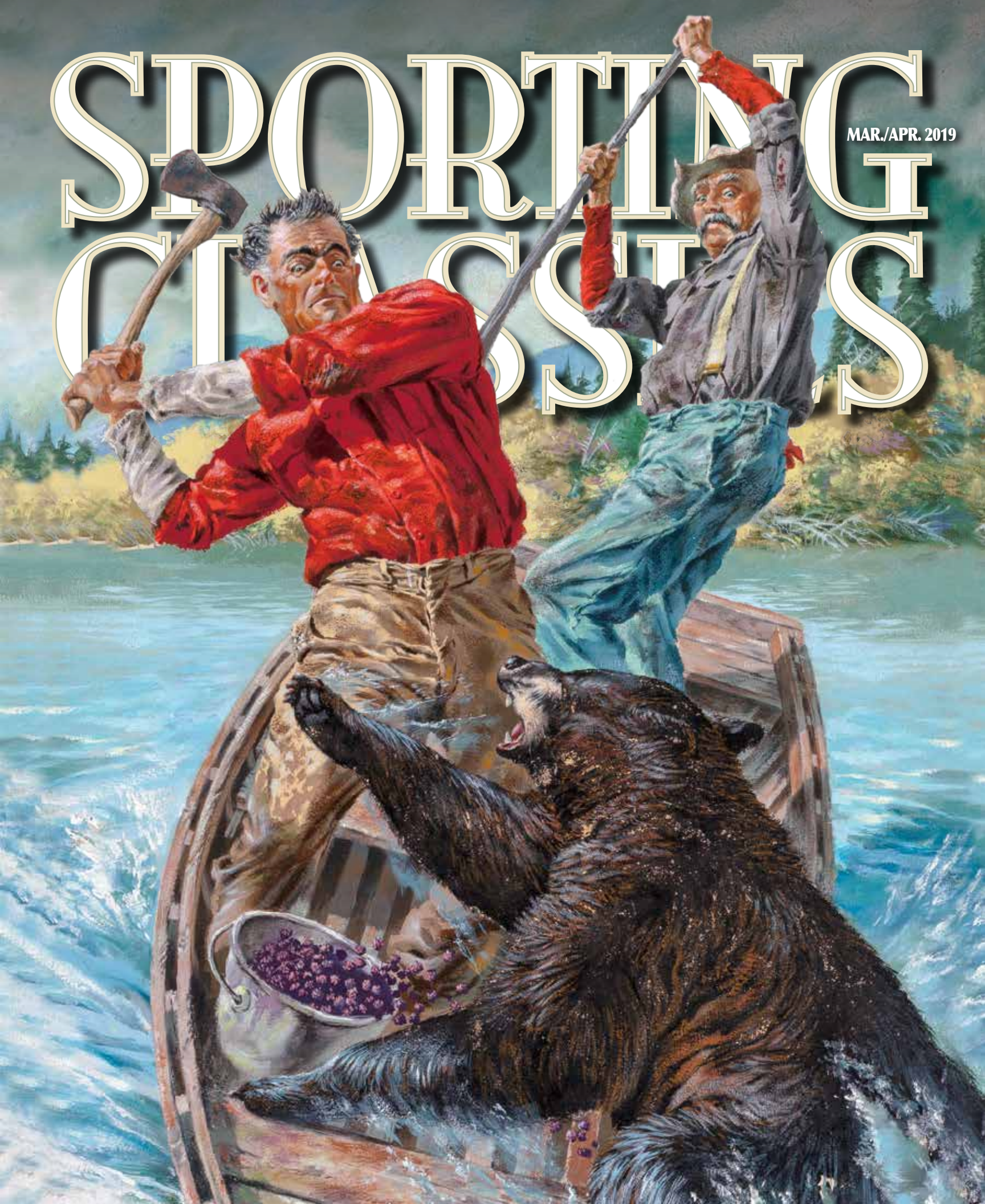


SPORTING CLASSICS

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The Lowcountry is in their Blood



BY ROGER PINCKNEY

Young Davis Allred threw another log on the fire, sparks flew, the smoke rolled and his old Lab inched closer to catch the heat. One eye was milky and he'd learned to crawl on his belly rather than struggle to his feet. His nose was still keen, his heart even keener, but there weren't too many more hunts left in him.

But the 13-year-old Allred still had a lifetime of memories yet to make. He was fresh out of the deer woods and damp from the afternoon drizzle. He backed up to the fire till his britches steamed. A north wind mumbled around the eaves, the sashes rattled, a full moon ghosted along through a low-hanging, wind-driven scud.

Located a few miles east of Yemassee, South Carolina, Tomotley Plantation is a thousand acres of ricefields and high ground, with the most exquisite avenue of oaks anywhere in the Lowcountry, and hence, the world.

Tomotley was part of a 48,000-acre royal land grant made to a British nobleman in 1698. The devil is in the details but the angels are, too. A minor historical quirk can have monumental contemporary consequences. "Modern" deeds, those post-dating the Revolution, read to the high-water mark, while the "king's grant" titles extend to low water, a considerable difference in a flat country with an eight-foot tide.

The owners of Tomotley, and all the plantations hereabouts, had the right to develop salt and brackish marshes into freshwater ricefields, which they did. Commercial at first, these ricefields

Clockwise from top: Built in 1910, Tomotley's main house looks out over a lake filled with flounder and redfish. • At times in the fall, ducks by the thousands flock to the plantation's 250 acres of flooded ricefields. • The spectacular avenue of oaks was planted in the 1820s.



Davis Allred hefts a mixed bag of ducks from Tomotley Plantation's ricefields.

eventually became some of the best waterfowl habitat in the Southeast. Of a thousand Tomotley acres, fully one-quarter are under water. More than a hundred acres in rice.

But before ducks, there was slavery, secession and Sherman. Twenty miles from Tomotley, there is a full-size billboard on the south shoulder of State 462. "Damn Sherman and his Army of Thieves and Arsonists All to Hell." Sentiments still widely held.

The Tomotley big house got the torch in early February 1865, as did every church, every house, courthouse,







Author Roger Pinckney and Sporting Classics Editor Chuck Wechsler enjoyed their morning duck hunt at Tomotley.

Left: The plantation is laced with stands of stately southern pines.

Opposite: A flock of ducks approaches a Tomotley ricefield where a lone egret stands guard. • In the main house, custom built-ins and a working fireplace bring warmth to the spacious living room.

outhouse within 50 miles. But on Tomotley, General Sherman must have run out of matches. Its stables, barns and carriage houses survived.

After the smoke cleared, Tomotley was subject to court pleadings as a prior purchase was made with \$75,000 of Confederate currency, suddenly worthless. The judge ordered Tomotley sold and proceeds parceled among the aggrieved. The land passed through a long string of northern transplants, one of whom built the existing house in 1910—6,000 square feet, five bedrooms, six baths.

Davis' great grandfather, Billy Mixon, bought the place in 1990. His great grandma pitched a fit. She was used to

Located in the historic ACE Basin of South Carolina, Tomotley Plantation is now available for \$10,495,000. This elegant 1,010-acre estate features seven buildings, the legendary Oak Allée, a large quail woods and world-class duck hunting in its storied ricefields.

waterfront, by damn, and her husband had to dig her a lake in front of the big house before she would move in. Fourteen acres, now full of mud-flap flounder, black drum and redfish too big to keep.

HAVING FREE RUN of Tomotley is the only life the Davis and his dog have ever known. His daddy, Grey Allred, amplified what his son was just beginning to understand.

"You can introduce traditions and pastimes to your children, teach them and encourage their interests, but to see the impact is incredible," said Grey. "The outdoor pursuits of the Lowcountry are in his blood, and a big part of that has been Tomotley. He's known for years that the day would come that we would probably sell, and right now, we're both focused on using the time we have left to make more memories."

The dog knew it all, like old dogs always do. He didn't say a thing. He didn't really need to.

DUCKS AND GEESE MOVE on the full moon, lay up and rest at sunrise. Hunkered down in blind of palm fronds, we were buzzed by a large flock of black-bellied whistling ducks, Mexican ducks, they call them here, my first. We blazed away to scant effect, then managed to connect with a brace of mottled ducks. We were picking up the decoys when the wading birds sifted in among us—egrets, ibis and roseate spoonbills, wheeling and turning like angels in flight. A fleeting moment frozen in time, worth a limit of ducks—10 limits.

But we couldn't know any of that just yet, while a boy fetched up another armload of wood, the wind sighed ancient secrets and an old dog inched closer to the hearth to ease his bones. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THE INVESTOR WEBSITE AT WWW.TOMOTLEYPLANTATIONSALE.COM.

For more details, contact listing agents CJ Brown at Jon Kohler & Associates, (803) 480-1260; Wise Batten at Wise Batten Inc., (803) 943-6983; or Grey Allred at Carolina Once, (843) 224-9647.

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