



KINGSLEY PLANTATION

A History of the
FORT GEORGE ISLAND PLANTATION

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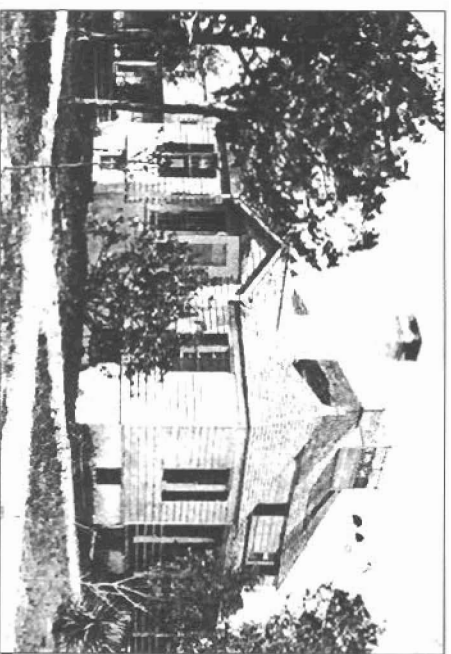


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Plantation, 11676 Palmetto Avenue, Jacksonville, Florida, 3

Anna was already helping her husband manage their properties.

At his plantations, Kingsley used the “task system” of labor organization, as did many coastal planters growing rice or Sea Island cotton. The task system made a sharp distinction between the plantation owner’s “time” and the slave’s “time.” When a slave completed a required plantation task, the remainder of the day could be devoted to hunting, fishing, or gardening for his or her own family. Kingsley’s slaves likely took advantage of an abundance of fish and wildlife and did not rely solely on rations received from Zephaniah Kingsley. In contrast, the “gang system” was widely used on tobacco, sugar, and upland cotton plantations. It involved the organization of slaves into gangs who worked the entire day under the close supervision of a driver or overseer.

IN 1821, DURING KINGSLEY’S OWNERSHIP of Fort George Island, Florida became an American territory. Many Americans moved to the new territory, resulting in dramatic societal changes. Most



Photographs of the plantation owner’s residence on Fort George Island reveal changes made to the house over the years. This photo, made after the Civil War, exact year unknown, is one of the earliest photographic views. Note the two chimneys and the bay window. Courtesy of the Florida State Archives.

profound were the changes in race relations. In 1823, President James Monroe appointed Zephaniah Kingsley and a dozen other men in whose “Integrity and Abilities” he had “special Trust and Confidence” to serve a one-year term on the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida. Kingsley encouraged the council to continue race policies such as the Spanish had established: liberal provisions for manumission of slaves, and rights and privileges for both free and enslaved people of color. These included the right to own property, to marry, to inherit and to testify in court.

Instead, the territorial legislature restricted the activities of Florida’s free blacks, prohibited interracial marriages, and made manumission more difficult. Kingsley opposed but could not prevent the strengthening of racial barriers. By 1828 the free black population in Florida had been significantly reduced. Kingsley complained publicly about the “impolitic” laws of the United States of America. He wrote his ideas in a pamphlet entitled *A Treatise on the Patriarchal or Cooperative System of Society as it Exists in Some Governments, and Colonies in America, and in the United States Under the Name of Slavery, With Its Necessity and Advantages*, published in four editions in 1828, 1829, 1833, and 1834.

“Our laws to regulate slaves are entirely founded on terror. The laws of the southern states are exclusively constructed for the protection of whites, and vexatious tyranny over the persons and properties of every colored person...”

Few, I think, will deny that color and condition, if properly considered, are two very separate qualities. But the fact is, that in almost every instance, our legislators, for want of due consideration, have mistaken the shadow for the substance, and confounded together two very different things; thereby substantiating by law a dangerous and inconvenient antipathy, which can have no better foundation than prejudi-