



HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Bluffton & Beyond

The Town of Bluffton is situated on a high bluff overlooking the pristine May River, source of the world-famous Bluffton oysters. This historic riverfront community still welcomes visitors with as much charm and vibrancy as it did in its antebellum heyday. Its location was prized by Lowcountry planters and their families as a refuge from the harsh plantation environment of mosquitoes and heat. The high bluffs welcomed strong, southerly breezes that kept yellow fever infection at bay and dispelled sultry summer doldrums.

Bluffton was the first town developed in southern Beaufort County. The town's reputation as a summer resort village helped it grow into a commercial center, welcoming packet ship trade between Hilton Head Island and Savannah.

The rich history of the area includes native American Yemassee Indians and the Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas. From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, the region is full of history lessons. A hotbed for political rhetoric in the 1840's and '50's, cries of secession were first given serious voice and debate in Bluffton.

After incorporation in 1852, the town continued to grow. Then came the Civil War. Initially raided and scavenged in the early days of the conflict by Union forces occupying Hilton Head Island, Bluffton was finally shelled and burned in 1863. The Heyward House, Campbell Chapel AME Church and the Church of the Cross were among 17 structures to escape destruction. These three historic buildings and seven other houses can be seen today in the Town's Historic District.

The Heyward House, an outstanding 1840's example of early Carolina farmhouse style, is the Town's official Welcome Center. It is open Wednesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and is a great place to start your docent or self-guided tour of the House and of the National Register Historic District along with the thriving, vibrant arts community. The Bluffton Old Town Merchants Society invites you to discover the many delightful retail shops, art and antique galleries and restaurants with Southern regional cuisine along Calhoun Street and the surrounding Old Town. A trip to Bluffton is not complete without a visit to Bluffton's tallest potter, Jacob Preston.

See South Carolina's oldest and continuous oyster shucking facility at the Bluffton Oyster Company and Community Park along the May River. Or enjoy contemplative moments at Bluffton's Riverfront Pocket Park and Garden, a living example of the Bluffton Overlay Protection District.