

Photo by Bruce Whitmore

Bullbat is a Southern nickname for the nighthawk, which takes wing to feed at dusk. Like the bullbat, Southerners once came out at dusk, too, to feast on gossip with a cocktail chaser. They called it “Bullbat Time.”

It is more likely than not that the owners of Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantation enjoyed Bullbat Time in their day. If the custom were still widely practiced, Hofwyl would no doubt be the talk of similar gatherings all over town.

Now a state historic site and one of the few surviving antebellum plantations on Georgia’s coast, Hofwyl is on a short list of unprofitable state parks and historic sites Georgia is thinking of closing.

What a loss that would be, and not just because Hofwyl offers that rare realistic glimpse back in time to the mythical Old South. Hofwyl is also proof that the old days weren’t all work and strife.

While the grand dames of Hofwyl – Miss Ophelia Dent and her sister, Miriam – were indeed ladies whose afternoon receptions more likely included tea and/or lemonade depending on the season, their family heritage certainly included recipes for spirits that would make any gathering a grand celebration.

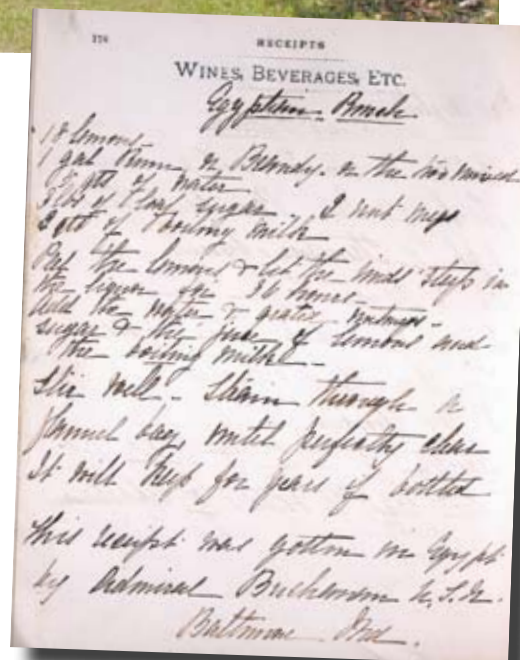
A recipe for Chatham Artillery Punch lives on in Hofwyl’s archives, written on a piece of ordinary note paper in Miss Ophelia’s hand.

“That punch is to cocktails what a nuclear warhead is to a fistfight,” says Bill

Giles, site manager at Hofwyl. The New York Times expressed similar sentiments in 1909 when reporting on the social preparations Savannah was making for a visit from President Taft.

“Punch Brewing For Taft,” declares the headline on a news clipping pulled from Hofwyl’s archives. “Savannah Favorite Has Had Many Victims, Including Naval Men,” a prominent subhead adds.

Another punch recipe that was likely served at Hofwyl dates to the mid-1800s. The recipe for Egyptian Punch was brought from Egypt by Confederate Navy Admiral Franklin Buchanan of Baltimore, Md., a former U.S. Navy



ARTILLERY PUNCH (10 GALLONS)

- 1 pound green tea in 2 gallons cold water. Allow to stand overnight, then strain.
- 3 gallons Catawba wine
- 1 gallon St. Croix rum
- 1 gallon Hennessey Brandy
- 1 gallon rye whiskey
- 5 pounds brown sugar
- 2 quarts cherries
- Juice of 3 dozen oranges
- Juice of 3 dozen lemons
- 1 gallon Gordon Gin (will make it smooth)
- 12 quarts champagne

Mix tea and juices together first, preferably in a cedar tub. Then add the sugar and liqueurs. Let this stock set for a week or two covered. When ready to serve add ice and 12 quarts of champagne. The stock and finished punch should both be stirred well.

EGYPTIAN PUNCH

- 18 lemons
- 1 gallon Rum or Brandy two mixed
- 5 quarts of water
- 3 pounds of loaf sugar
- 2 nut megs
- 2 quarts of boiling milk

Peel the lemons and let the rinds steep in the liquor for 36 hours. Add the water and grated nutmeg, sugar and the juice of lemons and the boiling milk. Stir well, strain through a flannel bag, until perfectly clear. It will keep for years if bottled.