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FEATURING

Floresta Ranch

Crested Butte, Gunnison County, COLORADO

Offered by Mason & Morse Ranch Company

The THOMASVILLE Legacy

Before the days of you or me
and before Thomasville was even Thomasville, the longleaf pine was king.

The diverse, carefully balanced ecosystem hosted, nourished and sheltered a plethora of beasts and birds over an expanse of 90 million acres. Easily the most dominate feature of the early US Coastal Plains, this region has seen its share of changes: the birth of a nation and the death of a way of life; the changing of names and the establishment of a city; the collapse of an ecosystem and the systematic rebuilding of a treasure on the verge of destruction. Life in the Red Hills, in Georgia, in Thomasville has survived years of evolution and lives on today to share its history with the world.

Founded in 1835, Thomasville is a tale best told not so much through events, but sounds. Hammers on wood erected the first structures in the newly founded county seat of Lot 39; hammers on steel brought the massive rails down from the north almost to city center and, not long after, gun and cannon fire signaled the beginnings of civil war. At war's end, again, the sounds of construction. Again, the sound of steam engines clattering on tracks. And this time, the sound of eager voices belonging to those who witness—some for the first time—the unique beauty of its Southern Antebellum architecture and acres of majestic longleaf and its abundance of feathered occupants.

The voices belong to the notable, wealthy and curious Northern visitors—whose names include those such as DuPont, Ford and Hanna—who have travelled south to escape the winter chill and marvel at the joys of the country lifestyle. Many arrive to see for themselves the unique and whimsical architecture of private cottages and downtown hotels; a few have come upon orders to take in the pine-infused air as a treatment for various ailments; and even more disembark with an eagerness to take to the forest and test their marksmanship. Above all, they have come for the bobwhites.

After the war, Thomasville could have easily faded from historical importance, but its residents were not resolved to that fate. Instead, they rebranded their city as a Southern destination and capitalized on both its natural and cultural treasures. And today, those traditions continue.

Civil War-era wagons clatter down well-worn paths, the clicking of wheels merging with the clapping of heavy mule hooves as they make their way along the rolling terrain colored by red clay soils—the distinctive Red Hills. Birding dogs bark in excitement, able to smell their quarry as the wagon ventures ever deeper into this unrivaled hunting ground so carefully maintained and preserved by a group of private owners determined to stop its eradication. The thick canopy still lets through enough light to fuel the growth of native grasses, routinely burned to keep the undergrowth from strangling life far below the treetops. All around, whitetail deer and red fox stare curiously before darting deeper into the forest. Overhead, eastern grey squirrels chitter and the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker taps intermittently at towering trunks. And somewhere in the brush, the shy quail lie in wait. The scene is timeless—over a century's worth of history wrapped into a single moment.

Cultural events in the “City of Roses” extend through the year and complement the hunting seasons. Quail hunting season opens in November with the Plantation Wildlife Arts Festival that showcases prominent wildlife artists from around the globe and season's end is marked by the Thomasville Antique Show, which attracts some of the country's most noteworthy dealers and interior designers. Spring is harkened with the arrival of turkey season and the annual Due South Event, showcasing live music, local cuisine and a regional maker's market. As summer turns to fall, the Covey Film Festival launches its film series. Local boutiques and dining spots focusing on regional cuisine and a variety of performing arts are on daily display and even

by Jamie Destouet

when the businesses close, a stroll down any street is a historical feast for the eyes as storefronts, libraries, hospitals, historic government buildings and private homes alike show off the colorful personality of a city steeped in antebellum style. Beyond the city, the last great bastion for quail hunting lives on, as well as the historic plantations—some of which have stood for over 150 years.

“One of our current listings is El Destino, a 5,000-acre plantation and former land grant from the Territory of Florida. It was established in 1828 and neighbors one of Ted Turner’s famed quail properties. Overall, it is very representative of a classic Red Hills Plantation with tremendous wildlife diversity. Landowners here are a combination of sportsmen, investors and conservationists who are dedicated not only to preserving this landscape but also this unique lifestyle,” said Ben McCollum, Owner and Broker with The Wright Group, a boutique firm specializing in Red Hills legacy estates.



Every landowner—everywhere—has a unique responsibility to the property they hold: to keep the story of its history and write the story of its future. Together, the owners of this legendary region hold true to that resolve, keeping old traditions, tending to the current needs of land and wildlife and planning for a future where the longleaf pine thrives, expands and—perhaps one day—regains its crown. ☆

*For information on Thomasville
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