



THOMASVILLE

HISTORY CENTER



Abridged Interpretive Plan
2022

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Institution

MISSION

The Thomasville History Center enriches the community through the exploration and discovery of its history, people, and stories.

VISION

Our history begins here. Let us start you on the journey.

Ideology

As a living institution dependent on community support and private funding, the Thomasville History Center strives for all people who interact with the History Center, its physical and digital presence, and its various representatives including staff, government, and volunteers to be impressed with the following ideas about the History Center itself:

- It is vital to the preservation of Thomasville and Thomas County's history, including but not limited to its stories, artifacts, documents, and images.
- It handles and shares those things in a professional and responsible manner.
- It is the premier authority of Thomasville and Thomas County history.
- It shares those stories, artifacts, documents, and images by an accurate, compelling, and balanced method that is interesting, relevant, and fair to all but those who harbor extremist beliefs.
- It is worthy of financial support, either through membership, donation, or purchase of services on an individual level, and membership, grants, or sponsorship on an institutional level.
- It manages that financial support in a professional and responsible manner.
- All who enter the Thomasville History Center and Lapham-Patterson House feel welcome.
- The services it provides and events it conducts are worthwhile.
- It is an active and friendly institution within Thomasville and Thomas County's institutional community.

Values

Accuracy, authenticity, intentionality, collaboration, relevancy, classic, enduring, and purposeful.

Theme

A part of place, a place apart: Experience our community's unique contributions to the evolution of the South and modern America.

It is neither our goal nor desire to merely transfer a series of historic factoids to visitors, but rather convey a series of Sub-Themes and chronological periods that best define the evolution of the area through the use of historic narratives, images, documents, and artifacts that impress the concept of Thomasville/Thomas County as "a part of place, a place apart." It is a product of serendipity and also of careful planning. It would not exist without both.

All people of Thomasville and Thomas County without regard to social, racial, religious, or economic status have contributed to the narrative of our collective history.

Sub-Themes

Preservation



Thomas Countians, and particularly, the community of Thomasville have shown great interest in the preservation of its history. Whether adapting and reusing historic structures, rehabilitating historic neighborhoods, or establishing organizations, initiatives, and institutions dedicated to the region's cultural heritage, the result is a community that recognizes and promotes the relevance of its rich history.

Adaptation



Since early settlement, Thomas County residents have experienced and responded to the effects and influence of outside individuals, businesses, political trends, and religious/civic groups. In the Red Hills region, the community's responses to outside pressures -- both in support of and in opposition to -- have necessitated strategic and fortuitous financial, cultural, and environmental decisions whose effects appear in the material culture as well as the recounting of community stories and events.

Ecology



As the northern point of the Red Hills Region, the physical environment plays a pivotal role in agriculture, recreation, and the economy. The upland pine ecosystem is defined by its old-growth longleaf pine, slope forests, fertile red-clay soils, abundant lakes, rolling hills, and valley terrain. The environment has served as a lifeline between coastal and northern wildlands for millennia. Residents of Thomas County have capitalized on the region's ecological treasures and fostered a progressive approach to its conservation. The sheer number of extant plantations, hunting preserves, areas under conservancy, and quail habitats make it unique in the Southeast.

Opportunity



Thomas Countians have created economic opportunities to advance the community through its resourceful natural and human capital and those economic resources (financial, subject matter experts, etc.) that accompany newcomers to the area. From the railroad to the fertile land, to its geographical location, the County and its inhabitants have capitalized on these circumstances to prosper and grow. The result of this fiscal agency is shown in the economically advanced status of Thomas County as compared to some of its geographic neighbors.

Identity



Since the founding of Thomas County, identity has been illustrated by various groups who function in both separate and intersecting arenas. These sub-sets of the community have organized in a hierarchical structure, with racial identity at the apex, followed by socio-economic identity, then religious, educational, and civic affiliations. Encircling these sub-sets are geographical identities divided between the "County" and "City" populations (see diagram below). The final part of "Identity" refers to the way in which Thomas County residents have and continue to exhibit a high level of civic pride and self-promotion to the betterment of the community's economy and brand recognition.

Chronological Eras



Early Environment (14,000 BC-1825)

- Old-growth longleaf pine ecological system
- Pre-historic and historic Indigenous populations of the Red Hills region



Antebellum (1825-1861)

- Economic, social, racial, and cultural system of plantation agribusiness
- Georgia's westward expansion and settlement patterns



Civil War & Reconstruction (1861-1875)

- Thomasville/Thomas County an agricultural and human resource for the Confederacy
- Fall of the plantation system and rise of sharecropping; reverberations of enslavement through anti-Black violence, racial segregation, unequal treatment under the law, and economic abuses on public, private, and personal levels



The Resort Era (1875-1906)

- The self-determined reinvention of community and the rise of the winter resort era and its lasting legacy on the built and cultural landscape of Thomas County



Industry, Modernity, & The World Wars (1906-1945)

- New industries like Flowers Foods and Sunnyland offered employment for many
- Philanthropic contributions of plantation owners like John D. Archbold's establishment of Archbold Hospital benefited the community



Civil Rights & The Cold War (1945-1989)

- Community leaders sought peaceful solutions during periods of social change
- Several architectural and natural landmarks were demolished and otherwise altered which led to an interest in preserving the natural and man-made look of Thomasville and Thomas County.



Post-Modernism & Preservation (1970-Present)

- Investments in the built and cultural landscape during the Resort Era brought considerable wealth and influence.