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POMEGRANATES & WILLIAMSBURG CREAM WARE
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Primland's Proper Edwardian Shoot

In Henry County, CLARKE JONES steps back in time into 14,000-acre Primland Resort. Once a firewood farm, Primland is now a European-style hunting preserve. Plus, TOM PRUNIER tells the colorful history of Primland, from moonshiners to NASCAR drivers.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF GREENOUGH

I've followed the directions but the roads are becoming narrower. I begin to think of breaking a man-rule and asking for directions, if only there were someone to ask, when suddenly I find myself on a modern driveway in front of a closed steel gate. Beside my car window is a cedar covered phone box.

I haven't seen a soul for the last four miles, so I push a button on the phone's keypad, hoping some kind soul will answer. "Good evening, Mr. Jones, we've been expecting you," says a warm female voice on the other end. "Please drive forward." And with that angelic invitation, the steel gate opens. As I move past, the gate closes behind and, out of the corner of my eye, I notice the first of several high-mounted cameras following my movements. It's at this moment that I think of a James Bond movie but instead I've just entered Primland, the 14,000-acre resort (that's right — 14,000 acres) at Meadows of Dan, Virginia.

A short drive brings me to the reception building with an Orvis shop, meeting and dining room, and kitchen. The gathered staff is so warm and friendly I get that "nobody's THIS nice" feeling that makes me glad I've left the real world. Like most native Virginians, I've a great affection for the past; so when an opportunity comes to shoot driven pheasant as it was done during the Edwardian days of King George V, I take it. When I arrive at Primland for their European Driven Shoot, I am treated as if Lord Leicester and Edward VII had personally invited me to Sandringham. I am escorted up a 3,200-foot mountain to a private chalet on top. My lodge for the night, The Woodchuck, has a view of the lights of Greensboro, North Carolina, over 60 miles away. The view alone is worth the drive.

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Primland goes to certain lengths to present the Edwardian feel of a driven shoot, and you will have more fun if you leave a tight attitude at the gate. Just go with it. You should at the very least wear a tie and leave anything "camo" at home. You will be assigned a loader who will certainly be well dressed in period attire. Bring two shotguns — either side-by-sides or over-and-unders.

I am taken by horse-drawn wagon to the location of the first drive and find my numbered post where I am to stand when the drive begins. I do not stray from my post or attempt to shoot pheasants flying over my neighbor's station. This is considered bad form, not to mention dangerous. I begin to notice that, for all the costume and pageantry, this is not going to be easy. I am standing on the side of a hill on an old logging road with trees on both sides, and the birds are coming over me at a range of 40 feet and higher and very fast. I may have only a two- to three-second window.

A horn sounds, the drive starts. I feel myself tense with anticipation and make a mental note to exhale. At first nothing — everything is quiet. There is a slight rustle of leaves above and to the right of the station next to me. Then an agitated cackle, then another. My heart starts beating faster. Any moment now. The cackling begins to get louder, as if a coven of witches has been awakened and is not at all happy about it. A single pheasant bursts through the tree line over the station to my left. Although we are ready, the bird's height and speed catches everyone off guard and it sails over like a feathered missile without a shot fired. Two more pheasants fly over the station to my right. A shot is fired, nothing falls.

Then all hell breaks loose. The birds are coming steadily now, and I get my first shot. I shoot twice at the same bird. Nothing. My loader is trying to hand me a loaded gun and take my empty one. I had forgotten he was there, and in the fumbled exchange two more birds fly past me, cackling at my ineptness. The intensity of the shooting quickens and the shooters on both sides of me have downed birds. I get another shot. Shoot twice, miss and almost fall over backwards as the bird flies directly over me. My loader catches me and puts another loaded gun in my hand. "You are shooting behind them," he says constructively. "Increase your lead."

I shoot twice more. Still no results. I am embarrassed and frustrated. "Increase your lead more," my loader says, as he hands me a gun. Another bird flies over and I lead it by what I think is a ridiculous amount, then fire. The bird folds and falls. Two more fly over and I get one more. "Wake up that dog!" I yell. Very bad form, but my loader laughs. A horn sounds and the drive ends. It seemed over so quickly I can't believe I got in many shots at all. My loader is picking up the spent rounds and hands me 50 empty cartridges. Everything has happened so fast, I wasn't aware I had shot that often.

We leave the area and proceed to one of the ponds. A Range Rover pulls up and the driver begins to set out coffee, hot chocolate, fruit and muffins. We all gather around discussing our first shoot. We proceed to another location for the second drive. The degree of difficulty is no less, but I now have an idea of what to expect. The third drive is at still another location, which gives me an idea of the vastness of Primland. I am more relaxed at this point and, with improved confidence, my enjoyment increases.

We break for lunch, then paired up with a shooter and a guide with either setters or pointers and go on a walk-up hunt for pheasant. Here I begin to see the real natural beauty of Primland. I am hunting behind excellent dogs, in fields of milo and sorghum, with mountain and valley vistas unparalleled on the East Coast.

A Primland Primer

This Southwest Virginia outdoors resort has long and colorful history dating to colonial times. From yesterday's moonshiners to today's NASCAR drivers, all visitors to Primland have something in common — making a life off the land.

Today, the grand expanse of Primland Resort is a peaceful escape from the rigors of city life. But in an earlier time, the Patrick County hunting and outdoors destination was home to people — loggers, farmers and bootleggers — who struggled against the elements to survive. The vistas and unspoiled beauty of the 14,000-acre resort were overshadowed by the difficulty of making a living. "People lived off the land," says Steve Helms, vice president and general manager of Primland. "They might have sold logs or food. There were very few public jobs back then."

Primland, now one of the East Coast's largest

hunting resorts and certainly Virginia's largest, is situated on what was once a 60,000-acre royal land grant made to English settler William Austin in 1747. According to Patrick County records, Austin sold the property in 1795. The property then changed hands four times over the next nine years and shrank to 50,000 acres. After that, the land began to be sold in chunks; its highest and best use was lumber. In 1910, the remaining plot of 8,690 acres was sold to the Rosslyn Lumber Company for \$75,000.

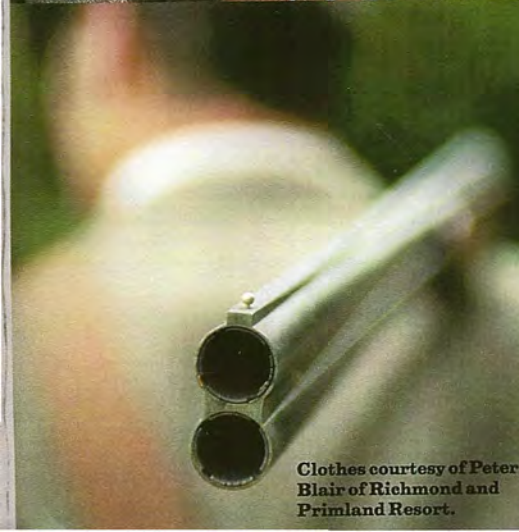
Only 20 miles from Andy Griffith's May-

berry (a.k.a. Mount Airy, N.C.), Primland has an equally colorful rural character. Residents harvested the bark from chestnut oak trees for tanning, made railroad ties by hand and sold the skins of animals to make money on the side. There were some farmers, but most animals and foods grown were for sustenance, not profit. The soil produced good buckwheat, and pancakes known as "buckwheat cakes" remain a popular regional delight today.

The tough climate demanded that the community work together. Normal citizens served as doctors and midwives, and the infant mortality rate was very high. Medicinal care consisted of whiskey mixed with sugar and ginger, even for sick children.

The business of moonshine is very much a part





Clothes courtesy of Peter Blair of Richmond and Primland Resort.