



 Park Office/Museum Store/
Brick Kitchen

 Restrooms/Log Cabin

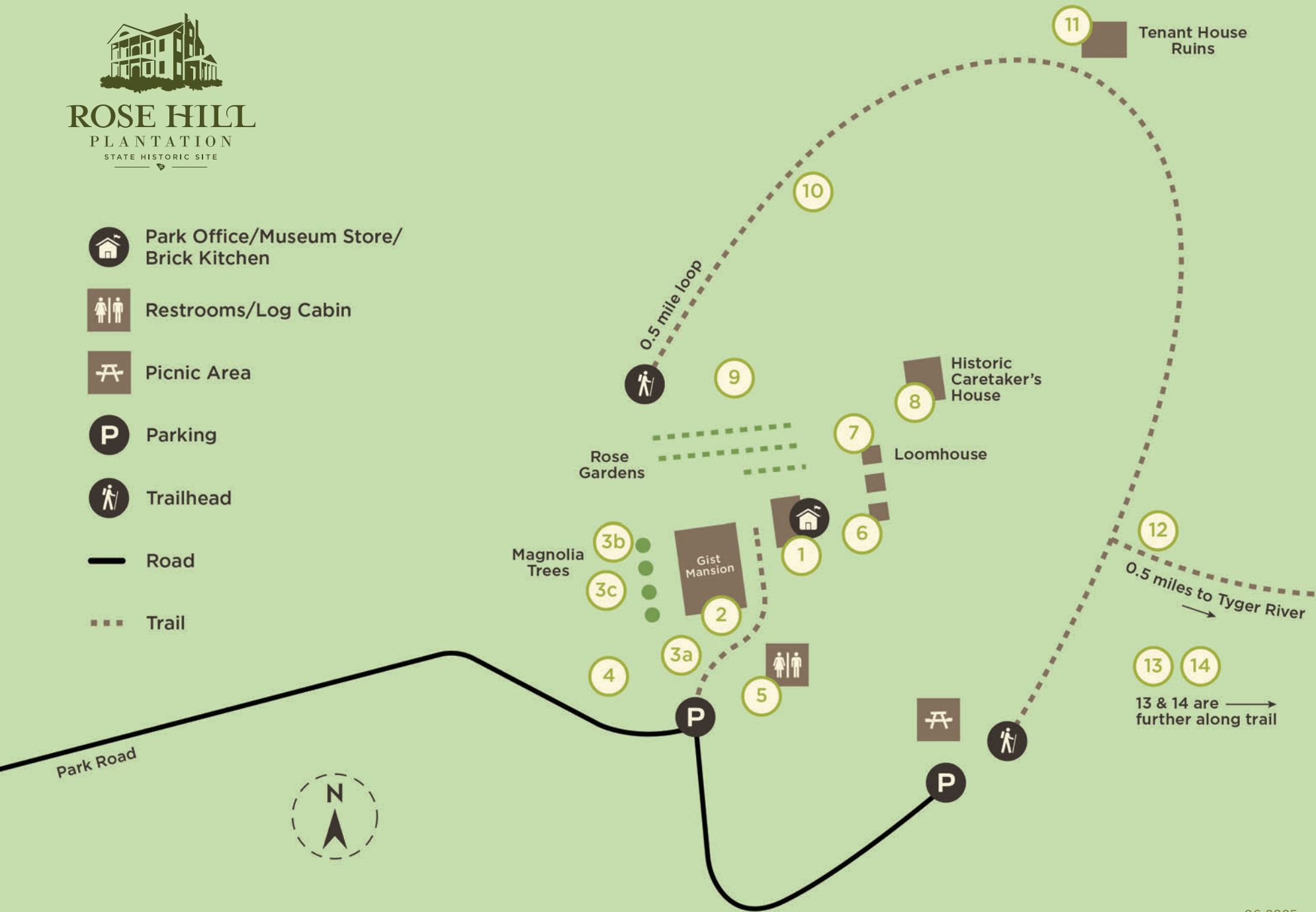
 Picnic Area

 Parking

 Trailhead

 Road

 Trail



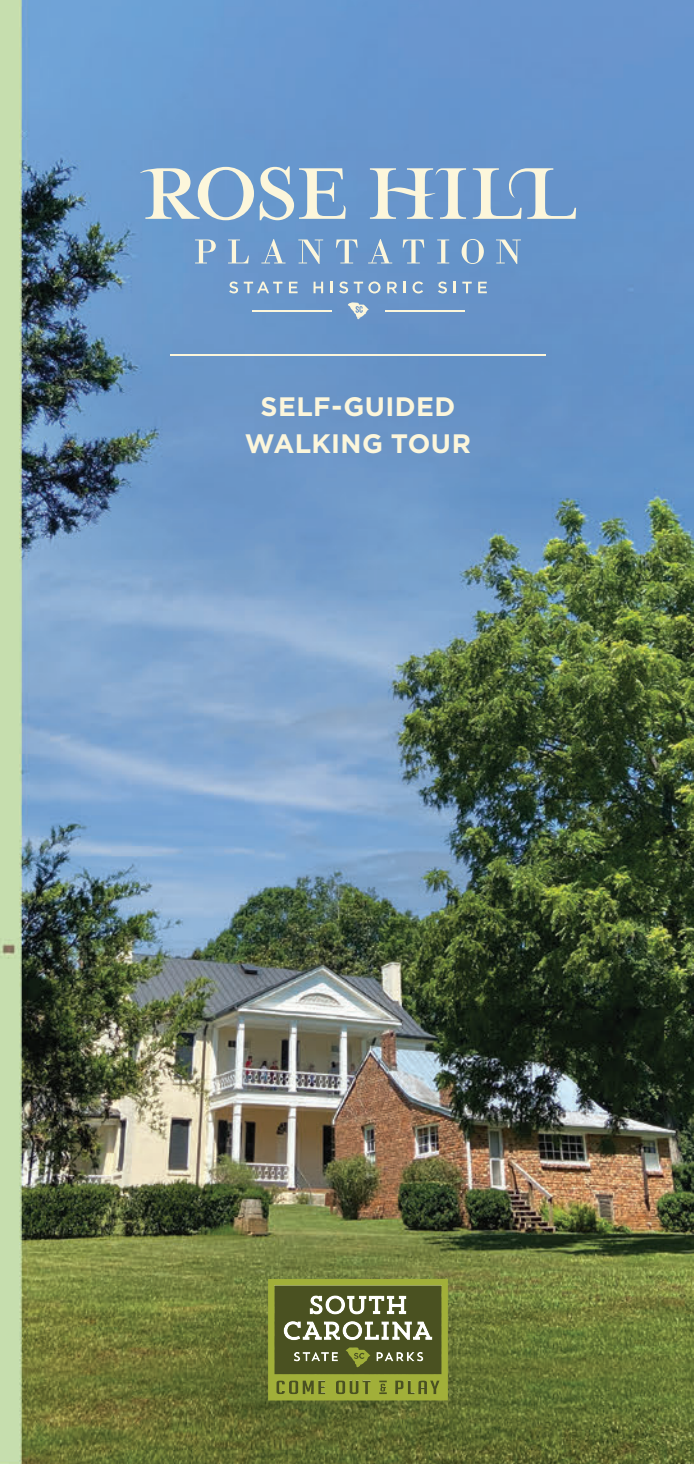
06.2025

ROSE HILL

PLANTATION

STATE HISTORIC SITE

SELF-GUIDED
WALKING TOUR



**SOUTH
CAROLINA**
STATE PARKS
COME OUT & PLAY

ROSE HILL PLANTATION
STATE HISTORIC SITE

SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR

This self-guided tour takes you around the grounds and trails at Rose Hill Plantation State Historic Site. It points out physical things that still stand here, using them to reveal the experiences of people who once lived on this Upstate cotton plantation. Layers of history date to the active cultivation of cotton on this plantation (1811 – 1939) and its transition to becoming a historic site and forest land (1940s and beyond).

The stories of people here at Rose Hill can be difficult to hear, but they are important. Plantations were places where the majority of people lived without any choice—enslavement bound African Americans unjustly to the land for generations. While the site may be described as beautiful and serene today, the painful experiences of many people are embedded in this land and cannot be erased.

1. BRICK KITCHEN HOUSE

This kitchen bridged the worlds of Black and white. Prior to the Civil War, Governor William Henry Gist reported enslaving 178 people, including a 25-year-old mixed-race woman listed as the cook.* She probably interacted frequently with Gist’s wife Mary, using produce, grains and meat raised by enslaved farmers to prepare meals that Mary ordered. Southern dishes blended African, Indigenous and European influences to create a distinct regional cuisine.

2. GIST MANSION SIDE PORCH

Enslaved house servants used this entrance to deliver food from the kitchen into the mansion’s dining room. In 1860, three enslaved teenagers between the ages of 14 – 16 were listed as house servants.* Deprived of contact with their own families, people who worked in their enslaver’s home were under close scrutiny and vulnerable to abuse. Their tasks were constant, from serving meals to cleaning the household and disposing of waste.

THE GARDENS

Gardens were status symbols. They served as a barrier between the mansion and the drudgery of plantation labor. Typically, only elite landowners had large flower gardens like this one, which was designed to showcase the wealth the Gists had extracted from slavery and cotton.

3a. Roses

Where did the name “Rose Hill” come from? Local preservationists increasingly referred to this place as “Rose Hill” in the mid-1900s as they turned it into a historic site. Many plantings in this garden, including the gigantic rose bush in front of you, date to this time.

3b. Southern Magnolia Trees

Estimated to be nearly 200 years old, these four massive Magnolias adorn the entrance to the Gists’ garden and home. Evergreen and flowery, Magnolias are ornamental shade trees with few uses beyond decoration. The Gists may have bought these Magnolias from the Pomaria Nurseries in nearby Newberry District.

3c. Iron Fence

As early as 1850, the Gists purchased this decorative fence from a catalogue for the New York Wire Railing Company. As industrialized mass production became more common and railroads crisscrossed the country, shopping for goods made far and wide became part of a modernizing world.

4. CARRIAGE STEPS

Originally located near the garden’s main entrance, these steps helped the Gists and visitors get in and out of carriages. An enslaved hostler—a 15-year-old boy in 1860—tended to horses and possibly drove the carriages.* He may have driven the Gists to places like Union, Columbia, Limestone Springs and the Kings Mountain Iron Works.

5. LOG CABIN

Although the location and appearance of slave quarters here at Rose Hill has not yet been determined, they may have looked like this building, which was moved here in the 1940s from another plantation. Ongoing archaeology, oral history and research hopefully will uncover the location of enslaved people’s housing at Rose Hill.

6. SHEDS

All three of these sheds were probably built in the 1940s as Clyde Franks, a preservationist from Laurens, SC, turned Rose Hill into a historic site. The smallest shed encloses an old well. The original use of the other two sheds is not known.

7. LOOM

A loom appears in the earliest records for Rose Hill. Although this is not the Gists’ original loom, it is a historic one from the era. By 1860, the Gists enslaved four women and one girl who were seamstresses.* They may have used a loom like this one to weave yarn into fabric to make clothing for the white Gist family and the larger enslaved community.

8. CARETAKER’S HOUSE (WAYSIDE)

A formerly enslaved tenant farmer named Charlie Giles was hired by Clyde Franks to live here with his family as caretakers in the 1940s. This house was either renovated, built or moved here for the Giles family to live in. Charlie Giles’ wife Selena and their daughter Louise Browning led visitors through the mansion while working as the first tour guides at this site.

9. TREE BASE

It appears that a building once sat at the base of this poplar tree. As the tree grew and the building disappeared, its roots became exposed. What structure sat here long ago is currently unknown. It may have been an outhouse, springhouse, root cellar or other sort of structure dug into the ground.

LOOP TRAIL

Find the trailhead marker and start to walk down the loop trail. This trail is about ½ mile long. It travels through a wooded area. Some of the trees are old, indicating the white Gist family and the African American community historically had uses for them. Other trees are relatively young, suggesting the U.S. Forest Service allowed them to grow when reforesting this area in the 1940s.

10. WITNESS TREE (WAYSIDE)

Some of these hickory trees predate Rose Hill Plantation, which started around 1811. This area

provides a reflective space to think about everything these trees witnessed among the African American community, from the trauma of enslavement and the despair of sharecropping, to the strength and resilience of each individual and family who lived here.

11. TENANT HOUSE (WAYSIDE)

In the aftermath of slavery, many newly freed African Americans became tenant farmers, working for former enslavers for minimal payment. You are looking at the ruins of a house where tenants lived in the early 1900s. The brick pile was the fireplace and chimney. The large stones were the house’s foundation. This is one of 11 known tenant home sites on this plantation.

12. GULLY (WAYSIDE)

Cotton leaches nutrients from the ground. The constant growing of cotton in the piedmont area of South Carolina depleted the soil so much that gullies formed as soil washed away. Cotton plantations severely damaged the landscape and the environment, leaving scars still seen today.

TYGER RIVER TRAIL

Find the trailhead for the Tyger River and start to walk the trail. It is ½ mile until you get to the Tyger River. When you reach the river, turn around and walk the same trail.

13. RIVER FLATS beyond the map’s depiction

Farmers often used river flats like this for cornfields. In the 1800s, enslaved fieldhands took corn to the gristmill on this plantation, where it could be turned into cornmeal, grits or polenta for human consumption. Farm animals, such as the mules that worked the fields, ate corn, too.

14. TYGER RIVER beyond the map’s depiction

The Tyger River formed the northeastern boundary of this 2,000-acre plantation and likely was an important part of this plantation’s operation. The Tyger flows into the Broad River, which was used to transport cotton to Columbia and other places during the 1800s.