

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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THE MAIN ROAD

(C.S.M.S. MAP A)

Description:

The main road on Cumberland Island National Seashore extends for approximately 13 miles from Dungeness on the south to near High Point and the Half Moon Bluff settlement on the north end of the island. The road varies from 8 to 10 feet wide. The roadbed is a shell base. It runs through both dense wooded areas of live oak, pine, and palmettos, as well as open areas with little understory. The road is maintained from Dungeness to Plum Orchard while north of Plum Orchard it is more primitive. The condition of the road is good to average.

A map of Cumberland Island, dated 1802, shows a road running north and south, however, it was not continuous, serving only to link plantation homes or fields. Segments of the Main Road follow the 1802 alignment.

The earliest known map containing evidence of a road connecting the south and north ends in a continuous pattern was drawn around 1870. Although the road is represented as a schematic drawing, it appears to match the lines of the existing Main Road. A much more accurate map of the Main Road, also drawn in 1870, shows it meandering more naturally following the topographical features of the land. After 1870, there are several maps of the island that depict the Main Road with extreme accuracy.

The existing road alignment north of Brickhill Bluff does not follow the alignment of the 1870 road. Rather it lies west of the historic road, passing very close to the western edge of the island. A foot trail and occasionally used roads still follow the 1870 alignment. The present road south of Brickhill Bluff does follow the alignment of the road shown on the 1870 map.

Before the Civil War much of the Main Road was probably primitive, but after the Carnegies acquired their lands and hotels began to flourish at High Point, the road received greater maintenance. In 1880, Frederick Albion Ober observed that only three miles of Grand Avenue (Main Road) had been cleared and of this portion one could "look straight down beneath the arch of live oaks for more than a mile." The use of electric cars, and later automobiles, by the Carnegies would have demanded an improved and graded road and the pruning of trees to prevent the obstruction of one's view.

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Significance:

The Main Road (also called Grand Avenue or Stafford Road), significant in the area of transportation, has linked the ante-bellum plantations, and later the entire island, together for 150 years. During this entire period it was the primary route for north-south travel on Cumberland Island.

After settling Dungeness, Catherine Greene Miller (widow of General Nathanael Greene) and Phineas Miller, her second husband, quickly established other plantations on the island, some near the north end. Separated from Dungeness by considerable distances, these plantations needed to be connected by adequate roads wide enough to permit horsedrawn carriages. Dr. Daniel Turner, a physician who ministered to the Miller family and to its slaves, spoke frequently of his visits to plantations north of Dungeness. The extensive timber business carried on by Phineas Miller required roads wide enough to cart lumber from distant wooded areas to docks for shipment. Moreover, the growing of the famed sea island cotton at different Miller plantations demanded the closest attention of Louisa Shaw (General Nathanael Greene's daughter) and Phineas Miller Nightingale (the General's grandson), and good roads were necessary in order to facilitate this. In the years after 1820, the main road linked the large land holdings of Robert Stafford as well as providing ease of access.

The Carnegie family brought the road into its existing alignment upon purchasing most of the island, and added the riding and hunting trails that branch from it. The Main Road has served as the primary transportation and communication link on the island since the early plantation years and continues to serve that purpose today.

Verbal Boundary Description

The historic main road begins at Dungeness and ends at High Point. It zigzags in many areas, but in general it was constructed so that it approached as close to the plantations and houses as possible. Thus, in addition to reaching Dungeness on the south and High Point on the north, it links Greyfield, Stafford, Plum Orchard, and Rayfield. The boundary for the property is 10 feet on either side of the road. It is designated by a solid black line on the U.S.G.S. map; coordinate points are indicated by boxed letters.

Acreage is approximately 50 acres.

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U.T.M. Coordinates

Easting	Northing
A 17 457 810	34 21 520
B 17 457 290	34 20 420
C 17 457 300	34 19 350
D 17 458 310	34 15 940
E 17 457 125	34 13 600
F 17 456 960	34 13 650
G 17 455 810	34 12 350
H 17 455 790	34 09 760
I 17 455 620	34 09 460
J 17 455 260	34 09 150
K 17 455 860	34 08 040
L 17 455 975	34 06 130
M 17 455 350	34 04 870
N 17 454 990	34 01 930



Main Road, looking N from Dungeness
Cumberland Island Nat'l Seashore MRA
Cumberland Island, Georgia
Ann Huston, June 1983
Negative at NPS Regional Office, Atlanta



Main Road, looking S. from Rayfield
Cumberland Island Nat'l Seashore MRA
Cumberland Island, Georgia
Ann Huston, June 1983
Negative at NPS Regional Office, Atlanta