



REAL ESTATE

You Can Buy an \$11.5 Million Plantation That's Older Than the U.S.

Covering nearly 1,800 acres, it's only a fraction of its original size.

By James Tarmy

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In 1742, nearly two decades before the American Revolution, William Byrd II, one of the colonies' largest landowners (and slave owners), had amassed a tract in North Carolina that spanned more than 26,000 acres. He named it "Land of Eden" in what amounted to a marketing ploy to induce Europeans to cross the Atlantic and settle on his property. It didn't work, and by 1755 Byrd's spendthrift son was forced to sell the the land to pay off gambling debts.



The current property spans nearly 1,770 acres. Source: Hall and Hall

By the time Arthur Dick bought it 250 years later for about \$2 million in 2001, the property had passed through just six different owners' hands but had been whittled down to about 770 acres. The original house was gone, replaced by an early 19th-century mansion. Dick, the president and chief executive officer of AdvantaClean, a Greensboro, N.C.-based environmental service company, soon set about regaining some of the land the plantation had lost. He bought several tracts from his neighbors and expanded the property to approximately 1,770 acres. He does not farm the land.



The main house is more than 7,700 square feet. Source: Hall and Hall

The plantation is about a 45-minute drive from Greensboro. Dick bought it as a vacation home, a place “to hunt and take my family,” he said. “At the time my kids were five and three, and my stepson was 12, and it was a place where I could manage the land as I saw fit.”



The dairy barn was converted into a guest lodge. Source: Hall and Hall

After 16 years, though, his children have grown up and moved out. “We were always coming up with kids and families and enjoying each other's company and having a blast,” he said. “But things have changed.”

Now he’s put the property on the market, listing it for \$11.5 million.



The formal dining room of the main house. Source: Hall and Hall

Although the plantation is vast, potential buyers will find that it requires “very little maintenance,” Dick said. When he acquired it, it was run as a dairy farm, but he got rid of the cows and turned the barn and other facilities into a guest lodge. (In Byrd's time, the property was almost entirely wild; subsequent owners converted it into a large-scale farm.)



A bedroom in the main house. Source: Hall and Hall

Dickson said that when he bought the land, “it’s not that it was mismanaged; it just wasn’t managed at all.” Grazing pastures were overgrown, roads on the property were eroded, and the 7,722-square-foot house had fallen into disrepair. “I did a total renovation of the house,” he said. “I actually put it up on temporary supports in order to redo its foundation. You name it, I did it.”



In its current iteration, the house is designed as a hunting retreat. Source: Hall and Hall

The main house, which was built in 1825 by the plantation's fourth owner, a Dr. Robert Brodnax, has seven bedrooms and five and a half baths. On the main floor is a formal dining room, a parlor, library, and, at one end of the house, a modern kitchen. "Back when they built it, the kitchen was just an outdoor smokehouse," he explained. "And then they added on a piece of junk in the sixties." He duly removed the 1960s-era addition and replaced it with a chef's kitchen and informal breakfast room.



The property is about a 45-minute drive from Greensboro, N.C. Source: Hall and Hall

Dick's family tended to spend most of their time in the less-formal living areas of the house. "It looks kind of like something out of *Gone With The Wind*," he said. "They're very beautiful rooms, but we don't use them unless we entertain."



The property has two lakes and a river. Source: Hall and Hall

Similarly, the milk-barn-cum-rec-lodge is more of a place “where you can walk in with dirty shoes,” he explained. The lodge, which is nearly 5,000 square feet, is a few hundred yards from the main entrance and contains another five bedrooms and five and a half baths.

The property also has a four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bath caretaker’s house, a “cowboy lodge” that has another three bedrooms and two baths, and a 3,800-foot equestrian stable with eight stalls and a hayloft.



The rear of the house. Source: Hall and Hall

The real selling point, he said, is the property's vast game park. He stocked it with deer, duck, quail, rabbits, and turkeys and installed a skeet and rifle range. "I transformed the property to encourage and promote native habitat species," he said. "Which in turn can improve and support more game."

There used to be a full-time caretaker, but after the various improvements Dick discovered he didn't need one. Still, he said, having a thousand-plus-acre property got to be too much for just one man. "I'm the only one there to enjoy it," he said.

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