



TWO BRUSHES INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Visit the venerable Piedmont Fox Hounds in their posh new kennels.

BY MARTHA DRUM

FOUNDED IN 1840, Piedmont is one of the oldest organized hunt clubs in the United States. When the decision was made to build new kennels, traditional wisdom combined with contemporary execution to create a hound haven.

Piedmont Fox Hounds, based in Upperville, Va., has helped define the storied horse country of Loudoun and Fauquier counties. Prominent sporting institutions, including the Upperville Colt and Horse Show, the Mrs. Theodora A. Randolph Memorial North American Field Hunter Championships, and the Piedmont Point-to-Point Races are closely tied to the hunt and its founders and Masters. In the field, from the nineteenth century to the present, Piedmont's well-regarded pack has provided terrific sport across exhilarating country.

The kennels, however, dated from the 1920s and had been derelict for a period while hounds were kenneled elsewhere. The yards rolled steeply down to a low-lying field, and despite staff's best efforts, aging fences encouraged what Huntsman Jordan Hicks calls "jailbreaks." By 2014, Joint Masters Shelby Bonnie, Tad Zimmerman, and Gregg Ryan recognized that the old kennels could no longer continue in service. With the support of Piedmont's board of directors, the decision was made to construct an entirely new facility.

GETTING STARTED

Once this commitment was announced, the club community rallied in support — including the means to complete the project without drawing on operating expenses. While

providing a kennel tour last March, the Masters expressed their gratitude to every donor. "We had one hundred percent participation from the board," notes Ryan, "and excellent contributions from the subscribers." This enabled Piedmont to realize a beautiful and useful building. They were also determined to make it durable. "We love these kennels," says Zimmerman, standing in front of the new building, "but we don't want to do this again."

The broader foxhunting fraternity offered advice and wisdom. Huntsmen such as Andrew Barclay and Masters Glenn Epstein, Dennis Foster, Tony Leahy, and Marty and Daphne Wood, among others, offered insight. Orange County Hounds (Va.), Green Spring Valley Hounds (Md.), Blue Ridge Hunt (Va.) and Elkridge-Harford

Hunt (Md.) opened their own recently built kennels for comparison.

Initial challenges included the land itself. Piedmont owns the property, thanks to the generosity of a few individuals who purchased the farm and transferred it to the club. The acreage, however, sits within an historic Civil War battlefield district and foxhound kennels do not precisely fall into either agricultural or commercial land use designation. The leadership team had to communicate their vision persuasively to Loudoun County officials as the plan evolved. The Masters emphasized that the club's record as a good civic neighbor and the positive relationships they have fostered with surrounding landowners proved invaluable.

THE FLOOR PLAN FLOWS NICELY

The new complex's clean outline stands neatly atop a small hill above the stables. Entering through the front courtyard, the immediate impression is bright, clean, elegant — and quiet. Hicks, a South Carolina native, nods and gestures toward relaxed, lounging hounds, "They're happy, they're not fussing, we can all hear each other talking, and they can hear me."

Piedmont benefited from a valuable resource in architect Leah C. Palmer, an active foxhunter. She shares that she grew up enjoying all aspects of sporting life — "riding, hunting, and cleaning kennels, so I knew how important creating a workable space would be!" Her experience contributed to the spacious and functional floor plan. The welcoming courtyard, oriented to collect heat in the