A 2010 Thomasville Report
This annual report is dedicated to the history of our great community and the individuals who lived and worked here.

The mayors’ letters in this report are based on historical facts and research of actual council meeting minutes; however, they were not actually penned by the individual. We took literary license with the personality of the correspondence.

The cover photo is a bird’s eye view of the side of the Mitchell House Hotel from the Stuart’s Hotel. The green space is now the Business Exchange.
For 66 years, since 1944, city managers have served the city of Thomasville. I am the 11th individual to have the privilege of running the day-to-day operations of our community, guided with the vision of the elected citizenry.

If you look at the minutes of Thomasville’s City Council meetings whether from 1873, 1944 or 2010 you see a common thread in the leadership. The details are different but the process is driven by a desire to make our homes and businesses safe, promote economic prosperity and provide basic services such as water and electricity.

This year we made strides in public safety, improved our Internet infrastructure, revived some of the legends in our historic cemeteries and took the first steps in our landfill toward a future “green” initiative.

We hope you enjoy these mayoral letters composed to capture the innovative spirit of the formative era in Thomasville. We also hope in another hundred years history will view this century of leaders as those of our past, as new pioneers.

Best regards

Steve Sykes
February, 1918

To Thomasville Citizens,
Many improvements have been made in our ability to fight fires thanks to the ongoing work of our fire companies and progressive city ordinances.

After a fire destroyed Piney Woods Hotel, your Aldermen mandated that within the business district all buildings should be made of brick. More recent ordinances defined the details of proper chimney construction.

For those brave men who fight fires, the mayor has exempted them from the street tax and as early as 1873 compensated them $60 a year plus $5 for every fire on which they threw water.

Now after much consideration, to decrease further fire risk in the city, we have made it unlawful to keep rubbish in any basement or outhouse. If you are cited by the fire chief, you have 24 hours to remove same rubbish without a fine.

Sincerely,

W.M. Cooper
Mayor
Circa 1919, Engine #1 was the pride of the fire department. The fire department faced Crawford Street, much as it does today.
Fire service for Thomasville’s citizens has come a long way since 1918 when the City Council took action to lower the risk of fire in the community by forbidding “the storage of rubbish in basements and outhouses.”

Fire service in Thomasville today is among the best in the nation. Thomasville Fire Rescue was named in 2010 in the top 1.3 percent of fire departments nationwide with the award of the Insurance Services Office’s (ISO) prestigious Class 2 rating. Only 16 other fire departments in Georgia and only 584 other fire departments throughout the nation have earned this distinction. And Thomasville Fire Rescue earned this distinction in the same year that the City Council began to implement a plan to eliminate the fire tax. In 2010, citizens saw a 42 percent reduction in the fire tax millage rate, reducing the fire tax on a $125,000 home from $125 in 2009 to approximately $72 in 2010. Plans are for Thomasville Fire Rescue’s funding to be primarily derived from profits from the City’s utilities services.

The City’s fire fighters are highly trained professionals equipped with state-of-the-art tools to provide fire protection and suppression. With a long tradition of dedication to the community, these men and women are committed to providing superior service to our citizens today and into the future.
A deluge gun is capable of 750 gallons a minute; aimable and hands-free for other tasks.

A driver/engineer manages critical flow information on all hoses from the control panel.

Center mount controls keep an engineer safely off the street as compared to side mount controls.

From all hoses, a total water flow is 2000 gallons a minute.

A bumper mounted 50 ft. hose assists with car fires.

ENGINE #1
State-of-the-art fire suppression equipment
In 1906, residents paid 75 cents per light for 1 to 2 lights. Business and office customers paid $1.00 for 1 to 2 lights.

January 1, 1906

To Thomasville Citizens,
This is a landmark time for our city. Today, we assume ownership and operation of the privately-owned Thomasville Electric System Company for a price of $32,500.

A seven-person citizen committee comprised of your neighbors demonstrated abiding confidence in this enterprising yet solemn decision with a public donation of $3,000, which will cover our first payment of $2,500.

Alderman Mallette proposed monthly electric rates that we believe you will find to your liking. Rates are based on your number of lights. A complete rate schedule is posted in the Market House.

We can now ensure reliable lighting for our parks, streets, and public buildings.

Sincerely,

S.A. Roddenberry
Mayor
D.R. Pringle, known by all as Rhett, ran the Thomasville Electric System for 33 years. This 1919 photo is of the power plant which now houses the Energy Control Center and Electric Operations on Fletcher Street.
energy

Biomass, wind, solar, water and geothermal are defined as renewable by the Department of Energy. Energy from a landfill is biomass.

In 2010, the City completed the construction of a methane gas collection system at the Thomasville-Thomas County Landfill. Our state-of-the-art landfill, which first opened in 1975, is projected to amply serve our community for two more decades.

The City undertook this project, not only as an environmental initiative to dispose of methane gas cleanly, but also as a potential source of a renewable, sustainable energy.

This new system collects gases that are produced when organic materials break down or decay in the landfill. Methane, the primary landfill gas collected, is the largest component of natural gas, so when the volumes of methane are adequate, the City will be able to generate electricity from the collected gas. Since landfill gas is generated 24 hours per day, this waste product can become a reliable, sustainable source of energy.

Until the time the City has sufficient volumes to convert the landfill gas into electricity, it will be safely burned off with a flare. Ultimately the electricity generated may either be used to power the office facilities located at the landfill or will be placed onto the electric grid as an energy resource.

Over 100 years ago, we launched a power business with coal and steam. Today, new technologies offer fresh ways to think about energy.
THOMASVILLE - Thomas County Landfill

Future generation of electricity

Methane gas collection system

Blower

Condensate collection tank

Flare
"... from December to April, inclusive, there are very few locations ... with better climatic conditions than ... Thomasville...

The days are comparatively few that invalids cannot go in the open air with comfort; ... they will find it difficult to secure any location on the mainland where the conditions as a whole are more favorable to their improvement and comfort."

Page 875, Volume LXXV
Harper's Monthly

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December 8, 1889

To Thomasville Citizens,

With the increase of winter visitors as a result of national publicity, such as the article in Harper’s Monthly Magazine, our hotel occupancy and local economy have grown. This New York City publication named Thomasville as a prime winter destination in the same company as Italy and southern France.

Because of our Northern guests, the council has passed a livestock ordinance. Between December 1 through April 15 it is unlawful for any cow or steer to run at large on the streets of Broad, Hansell and Smith or near the railway.

We will publish this letter along with official minutes of this meeting in our local organ, The Daily Times Enterprise, and post it in the Market House.

Sincerely,

H.W. Hopkins
Mayor

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Page 875, Volume LXXV
Harper's Monthly
Taking advantage of maturing print technologies, Harper & Brothers issued their first magazine in 1850.

Regarded lavish for the time, the cover art often featured woodcut illustrations.
Advanced technologies profoundly change the way we communicate. In 1850, it was a printing press that made it cost effective to reach 200,000 readers. In 2010, a software infrastructure, DOCSIS 3.0, made the worldwide web accessible in milliseconds.

Rose.Net first burst onto the scene in 1996 with dial-up Internet service offering ‘blazing rates’ of 28.8 kilobits per second, nearly triple the 9,600 baud widely available at the time. By 1999, the City built the CNS Broadband system, largely in response to customer demand for higher bandwidth and advanced services. With CNS in place, Rose.Net customers could choose speeds up to 1.54 megabits per second, and the race for even higher bandwidth began.

Why the need for speed and new infrastructure? The way we use the Internet continues to expand. Social media like Facebook and Twitter, live video streaming of business meetings or sporting events, and emerging applications mandate speed enhancements for users.

Not only did our DOCSIS upgrade provide faster speeds, it also provided more efficient use of bandwidth, thereby reducing the possibility of network congestion when Internet usage is high.

The Internet today is a far cry from its early simplicity. Our Rose.Net customers can expect the City to remain at the forefront of technology.

MSNBC, a national news network, interviewed our City merchants and staff in 2010 for a segment that aired early in 2011.

View the segment:
www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/41798041/#41798041
With DOCSIS 3.0 technology, new data speeds mean less waiting on downloads and faster Internet surfing.

Residential customers can choose Internet speeds up to 22 MBPS. Commercial customers can upgrade to speeds of 50 MBPS.
January 3, 1893

To Thomasville Citizens,
We are in the midst of our busy tourist season. Thousands arrive here over the winter.

We are happy to report that there is ample water supply as our population swells.
The largest users, The Piney Woods and Mitchell House Hotels, are honorable customers that pay, in advance, $125 twice a year.

The Boulevard, our two-mile thoroughfare circling the city bustles with those riding bicycles and carriages enjoying our pine-scented air. Congestion has not become a problem as yet.

Seasonal peddlers, like those operating flying ponies, the daguerreians, drummers, and transfer hacks must pay a license fee. This is a standard business practice.

In March, we wish to hire a city sexton to provide proper care for our cemeteries. Interested persons should apply.

Sincerely,

H.W. Hopkins
Mayor
The formal opening at the Piney Woods Hotel took place on January 11, 1885, and one of the items of interest was a handsome marble drinking fountain in the rotunda from which poured pure water from the Thomasville Water Works.
local color

Henry Ossian Flipper, Thomasville’s native son, was the 1st black graduate of West Point Military Academy. In 1998, our newest post office was named for the lieutenant.

Local color is defined as the ‘distinctive, picturesque characteristics of a place.’ It is those distinct characteristics of our community that lured tourists in the late 1800s and remain equally inviting today. The character of our community invites all of us to live, work and play here.

Our downtown remains a successful commercial district with new events such as First Fridays, featuring music, sidewalk sales, and car shows, on the first Friday of each month. Familiar annual events that draw us together—our Rose Show and Festival, the CNS sponsored July 4th Fireworks Show and Victorian Christmas bring thousands of attendees.

An important preservation project of 2010 was the restoration efforts of our historic cemeteries located near our business district. These cemeteries provide a tangible link to Thomasville’s past, revealing both the struggles and triumphs of those who helped shape our community. With assistance from Hands on Thomas County volunteers, monuments and fencing in the Flipper Cemetery were cleaned. Grant funds assisted the monument restoration in both the Flipper and Old Cemeteries. To identify hidden or unmarked graves or landmarks, this funding supports ground penetrating radar to safely “see” what is below the surface.

Since the days of the Thomasville Resort Era, our community has been called special, that special place we have the privilege of calling home.
The fan design on the top of the monument was a popular motif on women’s embroidery.

Susan Smith came to Thomasville with her husband Simeon from Rhode Island.

Some of the beautiful iron work was moved from the Courthouse grounds.

Paradise Park, today, is land purchased by Simeon Smith and designated public space by his estate.

The Old Cemetery

Susan P. Smith
Born: Jan. 14, 1812
Died: Dec. 12, 1874
If I Were Mayor

If I were mayor I would focus on serving the poor in our community, improving the local economy and creating more community time...

...A committee of business and government leaders would be organized to improve our economy. There is lots of space around town for an alternative clean energy business. Another idea would be to get a large family/environmentally friendly manufacturer like Seventh Generation. They would use all kinds of different skilled people...

essay by
Alex Kimbler

Alex Kimbler, Thomas County Middle School student, won a regional “If I Were Mayor” essay contest offered by the GA Municipal Association. He won a $250 savings bond for his essay.

Camille Payne, Mayor; Greg Hobbs, District 1; Alex Kimbler, student; Max Beverly, Mayor Pro Tem, District 2; Roy Campbell, member-at-large; David Lewis, District 1.
City Departments

Administration
Communications
Country Oaks Golf Course
Customer Service
Engineering
Finance
Fire
Housing & Community Development
Human Resources
Information Technology
Main Street/Downtown Thomasville
Parks and Facilities
Planning and Zoning
Police
Purchasing
Technology Resources
Thomasville Regional Airport
Utilities
Visitors Center
Budgets have grown and systems are more complicated in 2010 when compared to the 1907 audit report.

Yet it’s clear that the City has shifted its reliance from property taxes to utilities revenues to fund services.

Tax revenues as a percentage of total revenues to the community have dropped from around 28 percent in 1907 to approximately 6 percent in 2010.

The Utilities funds or ‘Public Industries’ as they were called in 1907 have grown significantly, with revenues from utilities representing nearly 82 percent of the City’s revenues in 2010 as opposed to only 19 percent in 1907.
The Numbers Past

This schedule five is one of six schedules, along with a balance sheet of assets and liabilities from the City’s 1907 audit, submitted by Charles Metz, auditor.

He made three recommendations in this document.

1. Hire a first class bookkeeper.
2. All accounting work be kept in the Treasurer’s office.
3. Institute a penalty for late water and light consumers rather than continue the 20 percent discount for timely payments. With 700 bills monthly, the discount created 250,000 entries yearly. A penalty instead of a deduction would save work and expense.
Line artwork in this report drawn by Valarie Nichols. Thanks to the Thomas County Historical Society for images and research.