

Document Reader Three: Tourism, the Resort Era, and Hunting Plantations

This selection of primary sources documents is designed to provide context for K-12 educators who are participating in the Quest for Freedom workshop examining the Long Civil Rights movement with a focus on landmarks in Thomasville and Red Hill region of Southern Georgia and northern Florida. With minor exceptions we have strived to provide verbatim transcripts with only minor editorial revisions--added texts are placed in square brackets. As historical documents they reflect many of the biases and prejudices of the period in which they were written. In using them in classroom care must be used as to place them in the proper context.

Striving to capture of the Black voice is often problematic. For instance, through much of Thomasville's history there existed no African American newspaper that survived for the period before 1954. Fortunately, Black newspapers in other parts of Georgia and nationally sometimes carried news regarding Thomasville. Although we often have to rely on letters, diaries, and newspapers accounts of white residents, nonetheless the documents in this reader underscore the resilience of the African American community from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to the U.S. Supreme Court issuing the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954

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Document One

WHERE TO GO IN WINTER

THE GROWTH OF THOMASVILLE IN GEORGIA WITHIN FIVE YEARS,

To the Editor of the New York Times:

The question is often asked by invalids, as well as those who desire a warmer climate in Winter, "Where can we go and secure health and pleasure?" The majority of Southern visitors go to Florida, to Jacksonville, St. Augustine, etc.. I think they make a great mistake. There is

hardly a place in Florida which is not low, flat, watery, and malarious. No invalid should go to such a place. I have spent the past five Winters in Thomasville, Ga. And I can recommend the place in the highest terms to those seeking health or recreation. It is but 12 miles from the line of Florida, and is 350 feet above the level of the Gulf. There is no standing water. It is closely surrounded by immense pine forests, by which the atmosphere is impregnated with the aroma of the pine. The average temperature in Winter is between 60 degrees and 70 degrees. The population is 5,500. It is only within the past five or six years that the place began to be known as a health resort, and since then the population has doubled. There are two first-class hotels in the town, each accommodating 350 guests, and there are besides quite a number of smaller houses. The two large hotels---the Piney Woods and the Mitchell House---are kept by Northern landlords; the Mitchell House, by Mr. Welch, formerly of the St. Nicholas in this city and the Piney Woods by the proprietor of the Catskill Mountain House. The tables at these hotels are supplied with all the luxuries to be found at the Brunswick and Hotel Dam in this City. The breakfast table is loaded with Indian River oranges. The cost is \$4 per day.

Last Winter, both these houses turned away more guests than were sufficient to fill another large hotel. The streets of Thomasville are wide and finely shaded with trees. The roads, stretching out like spokes from a wheel, are turnpiked for a distance of ten miles from the city. Only five rods from the Piney Woods Hotel, you enter a forest of large pine trees called "Yankee Paradise." The underbrush has been cleared off, and seats placed here and there for lounging. A band discourses excellent music every day at each hotel. The town is well supplied with book stores, dry goods, drug stores, livery stables, etc. The principal sport is that of shooting quail. In the evening there is dancing in the large parlors, and card parties here and there. "Exclusives" are not wanted or tolerated. Mrs. M A. Bower, lessee of the Piney Woods, manages to make all the guests acquainted with each other in the course of a week after their arrival. Judge Hopkins, the Mayor, is constantly projecting all sorts of out-door amusements for the whole population. There is a skating rink, a race track, and bicycle track for those who like such sports. There are two weekly newspapers, the *Times* and *Enterprise*. THE TIMES and other leading New-York papers arrive there at 3 o'clock the next day after publication. G. Q. C.

New-York, Friday, Dec. 25, 1886

Source: *The New York Times*, December 25, 1886, p. 2.

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Document 2

Thomasville Georgia: The Health Resort (brochure)

[Excerpt]

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RACES

Much has been said, principally by the politicians, about the relations between the races at the South. That they are perfectly kindly here will be testified to by the thousands and thousands of Northern people who have spent weeks and months here during the past ten years.

Every man, white or black, is free to think and act for himself, so he does not violate the law. And that law is made to apply to all without distinction of race, color or previous condition. Under these relations the colored people of this section have prospered. They have acquired property and homes, both in town and country, and are perfectly protected in all their rights, civil, political and religious. They receive every possible encouragement to become good citizens of a common country, and it is due them to say that they are orderly, law-abiding and contented, and are availing themselves of the opportunities afforded to obtain information and an education.

Source: *Thomasville, Georgia: The Health Resort* (1891), Box 6164, Thomasville History Center

Document Three

THOMASVILLE AND ITS CITIZENS

Thomasville is considered one of the most healthy spots in the State and is a regular rendezvous for Northern tourists during the winter season, as its large hotels and many boarding houses demonstrate. During this season a thriving business is always carried on.

We arrived in that town on Sunday amid a shower of rain which continued until the following morning when it cleared up.

Among the colored businessmen and those who have spoken kindly and acted encouragingly toward the TRIBUNE are Mr J H Miner, the popular tonsorial artist on Jackson near Broad street. He always give his customers a royal welcome.

Mr. F. Paine, on Jackson street, one of the leading shoe-makers of the town and is doing a thriving business.

T D Donaldson, Esq., is among the foremost men of the town and is a professional baker on Jackson street.

San Souci Bar, Capt E Hamilton, proprietor, is one of the popular resorts of the town. He keeps on hand the choicest kinds of wines, liquors, and segars, runs a pool and billiard table. Among the fine brands of segar "Sweet Ethel," with the photograph of his only daughter on the box, is the most popular.

Mr P H Hill, is the engineer at the city water works. He being employed in that capacity for the past ten years and is looked upon as being efficient in every respect.

Mr. J H Horton, is a wheelright on Madison street, and a true race lover is he, and always ready to aid his people. He is conducting a thriving business.

Jan Loving, Esq., is the proprietor of the well-known saloon on Calhoun street. He has a fine supply of choice liquors, wines, and segars. He is always pleased to see his friends.

MR W M Gordy has one of the finest barber shops in the town and is among the finest in the profession.

Mrs Charity Toox, has the best home for accommodation in the town. She can accommodate fully 50 persons at a time, and treatment is the best that can be accorded. Whenever you visit Thomasville don't fail to call on her.

We were chaperoned by Rev J H Smith, who did everything to make it pleasant for us.

Being called home on account of the death of Mr. Desverney, we were unable to call upon any more of our friends.

Source: *Savannah Tribune*, July 16, 1892, page 2

Document Four

ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS GONE

PINEY WOODS HOTEL AND THE FAMOUS SANDY BOTTOM COMPLETELY DESTROYED

Thomasville Misses Total Destruction by a Wind's Breath—Fire Started in a Dozen Different Parts of Town and Causes a Fearful Night

One Hundred Thousand Gone

At one o'clock this morning Thomasville, after having been threatened with total destruction from fire, realized that \$100,000 had gone up in smoke and flame, during the wildest night the city had ever known.

Entire Town Threatened

The Piney Woods, the famous resort hotel, is in ashes, half of lower Jackson Street on both sides has been wiped out, two negro houses on MaClean avenue are gone, and it is a blessing of providence that the threatened ruin that hung over the entire town was averted.

Of Incendiary Origin

The fire started in the basement of the Piney Woods Hotel, near the central portion, and almost beyond the shadow of a doubt was incendiary in origin. The alarm was turned in a few moments before nine o'clock. When the department got to the scene the flames were licking up the big 200 room structure., and within an hour it was burned to the ground.

Cottages Too

The old Baptist church that was used as a cottage was destroyed, also the cottage occupied by the caretaker, Miss Lewis. The department saved the surrounding houses, including the A & B depot, the Randall House, Elders' stables and Palin's shop.

Flying Embers

There was a stiff breeze blowing, and burning cinders and flakes of flaming wood were carried for blocks. It seemed certain that the entire north-east portion of the town was doomed. The little force of fire fighters were overwhelmed , and telegrams asking aid were sent to Bainbridge, Quitman and Valdosta. After the roof of the hotel fell in the danger was lessened, and our neighbors were notified that they would not be needed.

Many Catch, Two Burn

At least a dozen houses caught on fire from flying embers, but only two burned down. These were tenement houses on Maclean avenue, owned by W. C. Snodgrass, and back of his residence. This loss was about \$400.

Other houses that burst into flame were: Mrs. Maria Townsend's residence on Jackson, the house across the street owned by W. C. Pittman, T. N. Hopkins' home, Mrs. Ellen Mallette's residence on Dawson, Mrs. J. S. Hopkins, next door to Mrs. Mallette's and stumps on Remington avenue caught fire. Almost every house had a sentinel on the roof, armed with bucket or garden-hose to quench incipient flames.

The Loss

The value of the hotel was set by M. R. Malette, who manages the property, at \$60,000, including contents. The exact amount of insurance could not be ascertained last night, but was probably between \$15,000 and \$20,000. The amount carried when the hotel was occupied was \$40,000, but it has been vacant since April first, 1905, and since that time many of the policies were canceled and some companies refused renewal when the policies expired. The contents of the hotel were bedroom furniture, dining room furniture and silver. Most of this last was saved, but very little of the furniture was taken out. Volunteer workers saved a pool and billiard table.

Owned by Smith Estate

The hotel was the property of the heirs of Alex Smith. These are June H. Smith, Redden Smith, Sr., Mrs. L. E. Finn, Mrs. Cora Cassels, of Thomasville, and Thomas Smith and Mrs. Jackson of Valdosta, son and daughter of the late Simon Smith. It was built in 1884, and opened for business under the management of Mrs. M.A. Bowers, on January 1st, 1885. After the death of Mrs. Bowers the hotel was managed by her son, W.E. Davies, and following him by Harvey and Wood, who gave up the lease one year ago. For twenty years the hotel was one of the most famous resort inns in the United States.

From the Ghetto

Disaster Never Come Singly and Sandy Bottom Catches.

Hardly had the town drawn a sigh of relief over the passing of danger, when the cry of fire was raised from "Sandy Bottom" All the fighting apparatus was in use and it was some time before a stream of water could be put on the new blaze. In the meantime the "Ghetto" was doomed. The destruction was complete from the upper end of Thompson's Iron Works to the brick building on the corner of Jackson and Stevens, occupied by Robert Mitchell. The fire crossed the street and ate up all the shanties from Arthur's photograph tent to the brick block of W.P. Grantham.

The Losers

This row was owned entirely by B.H. Wright, and occupied by negro restaurants, blacksmith shops, etc. The heaviest loss fell upon Hammond Daniel, the colored merchant. He owned his store building. It, with his stock of merchandise and his barn, he valued at about \$6,000, with no insurance.

A frame building next to Thompson's owned by J. L. Beverly and occupied by J. T. Vann as a meat market, was the southern terminus on the left. No insurance.

Two story brick building owned by S. Sampson and occupied by T. Sampson, with a stock for fruit and confectionaries. The stock was not insured.

Wooden Building owned by J. L. Beverly, formerly occupied by Nick Sampson, the famous now vacant.

Wooden building owned by T. P. Applewhite and occupied by Charley Wheeler, colored, as a barber shop.

Four wooden buildings owned by Homer Williams and occupied by Hendricks and Atkinson's meat market; a restaurant owned by the same concern; Ed Hamilton, colored, pool room, and Robert Jenkins, colored, barber shop.

The Jeffers residence and store owned by Mrs. D.C. Montgomery, of Merrillville and occupied by negroes.

The rate of insurance in this neighborhood was [not] very high, and so far as could be learned Dr. McIntosh was the only one of the losers who carried one cent of insurance.

Source: *Weekly Times Enterprise and South Georgia Progress* [Thomasville]. April 13, 1906.

Document Five

{Percy Chubb, Hunting Diary, Excerpts}

Dec. 30, 1935

Rode George all day. Total bag nine birds. The other guns(?) found seven covies on Baker in the P.M. and got about 17 birds, Father shooting.

There is a great rivalry among the colored boys who pick up the doves. I wounded one bird which fell in the field near Caroline. About the same time she dropped a bird in about the same place. My man "Amos n' Andy" arrived on the spot about the same time as Buddy Cason did for Caroline. Pretty soon my man came back followed by a stream of reproaches and carrying only the one dove that had been found.

A little while later we were paid off. I hit a bird that fluttered down about ten yards from Caroline. A few minutes later, as Amos 'n' Andy started over there, Buddy called out "That bird done got up again."

It may be that it had, and the only reason that I had to doubt it was the grin of retribution on Buddy's face as he told us so.

February 4, 1937

Rain off and on in the morning & we did not shoot. After lunch it was overcast and muggy but cleared and cooled off with a gentle northwest wind. Father and I shot on the home plantation after lunch. Corine was with us for over an hour but never fired a shot. In the early afternoon the scenting conditions were the worst I have ever seen. We saw four or five covies without a single point, and with one exception could never locate the birds when we followed them. I got one shot at a wild turkey way out, but though I took some feathers out of him he did not come down.

A little after four, we picked up the dogs and rode out to the twin gates. Just about then the weather conditions changed and we began to find birds. We worked around the back edge of the plantation in beautiful country in one of the loveliest evenings I have ever seen. At one point we saw two more turkey, but though I carried my gun, loaded, across my knees I never got a shot at one. We ended up the afternoon with a bag of twelve quail, and by slow shooting I missed a chance to add to it a [ca—illegible]

After the last covey, I galloped in to the village from the pecan orchard and waited there for Father. In the last of the sunset it was one of the most peaceful scenes I can remember. A few chickens were fluttering about in front of the mule pen. An old mule leaning on the fence watched them, motionless. The smoke from the chimneys was rising almost straight, and in the background was the murmur of negro voices and the timbale of a piano. Father rode in, and we walked up to the house together.

[n.d.] Percy Chubb Shooting Record #1, 1935-6, 1936-7, pp. 17-18, 20. Transcribed from handwritten diary.

June 23, 2023