Preserving the Past

BY IVY LAMB

The Heyward House reveals Bluffton's rich history

Located on the edge of the nationally registered historic district, Heyward House is the gateway to Old Town Bluffton.

Bluffton began in the early 1800's as a summer resort for planter families. The high bluffs of the May River offered relief from the heat and insects of the plantation and a chance to socialize with other families. Built ca. 1840 in the Carolina Farmhouse Style, the house passed to the family of George Cuthbert Heyward, great-grandson to one of four signers of the Declaration of Independence for South Carolina, in the 1880's. Virtually unchanged for 170 years, this historic home is now a museum and the town's official welcome center.

The home stayed in the Heyward family until the late 1990s, and today the Bluffton Historical Preservation Society owns it and oversees tours that transport visitors to the antebellum South. Tours include the house and grounds, as well as an original slave cabin and summer kitchen, furnished as they would have appeared in the 1800s.

One of eight surviving antebellum homes in Bluffton, Heyward House is just the beginning. From Heyward you can embark on guided walking tours of the Old Town. Here you'll find the legacy of Gullah culture seen in a freedman's cottage, praise house, and two antebellum churches.

Thanks to its well-preserved condition, the Heyward House is an official project of the Save America's Treasures Program, a public-private trust between the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Through the efforts of the BHPS, this remarkable home has become known as the place to start when exploring the town of Bluffton and the Lowcountry.

Above: Heyward House is Bluffton's official welcome center. Below: The Church of the Cross was spared burning by Union soldiers during the Civil War.

To learn more about the Heyward House, Old Town Bluffton and BHPS, visit **heywardhouse.org**.

PHOTOS (FROM TOP) BY ED FUNK AND MARGARET PALMER (CHURCH)