

Retro Living

The neighborhood that time forgot—by design

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACH THARP

Tucked away on **James Island** between Maybank Highway and the shores of Wappoo Creek and the Stono River is the neighborhood time seems to have all but forgotten. Easily one of Charleston's most eclectic areas, **Riverland Terrace** has a place in local history that is as varied as the collection of homes, businesses, and people who call its cozy, oak-canopied streets home.

Planned in the **mid-1920s** on the site of the former **Wappoo Hall Plantation**, the neighborhood has the distinction of being the first on then-rural James Island. Although the neighborhood was planned as an **upscale development** of large waterfront estates, only a few of the grand homes actually were constructed before the market crash of 1929 put a halt to the project, leaving it to languish for more than a decade.

It wasn't until the **end of World War II** that the

neighborhood began to take shape. Over the next 20 years, about **800 mostly middle-class dwellings** of all sizes and shapes—from humble clapboard cottages and simple brick ranch houses to stucco chalets and glass-fronted art deco creations—were built in a charming randomness that somehow seems to fit together perfectly.

By the **'60s**, Riverland Terrace was an odd but idyllic self-contained community, with parks, schools, ball fields, and a community boat ramp, plus shops, restaurants, and, inevitably, a strip mall. Somewhere along the way, **a small-scale windmill** was erected, although the history of the landmark is fuzzy, at best.

Today, not much has changed. An **active neighborhood association** has made sure that the funky, family-oriented community has remained as such, fending off redevelopment proposals and refurbishing the park and the windmill, which was moved to

Left to right: A private dock overlooks Wappoo Creek; The Terrace Theater, Charleston's only art house cinema; Wappoo Drive once led to a plantation house.



ILLUSTRATION BY JENNIFER THEIMER

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

RIVERLAND TERRACE

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACH THARP



Seed [1978 Maybank Hwy. (843) 762-0072] features an expansive menu with everything from Low-country favorites to pasta and Thai dishes, along with considerable vegetarian offerings, all served up in a casual, homey setting. Only a few doors down is **Le Club Fez** [1956 Maybank Hwy. (843) 406-2767]. Since opening its doors last year, Fez has received rave reviews for its French-influenced Moroccan menu. The rich and exotic aromas wafting from the kitchen and the tapestry-draped walls and dim lighting give the place the feeling of a locals-only restaurant in Casablanca. For years, **Athens** [1939 Maybank Hwy. (843) 795-0957] has served the Low-country's most popular Greek and Mediterranean fare. Its move to a new custom-built location has only enhanced the intimate, festive, old-country feel of the restaurant, which offers everything from gyros and pizza to traditional Greek entrées.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACH THARP



Clockwise from top left: Athens serves up authentic Greek fare; A World Apart offers eclectic home furnishings and objets gathered from around the globe; the small-scale, fairy-tale windmill adds to the neighborhood's whimsical charm; in addition to an extensive lunch and dinner menu, the Mustard Seed offers detectable, made-from-scratch desserts.



Plymouth Park, overlooking Wappoo Creek and standing as a symbolic reminder to all of the history as well as the future of the quirky little place.

Eat

Like Riverland Terrace itself, dining options are interesting and varied. Longtime staple the **Mustard**

Shop

Characterizing **Attic Treasures'** [2024 Wappoo Dr. (843) 762-0418] collection of merchandise as diverse would be a grave understatement. Its quickly revolving inventory, ranging from colonial to kitsch, make it all but impossible to predict what treasures will turn up from week to week in this combination antiques shop and consignment store. Specializing in the exotic, **A World Apart** [2008 Wappoo Dr. (843) 762-1884] imports home furnishings, art, and clothing from the far reaches of the globe. Tucked just off Maybank, this out-of-the-way shop would be right at home on King Street. The room in the back is full of great bargains. **Lady Tess Everlasting Florals** [2004 Wappoo Dr. (843) 762-3999] has a variety of artificial plants, flowers, and even trees that are all but indistinguishable from the real thing and ideal for those lacking a green thumb.

Play

Affectionately referred to as "Muni," the **Charleston Municipal Golf Course** [2110 Maybank Hwy. (843) 795-6517] is one of the oldest operating courses in the city where golf made its national debut. Over the years, Muni has been updated, and despite the proliferation of high-profile courses nearby, it remains very much a top public choice of



While a community landing makes Riverland Terrace boat friendly, many homeowners enjoy private docks.

the city's golfing community, thanks to bargain greens fees. As Charleston's only art house movie theater, the **Terrace Theater** [1956 Maybank Hwy. (843) 762-9494] runs independent and foreign films that would not otherwise appear in the Lowcountry. Though dated as theaters go, the concession stand makes up for it with a good selection of beer and wine to go along with popcorn and junior mints. It's often standing room only at **The Pour House** [1977 Maybank Hwy. (843) 571-4343]. Attracting a mixture of local and national acts, the intimate venue features everything from rock to bluegrass nearly every night of the week. **Plymouth Park** [end of Plymouth St.] is a popular place for folks of all ages, offering a busy, live oak-shaded playground and a public dock. ©

Fast Facts

- The big house of **Wappoo Hall Plantation**, which consisted of 1,085 acres, once stood on the banks of the Stono River at the end of Wappoo Drive.
- **Fort Pemberton**, an earthen Confederate fortification, was built on the banks of the Stono River in 1862 to halt the Union army's access to the river. The foundations of the fort remain today.
- More than **70 live oak trees** believed to be more than 100 years old create a moss-draped canopy the length of Wappoo Drive. Designated a Scenic Drive by the state, the allée of oaks once led to Wappoo Hall.



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