was clearly one of Henry Ford's most far-reaching contributions to the people of Bryan County. They were treated free of charge and received free medicine as well from 1931-1951. From the memoirs of Ford Plantation office manager, R. P. Thompson: "The area around much of Richmond Hill was low and poorly drained, thus providing ideal conditions for the breeding of the anopheles mosquito. This was a primary cause of the constant health problems associated with malaria in the area. A clinic was established to treat the unusually high incidence in Bryan County of not only malaria, but such diseases as hookworm, typhoid fever, syphilis and diphtheria. The Department of Health reported a severe outbreak of malaria in 1936. The Ways Station Health Clinic reported that up to 75 percent of the population in the area was infected with the estivo-autumnal, or "black-water" malaria. Treatment of the expensive Atabrine tablets along with Ford's efforts to drain the low-lying swamplands on Bryan Neck, led to the eventual eradication of malaria in the area. Many non-employees were also treated for free if they could not afford to pay."

Henry Ford and his wife, Clara, used Richmond Hill as their winter retreat from the mid-twenties until right after World War Two and formed a bond with the residents. The Fords' influence on the town can still be seen and felt today in the 21st Century.

To the right of City Hall, along Ford Avenue, you may notice the white fencing. During the Ford era, this type of fence was installed all over town and would often stretch for miles, along Bryan Neck Road (Ford Avenue) and US Highway 17. Typically, the state flower, the Cherokee Rose was planted along the fence. Much of the fencing has been removed over the years, but it can still be seen around many of the landmarks you will see on this tour.

Directly across the street is the marker for J.F. Gregory and Stop Number Four.

Stop 4

Stop four, J. F. Gregory. The Gregory House was constructed in 1930 for Jack Gregory, the superintendent of Ford Plantation. The home was one of the few at the time built with a basement. Gregory was an area resident and former associate of Ford's Savannah real estate agent, R. L. Cooper, when he was hired to oversee all the activities of the Ford plantation, first known as Ford Farms, later as Richmond Hill Plantation. Gregory was responsible for implementing the original plantation activities, including lumbering, farming, housing, medical care, education, and even oystering. Gregory played a key role in virtually every phase of plantation and community development.

Surprisingly, iceberg lettuce became one of the main crops grown on Ford's plantation. Richmond Hill lettuce came to be recognized as a very high-quality product. The excellence of the iceberg lettuce grown at Ford Farms was attributable to the rich soils, which were exposed to the brackish, slightly salty waters of the Ogeechee River. Richmond Hill lettuce was labeled and shipped to the produce market in Savannah for distribution along the US East Coast. Leslie Long, an employee of Ford Plantation, noted that he once assisted in the loading of 17 tons of lettuce on one tractor-trailer truck for shipment.

Henry and Clara Ford generally spent a few months at Richmond Hill on their annual visit to their Georgia properties, usually in the spring. While they were away, Ford stayed up to date on his Richmond Hill operations through his personal secretary, Frank Campsall, who was in regular contact with Jack Gregory.

Mr. Gregory's home is now the offices of Richmond Hill Planning and Zoning. The Gregory family also donated land to the City for a community park; which is now situated on 335 acres and is ideal for picnics, sports, activities, canoeing, birding, fishing, hiking, strolling and meetings. Attractions include a lake, walking trail, birding tower, and two restored Henry Ford era homes.

Continue to the rear of the City Hall Complex to J. F. Gregory Park. At the roundabout go left and at the Cedar St stop sign go right into the park. Follow Cedar St to the next stop sign and turn left. Go right before the Conference Center and park at the trailhead at the woods. You will find our next marker approximately 50 yards down the trail.

Stop 5

Stop five, Rice Cultivation on the Ogeechee River. Some of the most important rice growing lands in this area were along the Ogeechee River and the areas of Chatham County and lower Bryan County throughout the Antebellum period prior to the Civil War. The rice growing technique of “the tide flow method” adopted from West African slaves who were brought into the South Carolina and Georgia Colonies during the 1700’s proved to be very productive. This type of cultivation uses the natural tidal flow of the coastal rivers to irrigate the fields with fresh water and enabled plantations along these rivers to become very profitable. The canals you see here are examples of the hand dug channels that were used to irrigate these massive rice plantations. South Carolina and Georgia led the world in rice production throughout the antebellum period, producing over 95% of all the rice grown in the United States. In turn, the “Rice Planting Aristocracy” made this one of the wealthiest areas in coastal Georgia which was known at the time as “the Rice Kingdom”. This agricultural legacy continued after the war, with large amounts of rice being cultivated in the area until a string of devastating hurricanes in the 1880’s and 1890’s spelled an end to the rice growing culture. By 1900, rice growing had ceased in Coastal Georgia and the majority of rice cultivation in the United States was taking place in Louisiana and East Texas where rice continues to be grown.

To reach our next stops The Community House and Martha-Mary Chapel return to Cedar St and continue back to Ford Avenue. Turn left and in one quarter of mile you will find Stops 6 and 7 on your right.

The Community House is now Carter’s Funeral home and Martha-Mary Chapel is home to St. Anne’s Catholic Church. The chapel attached to the Community House was not part of the original structure, but added later as part of the funeral home.

Stop 6

Stop Six, The Community House. The Community House was built by the Fords to enhance the educational, social, and cultural development of the people of the community; particularly young people. Home economics, cooking, sewing and all the social graces and courtesies were taught at the Community House at no cost to students or parents. Ms. Amber Lee came to Richmond Hill in 1943 to serve as hostess and director of the Community House. Young ladies would stay at the Community House for a week at a time. The young ladies would arrive and plan their menus for the week and then walk over to the nearby Commissary to purchase groceries and supplies for the week. The kitchen was equipped with the latest innovations in appliances, including ovens, stoves, and refrigerators. Although most girls already knew how to cook, here, they learned proper social etiquette, how to prepare well-balanced meals, correctly set the table, serve guests and make beds. Silver and china were provided by Mrs. Ford so the girls would have hands-on training.

Henry Ford provided an orchestra to play for young people and adults taking dancing instruction at the Community House. The orchestra members often came down from Michigan with the Fords. Dancing instruction was one of the most popular of the many social activities occurring at the Community House. Ford hired Ebba Oelsen Thompson, wife of plantation office manager Robbie Thomson and a dance teacher from Savannah to teach dancing, including square dancing and ballet in the Community House ballroom. Occasionally, the Fords invited students and teachers to their home, Richmond, to dance on the lawn. Often, Mr. and Mrs. Ford appeared at the Community House to enjoy the activities of the students, the rocking chairs on the veranda and the southern charm.

In 1951, former Ford employee E. D. Mitchum talked about the Fords' influence in the community: "The people of Richmond Hill appreciated what was done for them by Ford... I could take you from one house to another in Richmond Hill right now, just ride by the houses and show you the different ones. If you could have seen them back in 1931, 1932 and look at the same family now, you wouldn't believe it was them. Their homes are well kept and their kids are well-educated through high school. I don't think I've ever seen a community in which the kids are so well mannered.... And the dancing is one of the most wonderful things you've ever seen in your life!...Mr. Ford would dance with the kids, and he'd get around there and have a big time of it. I'm telling you it really made little gentlemen and little ladies out of the whole bunch of them..." These and other reminiscences are in the Oral History section of the Ford Archives in Dearborn, Michigan.

The chapel attached to the right of the Community House was not part of the original structure. It was added many years later to service the funeral home.

St. Anne's Catholic Church to your right is Stop 7.

Stop 7

Stop Seven, the Martha-Mary Chapel. All students of the Richmond Hill Consolidated School, located behind the chapel, were required to be at daily services. Each school morning, there was a 30-minute devotional conducted at the chapel before classes started. The Community House is located to the right, adjacent to the chapel. Thus, the school, chapel, and Community House were located in close proximity for the convenience of the students. The school devotionals were conducted by the students under the supervision of the teachers. Each grade took turns for a week at a time. The students were seated in the chapel by grade. The teachers usually sat in the balcony. Mr. Ford provided an organist and the school music teacher taught choruses, which performed occasionally. The Fords attended the chapel devotional quite often when they were in town sitting in the balcony on the right side.

The chapel was also enjoyed by the members of the community who looked forward to attending services on Sundays. The service was non-denominational. There was no regular pastor, so residents would take turns leading the services- a different person each Sunday. Early in the Ford era, Canaan Baptist Church was the only denominational church in what is now the city limits of Richmond Hill.

The chapel was a pre-fabricated structure from the Ford's plant in Wayside Inn, Massachusetts. All of the other local structures, however, were built from lumber and materials prepared in Richmond Hill. The Martha-Mary Chapel was one of six similar chapels built by Ford- there were four in Michigan and one in Massachusetts. Dr. Leslie Long, former Ford employee described the chapel in his book, "Henry Ford at Richmond Hill": "Including the balcony, it can seat about 250 people. The pews, chairs and table were made in the plantation cabinet shop. The floors are highly varnished hardwood. The pews are made of very wide boards and have a blue padding on the seats. They are painted white, except for some trim which is stained wood. The original beautiful crystal chandelier still hangs from the ceiling. The community very much appreciated the opportunity given to them by Mr. and Mrs. Ford to hold their Sunday service in such a fine chapel." During the 1940s and 1950s, many couples held their wedding at the chapel and the reception next door at the Community House. The chapel is still used for special services and weddings.

Turn right onto Ford Avenue after leaving Martha-Mary Chapel. In .2 miles on the right is Stop 8, The Commissary. This building is the current home of Coastal Community Church.

Stop 8

Stop Eight, the Commissary. The Commissary served as a general store and was an important shopping facility for both the Ford Plantation employees and the Richmond Hill Community at large. Resident and Ford employee Leslie Long recalled, "The Commissary sold a variety of groceries and general merchandise, including dry goods, fresh produce grown on Ford's plantation, Richmond Hill, and choice cuts of meats. They always employed an excellent butcher who knew his meat and how to cut it. In those days, most of the beef and pork was delivered to the store in side halves. The butcher made smaller cuts for the customers. During oyster season, they carried fresh oysters from the oyster house at Kilkenny (pronounced Kill-Cainey). The foundation ruins of the ice plant are still in place behind the building. The Camp Stewart demand for ice was so heavy in the summer months that it threatened the plantation's needs, so Ford built his own manufacturing depot."

The Bakery next door was built in 1939 by Henry Ford. Ford had crossed paths with Ira Womble, a master baker in Savannah, and invited him to run the bakery and experiment with soy-derived bakery products. Mr. Womble moved his family to The Bottom neighborhood and worked at the Commissary for a short time while the bakery was being constructed. It took Ford's carpenters only three weeks to construct the three-room bakery. Its location beside the Commissary and across from the saw mill made it the center of the plantation's business district. The tables and furnishings were constructed at the Trade School and Mr. Womble brought his equipment from his Savannah. At first, it was simply called "the bakery" but in later years it was known as the Sweet Shop. Mr. Womble baked a wide variety such as bread, rolls, cakes, pies, cookies, doughnuts, and also made and sold ice cream. His fruitcake was well liked by Mrs. Ford and a supply was sent to Dearborn for Thanksgiving and Christmas each year. The bakery quickly became a popular afternoon gathering place for both residents of Richmond Hill and Henry Ford alike. One day, Ford noticed that Mr. Womble mixing cake batter in very small batches because he only had one small mixer. A few days later, an oversized, industrial mixer arrived at the bakery. The stand of the mixer is approximately 6 feet tall and is on display at the Richmond Hill Museum, along with a handwritten thank you note from Clara Ford to Mr. Womble praising his delicious cakes. Mr. Womble would always send Ford a birthday cake to his home in Michigan since he would be there during the summer months. After Ford's death in 1947, Womble started the Georgia Fruit Cake Company in Claxton, Georgia, now known as the Fruit Cake capital of the world.

Turn right back onto Ford Avenue for our next stop "Canaan Church". This stop is about 100 yards on your right.

Stop 9

Stop Nine, Canaan Church. Canaan Church was originally a part of the Bryan Neck Missionary Baptist Church in Keller. In 1913, David Boles, Sr., Fred Gilbert and Deacon A. Underwood led a group of people to withdraw from the Brian Neck church and form a church in the slave quarters at Cherry Hill Plantation. Members also used a prayer house located on the corner of Brisbon Road and Harris Trail Road. Although it is in poor condition, the small building still stands.

In 1947, this land was purchased from the railroad for the purpose of building a church in “The Bottom” neighborhood. The old church was then moved from Cherry Hill to the present site. The original church was situated under the large live oak trees to the right of the church, much closer to the railroad tracks. It was torn down after the current church building was built by the members themselves. The original bell from the prayer house adorns the steeple of the current church building. The ringing of the bell at the prayer house was the sole means of spreading news to the community. The custodian of the Church would ring the bell a certain number of times to notify the people of a death in the community or for other news.

Across Ford Avenue from Canaan Church and near the railroad, is the site of the Ways Number 1 ½ train depot for which the town Ways Station was named. When Henry and Clara Ford were in town, before their home was built, they would stay in their private train car “Fair Lane”. The original depot is no longer standing.

Leaving Canaan Church, turn right onto Ford Ave and then right onto Mimosa St. You will see the next marker “The Bottom” on your right.

Stop 10

Stop Ten, “The Bottom”. The homes in The Bottom neighborhood were built for Henry Ford’s employees in Richmond Hill. This neighborhood was named Richmond Hill Village but was commonly referred to as “The Bottom” and was one of Richmond Hill’s two original subdivisions. The other subdivision was Blueberry, located near what is now Interstate 95.

From the memoirs of Dr. Leslie Long, a Ford employee and resident of the Bottom: “These houses were welcomed and appreciated by the employees and were occupied as soon as they were completed. Many of the employees who lived outside Richmond Hill were glad to have housing closer to their work which reduced their travel cost. Some of the houses had two bedrooms but most had three. Each house was painted white- no exceptions- and usually had black trim. All of the houses had hardwood floors which were kept varnished and refinished as needed. Each home had a building in back for an automobile, a laundry room, and a place to store firewood. The firewood usually came from the Ford saw mill and was delivered to the house for five dollars per truck load. Since this land was previously a wetland, or a “bottom”, each driveway had a culvert which enabled proper drainage. Each home was occupied with a garden plot, because plantation employees were encouraged to grow their own vegetables.”

While, larger homes were built for supervisors, managers, teachers and principals, one home, The Martin House, was built specifically for an employee who had a daughter with Polio. Henry Ford sent the child to the Ford Hospital in Dearborn, Michigan for a year of free treatment. When she returned to Richmond Hill, he built her family a home within a block of the school. Ford also gave her a wheelchair and built a special storage area in the home for it. Ms. Martin’s wheelchair is on display at the Richmond Hill Museum.

*To continue to our next stop “The Kindergarten Building” and the Richmond Hill Historical Society and Museum, continue to the next left onto Linwood Drive. Note the original ball field and recreation building to your right. Turn left at the stop sign on Magnolia Street. Here, you can see more of the homes built for Ford employees. Turn right onto Ford Ave and travel one quarter of a mile. The Museum and Stop 11 is on your right at the intersection of Timber Trail and Ford Ave. Across Ford Avenue from The Bottom neighborhood begins the current Ford Plantation property. It stretches nearly two miles east. **The Ford Plantation is now a gated community and is not open to the public.***

Stop 11

Stop Eleven, The Kindergarten Building. Henry and Clara Ford were proponents of early childhood education; thus, they provided funds for the construction and staffing of this kindergarten building and another just South of here in Keller. This building was constructed in 1940-41. The 3500 square foot building was an attractive home-like bungalow two large classrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. In the bathroom, in addition to the regular commode and lavatory, was a small size especially made for the small children.

The furnishings for the kindergarten such as the tables and chairs were made in the Ford cabinet shop. You can still see the wooden lockers which line the wall and were used to store the children's belongings. Local children ranging in age from three to six years attended the school. The kindergarten director was Margaret Mustin, who was recommended by the Kate Baldwin Free Kindergarten, which was considered to be the leading kindergarten in the county at that time. It was evident that the Fords were interested in getting the best qualified director possible for the kindergarten at Richmond Hill. The kindergarten building was equipped with the latest technology and tools for learning. Mustin would pick up children in the morning and take them home in the afternoon (in a Ford station wagon, of course). She commented about often being nervous about getting stuck on the then unpaved Bryan Neck Road (now highway 144) which went through low lying areas and wetlands. Many former students expressed their appreciation and had fond memories of their days at the Ford Kindergarten.

Also on the grounds of the Kindergarten Building is Carpenter's Barber Shop. When Henry Ford came to Richmond Hill, Baily Carpenter was a 29 year old barber. His shop was a very small wooden building and was located in Richmond Hill at the crossroads. It was the only barber shop in Richmond Hill. One day, Mr. Ford walked into the shop for a haircut and a shave. In the late 1930s, the going rate was 35 cents. After the cut and shave, Mr. Ford handed Mr. Carpenter an envelope. When he opened it later that evening, he found that Mr. Ford had given him ten dollars. That was the same amount that Carpenter was paying per month for rent!

Soon after, Mr. Ford offered to move Carpenter's shop to a location that was more convenient, not only to the barber but to Mr. Ford.

One day the plantation superintendent, Mr. Jack Gregory, went to Carpenter's barber shop and asked him to go to Savannah to approve a barber chair Mr. Ford had picked out for him. The Emil J. Paider barber chair was \$160. Mr. Ford purchased the chair, a mirror, a cabinet, and two razors for the shop. Carpenter used those razors for more than seventy years. When Mr. Ford was in Richmond Hill for the winter, he visited the shop every other week. He continued the free rent and paid Carpenter three dollars for each haircut.

After Ford passed away in 1947, the building was sold to International Paper Company. The Paper Company required Mr. Carpenter purchase the building. He began paying \$48 per month until it was paid for. He then moved the little wooden building to the backyard of his home in the Bottom. Mr. Carpenter passed away in 2009, just shy of his 90th birthday. His family donated the barbershop to the Richmond Hill Historical Society and it was moved to the museum grounds.

The Kindergarten building is now home to the Richmond Hill Historical Society and Museum. The Museum is a resource for books, maps, items of interest, personal stories, and historical information indigenous to our coastal region and highlighting the people who came before us. Children and adults alike can come to the Museum and touch a bit of the past. Admission is free.

Notice the original white Ford Fence with the Cherokee Roses.

To continue to the next stop on our tour please turn right onto Ford Ave and travel 4.5 miles to Burnt Church Cemetery on your right. Notice that Ford Avenue changes to Bryan Neck Road after leaving the City limits of Richmond Hill. This road is also State Route 144.

Feel free to explore this historic cemetery, there is a kiosk located in the cemetery to guide you.

Stop 12

Stop Twelve, Burnt Church Cemetery. Please keep in mind that this is still an active cemetery and that respect should be paid to those that are buried here and of burial ceremonies that may be taking place during your visit.

This historic burial ground gets its name, "Burnt Church Cemetery", from the unfortunate accidental destruction of the church that once stood on these grounds in 1882.

The burial ground served the original Bryan Neck Presbyterian congregation as well as other members of the local planting community along the Ogeechee River and in south Bryan County.

The cemetery continues to be used as a local burying ground, but the historic legacy here is such that this one of the oldest cemeteries in Bryan County and is a testimony to the Plantation Aristocracy that made antebellum Bryan County one of the wealthiest counties in the region in the early to mid 1800's.

The cemetery is owned and maintained by Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church.

Stop 13 and 14 are located within the cemetery in the center back.

Stop 13

Stop Thirteen, George W. McAllister. Within the aged brick walls at the back center of the Burial Grounds you will find the graves of two of Bryan Neck's most prominent antebellum citizens. The grave and marker on the right are that of George Washington McAllister. George W. McAllister was born in 1781 in Lancaster County, now Dauphon County, Pennsylvania. He was the eldest son of Archibald McAllister and the grandson of Colonel Richard McAllister. He was reared near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania before migrating to Savannah, Georgia, at the age of nineteen. He became a prominent Savannah businessman who purchased sections of the Ogeechee River rice tracts known as Strathy Hall in 1817. McAllister quickly became one of the most prominent citizens of Bryan County, a founding member of the Bryan Neck Presbyterian Church and one of the true leaders of the so called "Rice Aristocracy". It was McAllister who built the house that still stands on the site of Strathy Hall. McAllister came to own additional properties on the Ogeechee River, including Genesis Point. The McAllister family grew rice on the Ogeechee River up until the start of the Civil War.

McAllister was married four times and fathered children by the first three wives. He died in a riding accident, being thrown from a horse in 1850 at the age of 69.

Stop 14

Stop fourteen, The Clay Family of Bryan Neck. The graves and marker to the left are of The Clay Family. The Clay Family was one of the first families to arrive in Georgia with James Oglethorpe in 1733. The Clays continued to thrive in Georgia and were strong supporters of Independence from England. The Clays were leaders in the area following the Revolutionary War, not only politically but in the rice cultivation as well.

In 1789, Joseph Clay, Jr. of Savannah married Mary Ann Savage of Silk Hope plantation. This was one of a series of marriages that would eventually link by blood or marriage almost all of the prominent families of Bryan Neck – Savages, Clays, Butlers, Maxwells, McAllisters and Arnolds.

On May 17, 1836, Thomas Savage Clay married Matilda Willis McAllister, daughter of George W. McAllister of neighboring Strathy Hall plantation. The Clay family settled into a typical tidewater plantation lifestyle.

According to 1860 census records, the Clay family owned 230 slaves at their Bryan Neck plantations, including Tranquilla, Richmond and Tivoli, Piercefield, Frugality Hall and Ricedale. The Clays eventually came to own some 7,700 acres of land. Surviving plantation accounts indicate that Richmond, with its large-scale rice operations, was by far the most profitable of clay's various agricultural activities in Bryan County. Tranquilla and Tivoli were planted primarily in Sea Island Cotton, while Piercefield, Tranquilla, Point and Ricedale were used for the cultivation of provision crops (corn, peas and sweet potatoes) to sustain the work force and plantation livestock.

Thomas Savage Clay died in 1849 at the age of 48 after a brief illness. Clay's widow, Matilda Clay, was disabled, thus much of the plantation management was performed by Clay's younger sister, Eliza Caroline Clay, who lived with the family at Richmond. Matilda McAllister Clay never recovered from the shock of losing her husband at a relatively early age in 1849, then seeing her father, George Washington McAllister, die in a riding accident, being thrown from a horse, less than six months later, in March 1850.

In 1864, the family evacuated their Richmond Plantation and went to southwest, Georgia, due to the impending Union approach during the Civil War. Thomas Carlin Clay, son of Thomas Savage Clay and Matilda Clay, stayed in Bryan County because he was in the signal corp for the confederacy and was on a mission to establish light systems along the Ogeechee River from Fort McAllister to the Atlantic Gulf Railroad. He stopped by Richmond plantation, knowing this may be the last time he would see his childhood home. Upon leaving, he stopped to look at two portraits of his parents which hung on the wall. Since he was on horseback, he had no way to take these treasured portraits with him. Starting out again, the portraits seemed to say to

him “You are not going to leave us here to be destroyed are you?” He took a knife from his pocket and cut the portraits from their frames, rolled them up, placed them under his arm and left. These portraits were all that he was able to carry with him. The Clay house was destroyed by Union forces invading Bryan Neck in December 1864 but the plantation remained in Clay family ownership until the tract was purchased in 1920 by Henry Davis Weed of Savannah who, in turn, conveyed it to Henry Ford in 1925. The portraits were restored and remain in the Clay family.

Matilda McAllister Clay lived until September 1869 when she died in Athens, Georgia, and was buried beside her husband here.

Eliza Caroline Clay “devoted herself with energy and enthusiasm” to the development and education of her nieces and nephews. She never married, living with her niece, Emma Clay, who also never married, at their small Bryan County house, Three Gables, built after the Civil War. Eliza Clay died in October 1895.

Henry Ford once owned the cemetery and restored it, adding the white “Ford Fence”.

Our next stop is the Bryan Neck Presbyterian Church. Continue east on State Route 144/Bryan Neck Rd for 2.4 miles to Belfast Keller Road. Turn right onto Belfast Keller Road and the Church will be a half of a mile on your left.

Stop 15

Stop fifteen, Bryan Neck Presbyterian Church. In 1830, the original Bryan Neck Presbyterian Church was built on the Bryan Neck Road near the Burnt Church Cemetery. Leading planters, John J. Maxwell, Thomas Savage Clay, Richard James Arnold, Edward Footman and George W. McAllister were named as trustees. The church was the first in Bryan County to serve the local congregation and it soon became the center of local activity during the antebellum era. The church not only served as a place of worship for the planters and their families, but also for their slaves. The slaves were allowed to worship with the planter families, although they were segregated by the seating arrangement. The social order of the plantation and the constantly reinforced concept of slave-to-master subservience was an important element in the Christian training of the slaves and the church was the primary vehicle for its implementation. The oft-repeated theme preached to the slaves was that absolute obedience to the master by the slave was tantamount to obedience by the Christian to God as all men are God's servants"

In 1882, the original church building was destroyed by fire and was not rebuilt on that site, which was located at what is now called Burnt Church Cemetery. A new church building was built in 1885 here, near the small community of Keller. The move from the previous location being made to better accommodate the residents of Bryan Neck concentrated in that area. This church building served the community for almost 100 years until a newer and larger building was built closer to downtown Richmond Hill in the early 1990's.

This building, owned by Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, is one of Bryan County's most historic public buildings is now on the National Register of Historic Places and hosts events from time to time during the year.

Please turn around and head back to State Route 144/Bryan Neck Rd. Turn right onto State Route 144/Bryan Neck Rd. Turn left approximately 2.6 miles onto Kilkenny (pronounced Kill-Cainey) Road. Follow this road to the end in about two and three quarters of a mile. You will be facing the rear of the Kilkenny house, turn right to go around the house for a view of this magnificent example of an Antebellum Coastal Home.

Stop 16

Stop sixteen, Kilkenny (please pronounce “Kill-Cainey”), this house is privately owned and is not opened to the public.

Kilkenny located on the lower end of Bryan Neck, had been the pre-Revolutionary property of Thomas Young (1733-1808) who demonstrated a high degree of agricultural efficiency in the use of the 662 acres of land which he settled there about 1758. On January 21, 1836, the executors of Thomas Young’s estate sold Kilkenny to Charles Rogers of Savannah and Sapelo Island.

Kilkenny was ideally suited for the cultivation of Sea Island cotton. Fronting the Kilkenny River, overlooking the tidal salt marshes toward St. Catherines and Ossabaw islands, with convenient water access to St. Catherines Sound, Kilkenny was Bryan County’s most productive cotton plantation during the antebellum period.

Several years after acquiring the plantation, Charles Rogers built the present wooden frame house which still overlooks the marshes of Kilkenny River toward Ossabaw. The residence was likely constructed about 1844-45 as a summer house for Rogers and his wife Anne West Munro Rogers.

There has been documentation of several cannon balls passing through the Kilkenny house and a nearby barn during the Civil War, apparently fired from a Union gunboat shelling the property from the Bear River, which forms part of the inland waterway between Ossabaw Island and the lower end of Bryan Neck.

After the Civil War in 1874, Kilkenny plantation was purchased by James M. Butler, after which it was acquired by James H. Furber in January 1890. It was during this period that the Kilkenny Club was formed, being composed of several members who would bring groups of up to forty persons to the tract for several weeks at a time. In 1889, the first deep-ground artisan well in Bryan County was drilled by hand at Kilkenny.

Over the next several years, the property changed ownership many times. Former Tennessee governor John Cox conveyed the property to Henry Ford in June 1930.

Former Ford employee, Dr. Leslie Long recalled “Although Kilkenny house was rundown when Mr. Ford bought it, it had been remodeled several times and bore little resemblance to the original house that Mr. Rogers had built. Mr. Ford had it restored to its original grandeur. The house faces the Kilkenny River and is located about 150 feet from it. At that time, all homes along the coast faced the rivers since there were few roads and the rivers were the primary means of transportation both for personal travel and obtaining supplies. When Mr. Ford started restoring the house, the carpenters found where a cannon ball had severed one of the

uprights in the front wall. It was shown to Mr. Ford and he would not let them replace it. He said to frame it and put a small door there so people could open the door and see what had happened. It was fixed that way and is still there today.

Note some of the features of the house. The cupola on top of the house was used by family members to look out over the river toward the ocean to observe family members or friends who might be out there. In case trouble was visible, they could send help. Also note the small windows at the base of the top roof used for ventilation. The summers were hot and the ventilation also provided some ocean breezes. The two windows downstairs on each side of the front door could be fully opened and provided a cooling breeze for downstairs. The small building was the kitchen. During that time, kitchens were not part of the main house due to the fire hazard. The kitchen has a very large fireplace and a Dutch oven. The foods were cooked in iron pots which hung on an iron rod over the fire and the Dutch oven was to the side of the fireplace. The building has two rooms and a small attic room. On the other side was apparently where the servants ate. The attic room was probably used for sleeping by the cooks.

Mr. Ford also restored some of the slave cabins. They are no longer standing today.

You may see shrimp boats docked on Kilkenny Creek. Some are pieces of modern history in their own right. Locals enjoy fresh caught Wild Georgia Shrimp and seafood brought in on these boats.

For our next stop, please return to State Route 144/Bryan Neck Rd. Turn right and travel 4.5 miles to Bryan Neck Missionary Church on your right.

Stop 17

Stop seventeen, Bryan Neck Missionary Baptist Church. During the Henry Ford era, the church was renovated to look very much like the Martha-Mary Chapel and was used by the adjacent George Washington Carver School as a chapel and by the community as a church. Historic photos show the church with wood siding, painted white. Red brick was added to the façade of the church in the 1960s.

After the Civil War, emancipated African Americans on Bryan Neck began to purchase their own land from plantation owners. Amos Morel, the head slave for Richard J. Arnold, became the most prominent freedman of the section as well as the largest landowner. Blacks worked for wages at the revived Ogeechee River plantations, and the area prospered until hurricanes in the 1890s wiped out the rice industry in tidewater Georgia. Later many blacks found employment in the local lumber industry. In about 1904 the Hilton-Dodge Lumber Company of Darien opened a large sawmill and timber-exporting center at Belfast, near here. This activity continued until 1916.

To the left of the Bryan Neck Missionary Baptist Church you will find Stop 19 on our tour, "The George Washington Carver School".

Stop 18

Stop Eighteen, George Washington Carver School. Formal education, separate for blacks and whites at that time, was rudimentary and somewhat haphazard in the early 20th century. There were small schools for whites at Clyde and Ways Station and one-room schools for blacks at Cherry Hill, Oak Level, and Daniel Siding. With the arrival of Henry Ford in 1925, the local education picture began to brighten. Ford implemented repairs and upgrades to the one-room school buildings but despite his efforts, educational facilities for local African-Americans were small and crowded.

In 1939, Ford underwrote the construction of a new school, housing for the teachers, a lunchroom and an industrial arts shop which provided classes in such trade skills as metalworking and woodworking. It was named for his friend and colleague, George Washington Carver. Dr. Carver himself came here to speak for the dedication, along with Mr. Ford.

Boys received 90 minutes of shop training three days each week. Tests were conducted to determine the educational level of the students, the results of which established the sixth grade as the highest grade level when the school opened in 1939. As students advanced, a higher grade was added each year until there were 11 grades, which conformed with the rest of the Georgia state school system at that time. The new school provided modern conveniences the old schools had lacked, such as electric lighting, individual desks for students and new text books. Ford provided a modern school bus to transport students to and from school each day. The school also served hot lunches at no cost to the students.

Because the teachers' salaries were supplemented and they were provided housing, Ford was able to attract very good teachers, many with advanced degrees and the school became a very desirable place to teach.

A former student recalled one of Mr. Ford's visits to the school. On this particular day, Ford found the principal working in the garden that had been created at the school for the purpose of teaching students how to grow crops. Mr. Ford extended his hand to the principal. The principal was reluctant to shake hands because his hands were dirty from his work in the garden. Mr. Ford reached down and put his own hand in the dirt and again offered a handshake. The principal smiled and obliged.

Richmond Hill resident Charles Boles remembers "For the first time we did not have to walk to school – Mr. Ford provided buses for us to ride to school and back home in the afternoon. We had free lunches at the school. Mr. Ford was a very kind man. He dressed commonly and acted like everybody else. He would sometimes come to the school and mingle with the students and

talk to us. He treated everybody pretty much the same in his relations with ordinary people in the community.

Ford's efforts at improving black education on Bryan Neck were clearly successful. He provided a scholarship fund to help interested black students attend college, and out of the first graduating class of George Washington Carver School in 1945, five attended Savannah State College, with three earning degrees.

George Washington Carver Elementary School still exists but has a new building in the City of Richmond Hill which consists of 4th and 5th grades. A collage of photographs from the old school can be found in the school lobby.

We will now continue to our next Stops 20 and 21 located at the intersection of the 144 Spur and State Route 144/Bryan Neck Road. Continue to travel west on 144 approximately 1.4 miles and turn right onto the 144 Spur. There are two markers on the right, these markers are Stops 20 and 21.

Stop 19

Stop Nineteen, Kilpatrick on Bryan Neck. General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick was an aggressive and often careless cavalry leader who earned himself the nickname "Kill Cavalary" for his willingness to throw his men into the lines of the enemy. General Sherman often referred to Kilpatrick as that "damn fool", but it was his aggressiveness that Sherman needed for the Atlanta Campaign and onto his March to the Sea.

On Dec. 12, 1864, as Sherman's army closed in on Savannah, the 3rd Cavalry Division led by Brigadier General Kilpatrick and covering Sherman's right rear, crossed the Great Ogeechee River near Fort Argyle and the Canoochee River near Bryan Court House on pontoon bridges laid by the 1st Missouri Engineers and moved down Bryan Neck. That night, Kilpatrick made his headquarters at Strathy Hall, the plantation home of Lt. Col. Joseph L. McAllister, which stood near the river immediately north of this site. On the 13th, Kilpatrick sent Murray's brigade into Liberty County to scout the country south to Sunbury. He ordered Atkins' brigade and the 10th Wisconsin Battery to camp at "Cross Roads" (now Richmond Hill) then, with two of Atkins' regiments, he moved down Bryan Neck. Approaching Fort McAllister, he skirmished with the Confederate pickets, driving them back to the fort. Stopping just short of the causeway to the Fort, Kilpatrick received by courier the message from Sherman that the attack on the fort was to be by infantry. After examining the approaches to the fort, Kilpatrick moved on to Kilkenny Bluff, 8 miles to the southeast, where he was able to make contact with the USS "Fernadina" and forward dispatches to the flag-ship reporting the arrival of Gen. Sherman's army at Savannah. On the 14th, Kilpatrick moved with the balance of his command to Midway Church, north into Liberty County. After scouting the countryside and stripping it of livestock and provisions, he returned to Bryan County and went into camp at "Cross Roads" to picket the area to the south and west, and to protect the Union supply depot at King's Bridge.

Following the fall of Savannah on Christmas Day 1865, Kilpatrick continued north to Raleigh, North Carolina where the war ended for him as Lee surrendered at Appomattox in April 1865.

Kilpatrick went on to become the Ambassador to Chile following the war, where he died in 1881.

Stop 20

Stop Twenty, Fort McAllister. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Joseph L. McAllister of Strathy Hall Plantation founded the Hardwicke Mounted Rifles. He agreed to allow the construction of Confederate gun defenses with earthwork fortifications for four guns on his land. The initial structure was to guard the southern flank of the Savannah defenses as well as the entrance to the Ogeechee River. An important railroad trestle of the Atlantic and Gulf railroad, as well as rich cotton and rice plantations, lay upstream.

The Fort achieved its mission by deflecting seven major attacks by Union ironclads. Unlike Fort Pulaski on Tybee Island that was a brick fortification, Fort McAllister was able to be repaired quickly after the naval attacks, often using slave labor. Fort McAllister continued to guard the Ogeechee until late 1864 when General Sherman's 60,000-man army began to close on Savannah. Needing control of the Ogeechee River to open supply lines, Sherman dispatched a union division to cross Bryan Neck and attack Ft. McAllister from the rear. Never constructed to withstand a land attack, the fort fell after fifteen minutes of intense combat. Sherman's March to the Sea ended as the Ogeechee now lay open. Within a week, Savannah was the Union's prize and General Sherman presented the city to President Lincoln as a Christmas present.

Following the Civil War, nature reclaimed the land at Genesis Point and the remains of Fort McAllister were forgotten. In the 1930s then owner, Henry Ford, began restoration of the Civil War earthwork fortification. Before restoration was complete, the area passed to the International Paper Company, which deeded it to the State of Georgia. The site opened to the public in 1963, one hundred years after the great bombardment by the Union ironclads.

Today you can walk the meticulously preserved grounds, explore the "bomb proof", see the cannons and hear the history of the Fort from the knowledgeable staff. This is one of Georgia's finest State Historic Sites and Parks and offers RV Camping, tent camping, cottage rentals, boating and fishing.

You can also download the Fort McAllister app from the Apple App Store or Google Play for a voice narrated tour of the Fort.

Continue down the 144 Spur 4.5 miles to Fort McAllister State Historic Park.

Stop 21

Stop Twenty-one, the CSS Nashville. Under the pavilion, you will find machinery recovered from the sunken CSS Nashville or “Rattlesnake”, a 1200-ton Confederate blockade runner. Blockade runners were steam ships that were used to make their way through the Union blockades. On February 27, 1863 the Nashville took refuge in the Ogeechee River. After taking on a load of cotton, it ran aground on a sand bar not far from Fort McAllister in the Seven-Mile Bend, a hairpin turn in the Ogeechee River directly across from the fort. The ironclad Montauk, despite drawing heavy fire from the guns of Fort McAllister, moved upriver and opened fire on the stranded Nashville. The Union gunboats, positioned further downstream, as usual, peppered the fort. A three way battle ensued . The Montauk proceeded to fire on the Rattlesnake at long range across the marsh and eventually set her on fire. The Confederate vessel burned to the water line and its cargo was destroyed. The Rattlesnake’s crew jumped overboard and swam to shore.

Fort McAllister would endure a series of naval attacks from late 1862 to 1863. The fort would not fall until December 14, 1864 until Sherman’s troops attacked the fort by land.

Although the Nashville remains on the bottom of the Ogeechee River today, some of her has been recovered through underwater archaeology.

The evidence of the vessel's life and destruction becomes tangible through the recovery and display of artifacts. They are defined as the physical evidence of earlier human activity. They possess spiritual and physical links to the past that are readily available to those who see or touch them. They are evidence, primary evidence, providing a concrete connection in time and space between then and now.

Artifacts and more information on the Nashville can be found inside the museum in the Fort McAllister Visitors Center. Here you can also watch a short video and tour Fort McAllister. Admission fees apply.

Our next stop is Stop 23 located directly across from the CSS Nashville Pavilion. This marker “The Guale Village at Seven-Mile Bend” is located at the park fishing pier on the Ogeechee River.

Stop 22

Stop Twenty-two, The Guale Village at Seven-Mile Bend (pronounced Wall-ee) Historical records and archaeological evidence suggest that this site was inhabited by Native Americans as early as 3000 B.C. The presence of these "Guale" Indians, as they were called, continued and was recorded at the time of first European contact, as the Spanish set up missions along the Georgia coast from their Florida base. This early European contact greatly reduced the native presence in the area for many reasons.

The Native American inhabitants were not likely permanent residents of the site for any long period of time. Their culture tended to be nomadic as they practiced a hunter-gatherer form of economic life. At some times they would occupy a site for a number of years; more often, however, they would visit a site during the year to coincide with hunting or fishing season or the ripening of some plant or fruit.

A number of archaeological explorations on the site have revealed sporadic occupation, the location of a possible village and burials. Pottery shards and projectile points indicate the time and intensity of occupation. Further evidence is needed, however, to complete the prehistoric record of habitation at the site. Exhibits incorporating the use of many artifacts from this archaeology can be found in the Fort McAllister museum. Admission fees apply.

After exploring Fort McAllister we will now continue our tour and make our way back toward Richmond Hill. Leaving the Park continue on the 144 Spur for 1.6 miles to the next stop, Stop 24 "Hardwicke". This marker on your right is blue and is sometimes hidden by the trees.

Stop 23

Stop Twenty-three, Hardwicke With permanent settlement already well-established on the Ogeechee Neck by the 1750s, the desirability of a port, convenient to local planters, had become more pronounced. The Ogeechee River, with its advantages as a good harbor for coastal vessels, even larger ships had all the prospects and potential to provide the local rice growers a shipping center in their own midst. In 1754, a memorial of the leading planters requested that the colonial authorities reserve the land on the "Elbow of the Great Ogeechee" for a public town site. This site on the Great Ogeechee, 14 miles from the Atlantic, was selected in 1755 by Governor John Reynolds for the capital of Georgia. He named it for his kinsman, Lord High Chancellor of England, Philip Yorke Hardwicke. Reynolds said: "Hardwicke has a charming situation, the winding of the river making it a peninsula and it is the only fit place for the capital." In 1761, Sir James Wright, the Province Governor, determined against the removal of the capital from Savannah. Hardwicke then became little more than a trading village and it is now listed among "the dead towns of Georgia."

*To reach or next stop, Stop 25 "Folly Farms", continue down the 144 Spur for one mile to Old Hardwicke Road on your right. Old Hardwicke Rd is not paved and caution should be taken in rainy weather or if your vehicle is not suitable for a dirt road. **The Folly Farms house is a private residence and should be treated as such. Please do not trespass.***

Stop 24

Stop Twenty-four, Folly Farms. This Greek-Revival house at Myrtle Grove, now known as Folly Farms, was built for daughter, Louisa, as a wedding gift by her father, Richard James Arnold. Louisa married her first cousin, Samuel Greene Arnold, Jr., a lawyer, US Senator and Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island.

Gen. Sherman's troops marched past the home, sparing it from his Army's torches. It's been said Union soldiers camped under the large oaks at Folly Farms while awaiting supplies.

After the sale of Myrtle Grove by the Arnold family following the Civil War one of its owners, as noted, was William Washington Gordon II of Savannah. Gordon was the father of Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scouts of America.

Hollywood has come calling several times over the years. Some of the most famous movies are the 1989 American drama war film "Glory" starring Matthew Broderick and Denzel Washington and the 1999 murder mystery "The General's Daughter", starring John Travolta.

Please note that this is a private residence. Please do not enter the driveway or knock on the door.

Our next stop is Stop 26, Richard James Arnold marker. Turn right back onto the 144 Spur and approximately one tenth of a mile on your right you will see the marker. Please note that this is located at a private drive, do not block this drive.

Stop 25

Stop Twenty-five, Richard James Arnold. Richard James Arnold was literally a man who lived in two worlds; a member of a Quaker family involved in the movement to abolish slavery who became one the largest land owner in Bryan County as well as the largest slave owner. He was a native New Englander from Providence, Rhode Island and in the early 19th century came South on a business trip to Savannah where he met and married Louisa Gindrat. Miss Gindrat was the daughter of a prominent local family and by marrying her, Mr. Arnold acquired a considerable of plantation property along the Ogeechee River. Part of the land was known as White Hall, where he built a home and he and his family began to grow rice at Cherry Hill Plantation and Cotton at White Hall Plantation. The Arnolds were somewhat unique in that they resided in Coastal Georgia during the cooler months of winter and early spring, while spending their summer and early fall in Rhode Island, where Arnold continued to have business interest.

Mr. Arnold demonstrated business and management skills which were to make him if not the largest planter in tidewater Georgia, certainly one of the most resourceful and efficient. His rice, cotton and sugar production were the largest of the coastal Georgia planter aristocracy in the antebellum period. Arnold's total properties included Cherry Hill, White Hall, Sedgefield, Mulberry and other properties that lay on the western side of present I-95 known as Orange Grove.

He owned over 15,000 acres of land and also owned about 200 slaves that worked his various rice and cotton plantations.

In December 1864, General William B. Hazen's division of Sherman's forces marched down the right flank of the Ogeechee River on their way to an all-out assault on Fort McAllister. Units of the Ninth Michigan Volunteer Cavalry camped on the grounds at White Hall.

Arnold's legacy remained in this area after the War as his son continued to grow rice into the 1870's. The Arnold family owned White Hall into the early part of the 20th Century until the house burned down in 1914.

In the 1988 biography "North by South: The Two Lives of Richard J. Arnold", Charles Hoffman and Tess Hoffman used plantation journals to describe Arnold's career as a rice and cotton planter as it uncovers the increasingly difficult social and moral disguises that enabled him to move freely through two worlds.

Please note the house is no longer standing. Please do not enter the private drive.

Continue on the 144 Spur back to State Route 144/Bryan Neck Rd and turn right, continue for eight tenths of a mile and turn right onto Strathy Hall Rd. Travel six tenths of a mile and turn

right onto Mill Hill Landing Road. Stop 27 is located about 350 feet on your left. This is a private residence.

Stop 26

Stop Twenty-six, Strathy Hall. Strathy Hall, the oldest residential structure in lower Bryan County, was built in 1838 by prominent rice planter George W. McAllister on this site overlooking the Ogeechee River. During the Union campaign on Bryan Neck to take Fort McAllister, at the end of Sherman's march to the Sea, Strathy Hall was used as the headquarters, briefly, for Union cavalry general Judson H. Kilpatrick in December 1864. One official report noted that Federal troops, en route to Fort McAllister passed "...at the old McAllister mansion, called Stother (sic) Hall. There was their home, but now they had gone. Kilpatrick's Cavalry had been there before us, and the contents of the house were strewn upon the floors or scattered about the lawn...the Negro servants showed no disposition to put things right again, thinking perhaps that it would only invite further mischief." General William T. Sherman himself visited the house and spent part of a night at an overseer's house on the property, about a mile from Fort McAllister.

Strathy Hall was spared while other plantations were destroyed. Apparently the house was saved from destruction due to its being the residence of a family with important northern connections. The residences at nearby White Hall and Myrtle Grove, owned by Rhode Island planter-businessman Richard J. Arnold, were also spared for the same reason.

The history of Strathy Hall goes back to 1748 when Captain James Mackay of Scotland, petitioned the Trustees for 300 acres on the Great Ogeechee River. The earliest record of an organized meeting of the officials of the newly-created Bryan County is that of August 2, 1794 at Strathy Hall.

Again, note the "Ford Fence" around the property. Henry Ford restored Strathy Hall in the 1940s and the structure is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This is a private residence. Please do not enter the drive way or knock on the door.

For our final stops continue one tenth of a mile, take a left onto Baylor Road where you can view the back of Strathy Hall. To the right, across from the back of the house, behind the newer houses, are the rice fields and the Ogeechee River. The remains of the old rice mill is not far from here, archaeology of the rice mill revealed a civil war encampment and a Woodland Period Native American midden, or shell ring. Baylor Road turns to the left and becomes Strathy Hall Road. From Strathy Hall Road, stop to view the side of Strathy Hall Plantation to your left. Here, you will notice an avenue of live oaks that leads from the side of the house to the Ogeechee River to your right. This oak avenue led to the home's original boat landing.

Continue on Strathy Hall Road .3 mile where you will see a dark green water tank on your right. Behind the water tank is the original slave cemetery for Strathy Hall Plantation. The cemetery was used by the descendants of the slaves until the late 1970s. Georgia Southern, the

Richmond Hill Historical Society and members of the Bryan Neck Missionary Baptist church have made recent efforts to clean up the cemetery. Continue back out to State Route 144/Bryan Neck Road. Turn right onto State Route 144/Bryan Neck Road and continue for 3.5 miles.

Stop 27

Stop Twenty-seven, Ford Sawmill and Industrial Arts and Trade School. On your right, you will notice a shopping center called "Sawmill Plaza". This was the location of the Ford sawmill, the Industrial Arts and Trade School, and "The Green". "The Green" was a large grassy area where this parking lot and shopping center are now located. Students from the nearby school would often gather at "The Green" after school to socialize. The Industrial Arts and Trade School was located just past the Green. It was built by Henry Ford in the late 1930s. Similar to the Community House across the street which taught girls home economics, the Trade School was designed to teach high school boys practical industrial skills. Ford equipped it with all of the equipment necessary for teaching and training in woodworking, metal finishing, sheet metal work, ornamental iron work, machine shop forging, welding, printing, mechanical and architectural drawing, brass foundry and carpentry. It was built across the street from the school so that students could easily walk to their classes. Boys could also work in the shop on Saturdays or during the summers at a rate of 12 ½ cents per hour. Night classes were available for the adults in the community. Most boys who graduated from the program were able to gain successful employment in their fields.

Behind the Industrial Arts School was the Ford Sawmill. It was a very large operation. Most of the structures around Richmond Hill including residential housing for Ford employees and various community buildings, were constructed from lumber supplied by this local sawmill. These included the Community House, Industrial Arts and Trade School, Martha-Mary Chapel, George Washington Carver School, and the Commissary.

Due to the demand for pine lumber during World War II for the Savannah shipyards and construction of nearby Camp Stewart, mill's peak output was about 90,000 board feet per day. Two large steam boilers burned sawdust to generate power for the mill's engines and saws. Two other boilers burned wood chips from the planing mill and cabinet shop, thus powering a generator that provided electricity for the nearby Industrial Arts and Trade School. Some of the lumber produced at the sawmill was sold and shipped on the nearby railroad.

An accidental fire destroyed the complex in 1950. The Richmond Hill sawmill was not rebuilt since the Ford operations on Bryan Neck were winding down after Ford's death in 1947.

Turn right out of the parking lot of Sawmill Plaza onto Ford Avenue to continue to Stop 28, The Plantation office. Take an immediate right onto Dearborn Street. The plantation office is the second house on the right, a white, wood frame house on the corner of Dearborn and Greenwich.

Stop 28

Stop Twenty-eight, The Ford Plantation Office. Simply called “The Plantation Office”, this building was the administrative focal point for Henry Ford’s operations on Bryan Neck. Here, in this modest five-room structure, the plantation superintendent, the bookkeeper, the office manager, and payroll clerk had offices. It also housed the telephone switchboard.

R. P. Thompson of Savannah was the office manager of the Richmond Hill Plantation from 1936 to 1944. He noted in his memoirs “I was hired at Richmond Hill in July 1936 to open an accounting system. At the time I went there, Mr. Gregory explained to me that they had no method of keeping cost record on any of the construction work which they were doing. They would simply build anything that Mr. Ford desired, irrespective of cost. There was no bookkeeping system I know of. I think all of the records, such as payroll, checks and demands for funds were kept in Dearborn. The bills at that time were getting paid in Dearborn. The system I set up when I came was the same as I used in the US Army Corps of Engineers. At that time we worked eight hours a day, six days a week. We had a switchboard in the outer office and had a switchboard operator. The payroll had grown from about \$3,000 or \$4,000 a week up to \$14,000 a week... We had 800 employees on the payroll. Most of the men were laborers. There was a great deal of road repairing and grading and drainage. We had carpenter crews, painters, electricians, a floor finishing department, and the clinic had three nurses. In the schools at one time, the teachers were subsidized by Mr. Ford. At one time they had nearly 200 employees at the sawmill and we had mechanics in the garage... about ten or twelve.”

One interesting occupation was the Richmond Hill “Woods Riders”. These hired by Ford to protect the wildlife on Bryan Neck and to confiscate or destroy illegal moonshine stills men were deputized by Bryan County and had arresting authority. The “Woods Riders” patrolled the backwoods after dark keeping alert for illegal hunters, particularly those who hunted deer with bright lights and during their patrols they inevitably would uncover an illegal liquor making operation. E. D. Mitchum was hired by Ford in 1929 and was placed in charge of the work crews. He wrote in his memoirs: “There were over 250 whiskey stills destroyed on Ford’s property between 1930 and 1937, some small and some large. Each one of those stills at that time was furnishing anywhere from two to three men with work. Their whiskey had been hauled all over the United States on the eastern seaboard out of Bryan County. Some of the best moonshine liquor ever made was made right here in Bryan County. Old whiskey dealers up and down the coast will tell you that.” Mr. Thompson’s and Mr. Mitchum’s reminiscences are also on display in the oral history section of the Ford Archives in Dearborn, Michigan.

Turn left at the stop sign onto Greenwich Drive. Continue .1 mile and turn left at the stop sign onto Hill Avenue. Go to the stop sign and turn right onto Ford Avenue and continue for 6.4 miles. Our final two stops are markers that are located within the boundaries of Fort Stewart. Please follow all rules posted.

The final two markers are located on your right approximately 3 miles after you go under I-95.

Stop 29

Stop Twenty-nine, Hazen's Division on the Canoochee. On Dec. 6, 1864, the 15th Corps (US), led by Maj. Gen. P. J. Osterhaus, guarding the extreme right of Gen. Sherman's army on its destructive March to the Sea, camped near Jenk's Bridge, on Great Ogeechee River east of Blichton. On the 7th, Oliver's brigade of Hazen's division was sent down the west bank of the Ogeechee to seize the bridge over Canoochee River, two miles southeast of Bryan Court House and one-half mile northwest of this point. From Black Creek to the Canoochee, the advance was resisted by Confederate cavalry. After skirmishing most of the way, Oliver reached the bridge only to find it in flames and the south bank held by Confederate infantry and artillery under Col. John C. Fizer. The position being naturally strong, with swamps along the river, Oliver withdrew to Bryan Courthouse to await Hazen's arrival.

On the 8th, Hazen reached Bryan Courthouse accompanied by Gen. Osterhaus and supported by Woods' division, which was posted near Fort Argyle on the Ogeechee. Learning of an abandoned ferry site downstream from the bridge, Hazen sent a party across during the night, flanked the position at the bridge, and forced the defenders to fall back toward "Cross Roads" (now called Richmond Hill). At dawn, the bridge was repaired and two brigades crossed. One moved to Station No. 2 (Way's), the other to Station No. 3 (Fleming), to break the Savannah and Gulf (ACL) Railroad at those points. On the 13th of December Hazen would attack and defeat the remaining Confederate Troops at Fort McAllister, opening the Ogeechee River to Union resupply ships and enabling Sherman to take Savannah.

Stop 30

Stop Thirty, Fort Argyle. Our final stop is our oldest on the Coastal Bryan Heritage Trail. James Oglethorpe who founded the Georgia colony at Savannah in 1733 was a military engineer by profession and was also a specialist in military fortifications. He realized that with England at odds with Spain in a series of commercial wars in the early to mid-18th century that he would need to defend Savannah with a series of fortifications. He developed Fort Argyle on the banks of the Ogeechee River to protect the Western approaches to Savannah. The fort was completed in 1734 and never really saw any real military action like those to the south, such as Fort Frederica on St Simons Island and Ft. King George at Darien saw. But nonetheless Fort Argyle was an important installation in defending the upper part of the Georgia colony from possible Spanish attack during the "War of Jenkins Ear" which ran from 1739 to 1748. Fort Argyle was manned for a number of years in the 1740's by a contingent of Scottish Highlanders who were known for their military proficiency and their ability in battle. The Highlanders remained in the area after the War of Jenkins Ear and their influence remained in coastal Georgia where they were regarded as grantees of land from the British Crown. They settled along the Altamaha and the Ogeechee Rivers.

Unfortunately nothing remains of Fort Argyle, archaeological excavations in the late 20th century revealed many artifacts and the outlines of the fort and the fort area are not accessible to the general public due to the fact that it lies entirely within the boundaries of the Fort Stewart Military Reservation.

That concludes our tour of Coastal Bryan County; we hope that you have enjoyed your time with us learning about our rich heritage. Please stay a while and come back soon.

For more information, go to www.richmondhillvisit.com

References

Archives of the Richmond Hill Museum: www.richmondhillhistoricalsociety.com

Archives of Fort McAllister State Historic Park: www.gastateparks/fortmcallister

From Beautiful Zion to Red Bird Creek, a History of Bryan County, by Buddy Sullivan:
www.buddysullivan.com

Images of America, Richmond Hill, by Buddy Sullivan: www.buddysullivan.com

The Henry Ford Era at Richmond Hill, by Leslie and Lucy Long

Richmond Hill Reflections: www.richmondhillmag.com