

XI. 'TOO POOR TO RAISE A FUSS ON': KING COTTON'S DECLINE AND THE CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE, 1890 - 1980

As the History Group notes (1981:129), the decline of King Cotton can be divided into two phases: the thirty year period from 1890 to 1920, and the decade from 1920 to 1930. The first period marked a continuation of the cotton monarchy, and actually witnessed a rise in the region's fortunes, as manufacturing increased and railroads ended the isolation which had characterized the reservoir from the frontier period to the close of the nineteenth century. Between 1920 and 1930 cotton agriculture was dealt a series of blows, as demand slackened, prices declined, and the boll weevil arrived. The combination of these episodes, and specifically the boll weevil's arrival, signaled the economic demise of a large number of the area's cotton farmers. Confronted with bankruptcy, real or imminent, many of the area's inhabitants migrated to surrounding mill towns, or to the North (The History Group 1981:129). The end of the period marked the passing of an era, as the agricultural economy would not recover its former sway.

The period from 1890 to 1920 is one of the most enigmatic and provocative in the region's history. In many respects the agricultural heritage of the region was shed for the mantle of the New South; industry, commerce, and transportation all witnessed substantial improvements during this time. The railroads brought a greater variety of products, and greater contact with the outside world to the region, and made traveling within and beyond an easier thing to do. The railroad's made the depopulation of the 1930s possible. It is difficult to chart the cultural changes which occurred during this period, however, since a new cultural order never replaced the old. The Russell Reservoir after 1890 was neither New South or Old. The events from 1920 to 1930 retarded the cultural transformation of the region, and left behind a stunted, dwarfed version of the postbellum agricultural culture. The period after 1930 has been marked by relative stagnation, a shift in employment from agricultural to manufacturing venues, the gradual depopulation of the region, and the reorganization of the agrarian economy under the guise of agri-business, featuring fewer and larger farms practicing a diversified crop economy and utilizing mechanized labor. The culture of the area has become less regional, less southern, more national, and less distinctive. It is impossible to characterize the inhabitants of the area in terms of a single economic pursuit, as could be done for the agrarian economy. The passing of King Cotton's regime witnessed the passing of a common heritage.

To lay the demise of King Cotton's regime on the brittle carapace of the boll weevil is too simplistic of an explanation for the changes which were wrought between 1920 and 1930. Soil depletion, the over-production of cotton and corresponding decrease in price, the lack of diversity in the regional economy, and the Depression all contributed to the end of the agricultural era. It is likely that King Cotton's empire would have fallen without the boll weevil. In a sense the empire

was corrupted by poor land practices of the postbellum period, and by the vicious cycle of tenancy, and was ripe to be overthrown. The story of King Cotton's decline in the region is a fascinating story, but it also one without a real conclusion. In King Cotton's absence no new cultural monarchy has been enthroned.

FROM BOOM TO BUST: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION IN THE RUSSELL RESERVOIR, 1890 - 1930

The historical evolution of the Russell Reservoir from 1890 to 1930 can be understood in a number terms: industrialization; the rise and fall of the agricultural economy; or the changing relations between landlords, tenants, mill workers, and merchants. It is perhaps best understood in terms of the railroad. The railroad brought a new prosperity to the region, new products, new towns, and a new sense of belonging to the industrial South. When prosperity collapsed, the railroad took the region's inhabitants to new places and beginnings. As discussed in the previous chapter, until the late 1880s the Russell Reservoir area acted as a self-contained and self-sufficient unit, and its isolated setting explains in many ways the continuation of antebellum cultural traits into the postbellum period. The railroad shattered this isolation, and in turn transformed the regional culture.

The Savannah Valley Railroad's arrival on the eastern edge of the project area in 1886 was followed by the Georgia, Carolina, and Northern Railway (the G. C. & N.) in 1892. The G. C. & N. ran east-west across the region, connecting Abbeville and Elberton with Atlanta, while the Savannah Valley (later reorganized as the Charleston and Western Carolina Railway - the C. & W. C.) provided north-south connections to Augusta and beyond (The History Group 1981:52).

As the History Group (1981:52) notes, the completion of these lines had four basic effects on the region. First, they provided links to the extensive southern rail network, and thus promoted new trade routes and relations. Second, the C. & W. C. connected the region with Augusta, and thus offered a viable alternative to the Savannah River for goods shipped to this market. Third, the railroads greatly enhanced the regional prominence of their depot communities, focusing local trade systems. Finally, the railroads made travel within, and outside the region much easier and faster (The History Group 1981:52).

After 1900 the G. C. & N. became part of the Seaboard Air Line, and provided transportation between the project area and Atlanta, Birmingham, Washington, D.C., New York, and other east coast urban centers. The Seaboard Line became the region's primary transportation route, and quickly replaced other modes of transportation. Riverine networks were not economically viable as competition with the rails. As noted, the Savannah River acted as one of the region's primary transportation links up to the latter decades of the nineteenth century, and Augusta was one of the main trading hubs for the Georgia and South Carolina upcountry. For example, in 1876-1877, 180,000 bales of cotton were shipped to

Augusta, with 12,000 of these originating from Anderson, S. C., the head of navigation on the Savannah. By 1887, following the completion of the Savannah Valley Railroad, shipment on the Savannah River had declined to 4,477 bales. Statistics gathered from Elberton, Georgia in 1900 indicate that 23,000 (77 percent) of Elbert County's 30,000 bales of cotton were transported by rail; 6,000 bales were used in local textile mills; and only 1,000 bales were shipped by other means (The History Group 1981:53). The overwhelming shift to rail transportation after 1900 is perhaps the best measure of the inadequacy of other transportation means in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The rails served as the primary mode of transportation for the region well into the twentieth century. A letter written by a Lowndesville resident discussing his efforts to carry a load of bricks from Latimer to Lowndesville after several rainy days in February, 1901, provides a glimpse at the poor road conditions faced at even that late date (in The History Group 1981:53):

Mr. Allen had two wagons, 4 mules to one and 2 mules to the other and sent 2 darkies to drive. We went to Latimers and loaded the wagons as Mr. Allen told us, 700 bricks on one, 300 bricks on the other, and started home. We come all right til we got this side of Charles Allen place to a bad muddy place in the road. The 4 mule wagon stuck tight in the mud and could not move til we unloaded half the brick. We then drove to the top of hill, unloaded [the] 2 mule wagon on [the] 4 mule wagon and went right back after the brick we unloaded. We came all right til we got to [the] creek down here in Paterson Place. The 4 mule wagon stuck tight in the creek and could not move til we unloaded all the brick but about 150. The we pulled out, and when the 2 mule wagon got about half up the first hill this side [of] the creek the coupling tongue broke and spilled all its load in the road. Then we put its load on the 4 mule wagon, [and] went on to the house. By this time it was getting dark. We unloaded and went back to the creek and got about half the brick we throwed off and went back to the house with them. The darkies then went and made them a coupling tongue and went on home, and I hauled the balance of the brick from the creek [the] next morning. Now after all, the chimney is up and in use.

The story of transporting Mr. Allen's chimney brick gives an indication of how wonderful railroad transit must have been for the region's inhabitants in the early twentieth century. Highways and paved roads slowly began to appear in the region during the 1920s, and the completion of the Georgia-Carolina Memorial Bridge in 1927 provided an important link across the Savannah (Worthy 1983:296). After the 1930s ferrys declined in importance. The presence of both paved roads and railroads, in conjunction with decreasing population, led to a reduction in the number of communities in the region following the 1930s (Figure 132).

As the statistics on cotton shipment from Elberton indicate, the completion of the rail lines greatly effected the fortunes of those towns with depots, and of those without. Heardmont was typical of towns boasting rail depots, and the commerce

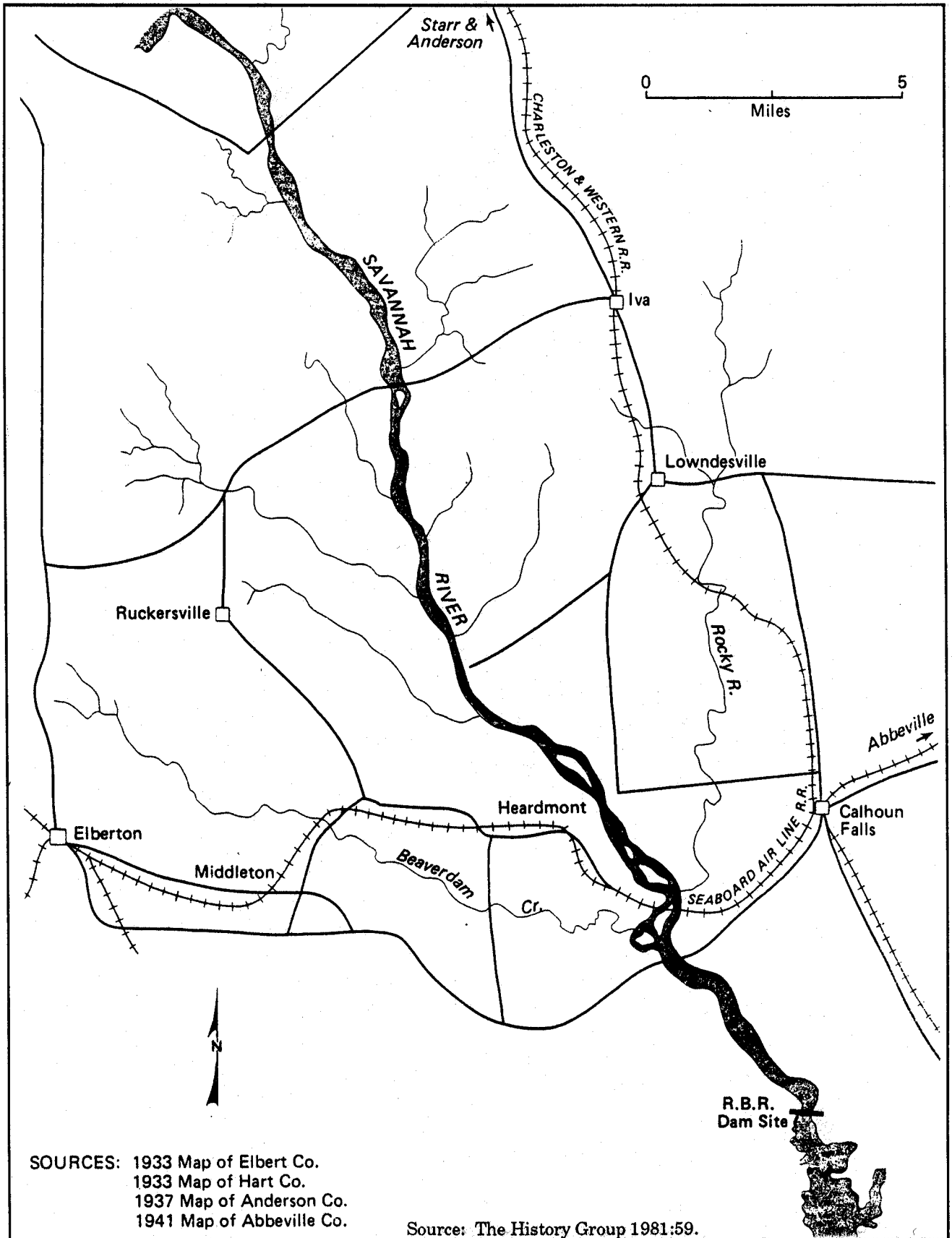


Figure 132. Regional Settlement and Transportation Pattern, ca. 1930.
 Note: For comparison, see the ca. 1850 settlement pattern, Figure 83.

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to and from these towns is an indication of the railroad's role in their economies. Rufus Ballard remembered this commerce as it was in the early twentieth century (in *The History Group* 1981:130):

Heardmont hit its peak during World War I. I think... things was pretty good in them days, in World War I. Of course, after World War II come along there wasn't much to it. Shoot, we used to have three stores out there; we had two gins where you would gin cotton... and we had a train coming four times a day. We didn't have many cars, but there weren't any then. If you wanted to go to town you just step right in and catch a train, go on in and came back out the same day for twenty-five or thirty cents.... We had a train come early in the morning, then one come at dinner time about eleven, then another at five o'clock in the evening, and another one then at night. You see, about four trains a day, two going this way and two coming back.... People were coming to church out here on this train. Our preacher used to ride it... and then by the time it would go back at night the service would be over with. You catch this train and go on back home. We had people getting off at Pearle and Middleton; there is two stops between here and Elberton.... We had people who came even from Winder, Georgia, to church.... Winder, Georgia, way up above Athens.

The railroad influenced not only the success of towns; it also directed their patterns of growth and development. While no major economic development occurred along the rail lines within the project area, a typical rail town was Lowndesville, South Carolina, to the north of the project area. Lowndesville, which was incorporated in 1839, received an economic boost with the arrival of the Savannah Valley Railroad in 1886. As local historian H. A. (Arnette) Carlisle has observed (in *The History Group* 1981:132):

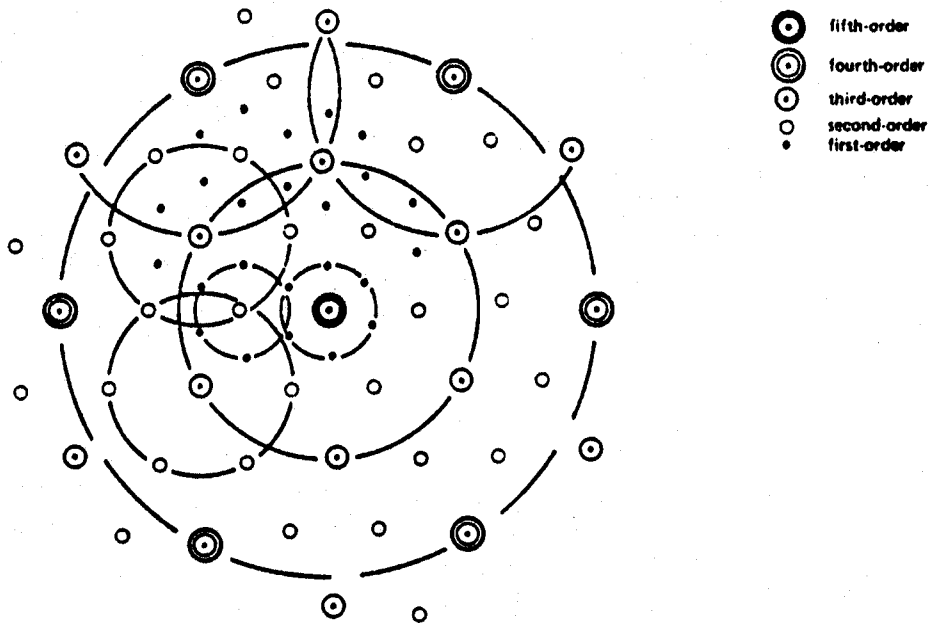
The railroad is about a third of a mile from where the town grew up and when it came out here to the west of the old town and built a depot down there, then the business firms gravitated toward the depot. We had what we called a "new town" and an "old town".... "New town" started building up shortly after the railroad came... the dwellings all came in after 1890, but some of the stores and warehouses began to build up as soon as the railroad came through there. There was a rivalry between the merchants all during the year, "new town" and "old town." Of course, these boys down here at the railroad had the advantage, they didn't have to hire somebody to haul their goods a mile to a half-mile away. One of them even built his store on the side track down there; he could use handtrucks to unload right into the store.... That's the main effect of the railroad. Of course, it also gave them the means of passenger transportation too. We had two passenger trains each way, north and south, each day.

Other railroad towns which developed during this period included Starr, Iva, and Calhoun Falls on the C. & W. C. line, and Middleton on the Seaboard Line. Most of these existed as small communities providing basic services (which almost always included a cotton gin) and as a transshipment point for cotton and other agricultural products. The populations of these towns were not greatly changed by the railroad, but local businesses received a competitive edge over other communities, especially those businesses geared toward the cotton economy. The most important service provided by these towns was ginning cotton. Alvin Hutchinson remembers that "... it wasn't too long before they quit ginning [cotton on the farm] and most of the ginning was done in Lowndesville; you had to haul your cotton out there and you got the fertilizer out there at the railroad station" (in *The History Group* 1981:136). Other services for the cotton industry included compresses, developed in the late nineteenth century, which reduced the size of cotton bales by half, allowing trains to carry more cotton and thus reducing freight costs. A second industrial development which affected the cotton economy was caused by the dramatic increase in the price of olive oil after 1880. With this price increase it became profitable to market other types of vegetable oils, including cotton seed oil, and both Starr and Lowndesville had cotton seed oil plants in the early twentieth century (*The History Group* 1981:136).

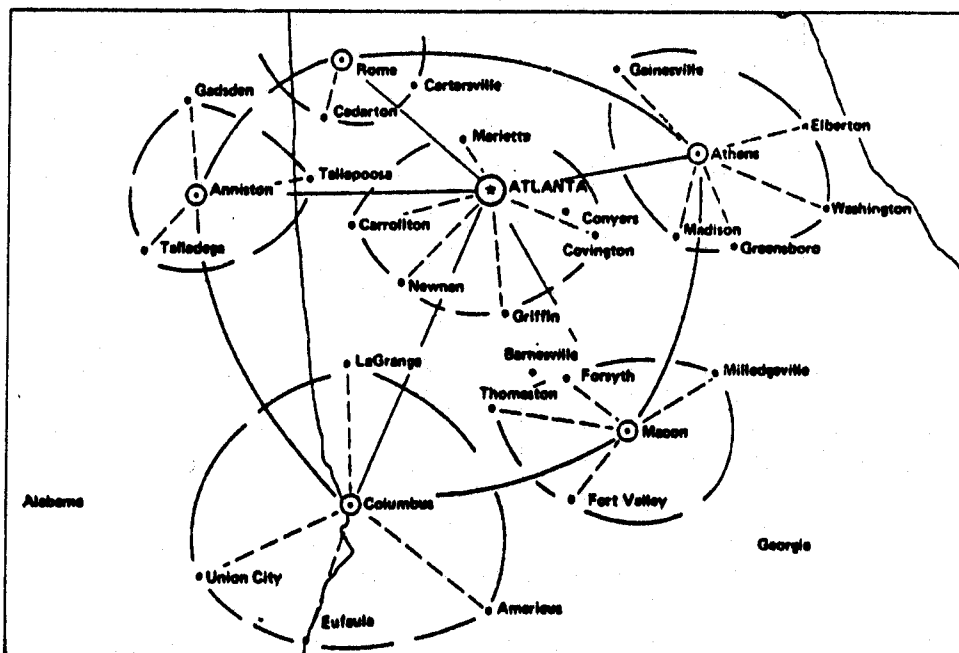
The development of these industrial adjuncts to the cotton economy, coupled with the arrival of the railroad, expanded the market radius of key communities in the region. Previously towns had been of little importance, since farms or plantations provided the basic industrial requisites, ginning and milling, of the community. Those towns that existed served a market radius of only five to ten miles, according to cultural geographer Kenneth Weiher. The concentration of compresses, gins, and cotton seed oil plants in particular communities made them central places for their regions, and expanded their market radius to 25 to 50 miles. Figure 133 shows Weiher's (1977) model for regional hierarchy, and the Atlanta trade network of 1890. Within the Atlanta network Elberton served as a first order trading loci dependent on Athens, which in turn traded to Atlanta (*The History Group* 1981:136-137). In the project area smaller communities such as Heardmont and Pearle most likely served as first order satellites of Elberton. This centralization of services and of trade relations was lacking in the project area until the end of the nineteenth century, and provided for greater urbanization and centralization of resources and capital in the twentieth century.

The development of central places in the region also led to the growth of a true merchant class. The establishment of railroads, gins, compresses, and oil plants meant that cotton could be marketed from Elberton, Lowndesville, and other regional communities, rather than being shipped to Augusta, Charleston, Atlanta, or Savannah for sale. Local storeowners thus became pivotal figures in the cotton economy, and not merely adjuncts to the seaport factors. Competition between these merchants benefited farmers in the sale of their cotton, and those farmers who were willing to travel the extra distance received a better price for their crop. Sharecropper Blake Crocker remembers that (in *The History Group* 1981:139):

Weier's Regional Hierarchy of Southern Places.



The Atlanta Urban Network, 1890.



Source: The History Group 1981:137.

Figure 133. Weiher's (1977) Model for Regional Trading Hierarchy and the Atlanta Trade Network of 1890.

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I done most of my trading, most of the people around there did, in Elberton, Georgia. We'd cross at Tucker's Ferry. And we [would] go over there about once a month to buy groceries and sometimes we would haul, carry cotton over there. We would get maybe a cent a pound more for it in Elberton than we could get in Lowndesville. We would take over two or three bales and they would have cotton buyers there, maybe three or four cutting and looking at your cotton. They would bid against each other so that sometimes you'd maybe get a cent, sometimes two cents, more than you would in Lowndesville because they had maybe [only] one or two buyers. If they didn't have but one, he would get it as cheap as he could. So we hauled a lot of cotton over to Elberton.

Crocker's memories of cotton trading highlights the economic benefits sharecroppers and tenants gained from the increasing commerce of the region; the centralization of mercantile functions meant that tenants could be aware of the value of their crop, and no longer solely dependent on landlords for determining its value. The growth of towns, railroads, and industry benefited all of the region's inhabitants.

Industrial developments followed the shift from a regional-agrarian to a national economy. The chief transition in the industrialization of the Russell Reservoir was the rise of textile mills and corresponding decline of grist and saw mills. Both Elbert and Abbeville Counties witnessed substantial industrial development during this period, although their accomplishments were not on a par with the growth in Anderson County. Anderson, the county seat, possessed only one textile mill in the late 1880s, but by 1909 it had 16, with a combined capitalization of more than \$7,000,000. These mills processed 150,000 bales of cotton annually and employed 1,000 workers. Much of Anderson's industrial success can be attributed to the availability of cheap electric power. The Anderson Water, Light, and Power Company completed two stations, Rocky Creek and Portman Shoals, before the turn of the century, and their success was followed by other power companies. The Savannah River Power Company completed its Greg Shoals plant in 1906, which provided 2,666 horsepower for Anderson, Abbeville, and Greenwood, S. C. The company had development plans for two plants within the project area, one at Cherokee Shoals capable of 13,300 horsepower and a second at Trotter's Shoals with a projected 40,000 horsepower capacity. These were never begun, but the power provided to Anderson County permitted sizable population increases and established an economy which would weather the storm of King Cotton's decline (The History Group 1981:136-142).

All of these transitions contributed to a substantial change in the regional economy and culture prior to 1920. Transportation across the region was facilitated by the railroads; towns developed as central places housing gins, oil plants, compresses and other mercantile facilities; farmers and sharecroppers participated in the cotton economy more directly, receiving a better price for their crop; textile mills developed in the region, providing an additional outlet for

locally grown cotton and a competing avenue of employment; and power plants began to appear on the upper reaches of the Savannah, bringing electricity to the region. However, 1920 marks the end of this brief phase of modernization and economic improvement in the region. By 1920 the boll weevil had also arrived, and this arrival triggered a depressed agricultural economy which lasted well beyond the second World War.

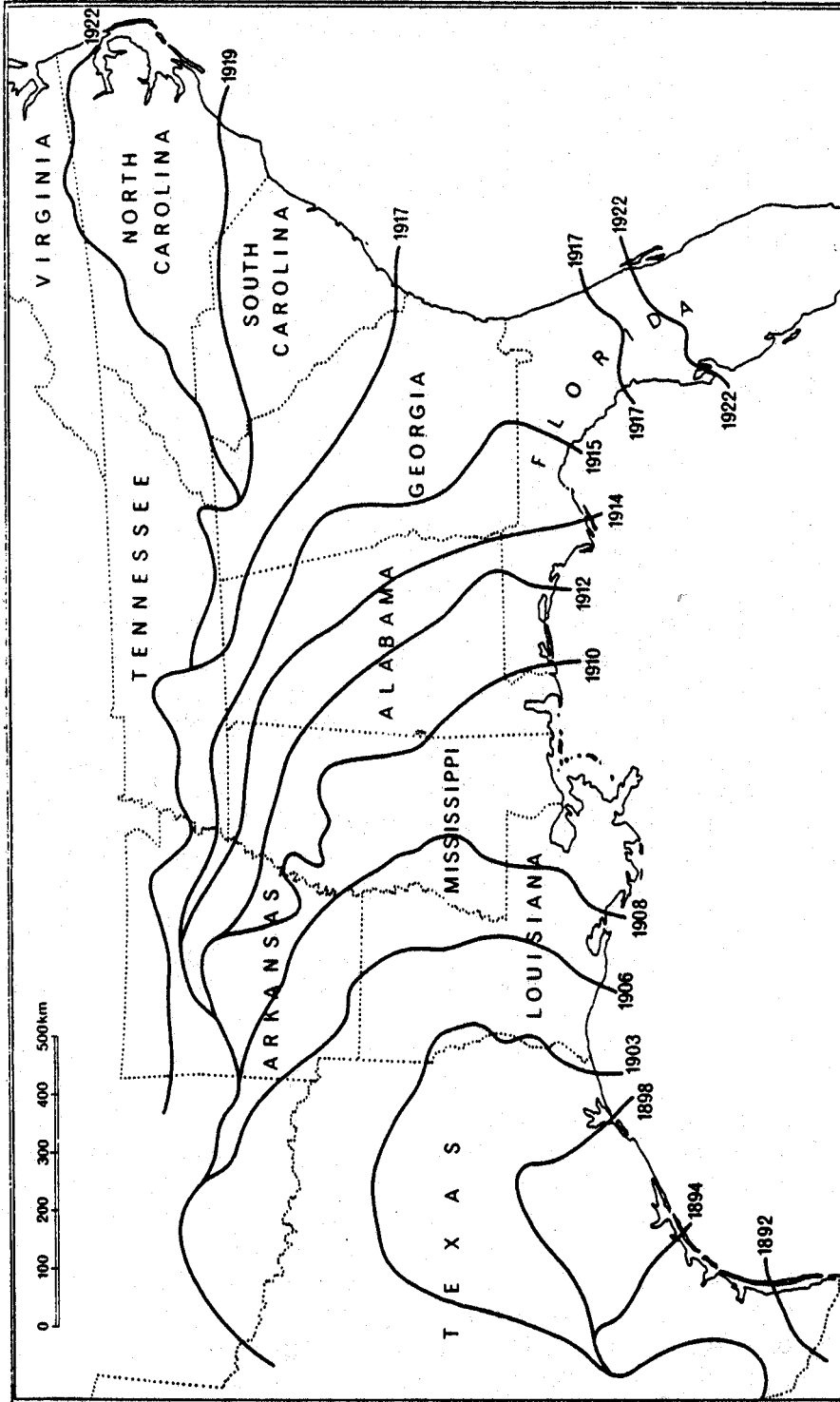
The boll weevil reached the project area in approximately 1919 (Figure 134). As Edward Brownlee notes, the economic hard times that followed persuaded many of the area's inhabitants to try and reestablish themselves in the north (in *The History Group* 1981:142):

The boll weevils broke down the farming situation.... When the boll weevil came, that's what run a lot of the people off the farm. That's when New York, Chicago, and all these places filled up. The people were being cheated enough [by the storeowners], and they knew they were being cheated. When the boll weevil came they couldn't make their quantities... and a lot of them got discouraged and they thought they'd go to some of these places where the "booms" had hit. They would go and for awhile... they makes lots of money. But when the boom got over they had to come back.

This outmigration was noted in the local presses, and was evidently tied to a shift in the region's agriculture. While perceived as a problem, black outmigration was also apparently promoted by local whites. An article from December 15, 1922, entitled "The Negro Exodus Serious Problem" reported (in Ramsey et al. 1986:4):

The fact that a great many colored laborers have left Elbert County is a serious problem. They have gone north, east, and west. Many of them are worthy and have the respect of both races... it may be that the land owner could not or would not furnish the rations. If he could furnish rations, it seems short-sighted not to do so, for if the exodus continues where can the land owner expect to get laborers.... But if enough white labor can be secured to take their place then the county will be better off, for the negro cannot be used as profitably in diversified farming as the white man.

The article is interesting for its implications as well as what it directly states. The failure of land owners to provide "rations" apparently was not always due to the financial restrictions caused by the boll weevil and decreasing cotton prices, and the article suggests that some farmers sought to drive tenants from their land. This drive may have been linked to a change in agricultural patterns, as "diversified farming" is noted as an apparent agricultural solution for depressed cotton economy. Black tenants were obviously linked to cotton agriculture in the minds of the region's white inhabitants, to the degree that the article suggests they could not be "profitably" employed in the new agricultural regime. The article is also of interest in that in many ways it foreshadowed the agricultural future of the region; diversified farming would oust tenants from the land,



Source: The History Group 1981:143.

Figure 134. The Spread of the Boll Weevil in the South, 1892-1922.

although their labor was replaced by machines, not white farmers. The seed of a diversified crop economy was apparently planted during the 1920s.

For those who chose to remain in the region, absolute warfare against the boll weevil became an economic necessity. Edward Brownlee remembers the efforts his father took to preserve the family's cotton crop (in *The History Group* 1981:144):

I was a child but I can remember it. I was nine years old. I can remember good. We poisoned the boll weevil... when they first started they used to make that molasses syrup that I was telling you about. They would get arsenic and put it in this molasses. They would take a stick and some old socks or old cloth and wrap it around to make a mop. And they would give the children these buckets of this liquid. The syrup made it sweet and the boll weevils like it. And we would go along with this mop, dip this mop in there and touch each top of cotton. You would leave some in there and at night the boll weevils come up and eat this syrup and stuff and die. And it was really effective. My dad used it because he was the type that was determined we survived.... We mopped our cotton for years. We couldn't work as much as other folks was working, but we made almost as much as they did because we took so much care with what little we did have.... We [also] had an old machine... we weren't big enough as children to carry it. It was made with these flaps and things and had these troughs... you take it on over to the row and you fill these things with kerosene... and you take it over the rows and these flaps [would] knock the boll weevils off and they would fall into this kerosene that would kill them.

The boll weevil was not the only threat to the agricultural economy with which farmers had to contend. By the early twentieth century soil exhaustion had ruined the productivity of many of the region's farms. Charlotte Sweeney remembers her father's land (in Ramsey et al. 1986:13): "he couldn't raise nothing on it... too poor to raise a fuss on, couldn't even raise a good argument on it!" The agricultural existence of the 1920s and 1930s was tenuous at best.

The boll weevil did not discriminate on racial lines, and white farmers were injured by the weevil's path through the South as well as blacks. While many blacks moved away from the region to find economic employment, whites were able to find work in local cotton mills. Arnette Carlisle remembers (in *The History Group* 1981:145):

The boll weevil came in and destroyed cotton farming. That was before the Depression even.... It just came natural that I thought I've got to find something else to do.... My brother... had already gone from Lowndesville and went to work in a textile mill at Calhoun Falls. He worked at night, had a night job, then during the day built up a small store building... right next to where his store is now....

They [the farmers] were gravitating toward the textile mills because that was the only industry in this area: Calhoun Falls, Abbeville, Ware Shoals.

Employment in the textile industry was segregated along racial lines throughout most of the South into the Civil Rights era. Blacks were employed at the mills, but at tasks such as loading and unloading cotton bales, and not at skilled positions. This segregation was one means for the textile industry to avoid unionization, since the option of blacks being employed in the mills could always be used against whites if they threatened to go on strike. Marshall Thomas remembers that it was not until the 1960s that blacks were finally employed inside the local mills. He recalls that "... in 1963, they started hiring blacks over here in this Burlington Mill where I work. There wasn't any blacks there before. I know cause I was one of the first blacks that they hired to go up in the mill" (in *The History Group* 1981:158). Thus up until more recent times, blacks' options in the depressed economy were limited, and were one reason why blacks left the region.

The outmigration of blacks during the 1920s led to the recognition that their treatment was unequal between the North and South, and this recognition would in turn provide fuel to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Luelle Walker recalled her experience in New York: "... I went to New York. I went in the shoe shop. A white man called me 'miss'...." She joined a union and found employment as a hotel housekeeper. "I was the only black woman on the job... they called me Miss Walker, they called me Miss Walker all the time" (Ramsey et al. 1986:4-6). The application of honorific titles, a privilege restricted to whites in the South, provided the recognition of biased treatment and would have a significant impact on regional culture as blacks returned after they retired from northern jobs in the 1950s and 1960s.

The collapse of the agricultural economy, outmigration, the growth of industrial employment, and segregation in this new job market, was not solely a factor of the destruction wrought by the boll weevil. The boll weevil was allied to a general depression in cotton prices which strengthened throughout the decade from 1920 to 1930. The price of cotton fell from 35¢ per pound in 1919 to 16¢ per pound in 1920, and to 9 1/2¢ per pound in 1930 (*The History Group* 1981). The limited production caused by the boll weevil, plus the decreased prices, and all followed by the Great Depression, assured that the agricultural economy of the region was dead by the early 1930s. King Cotton's reign was over.

MILLERS AND FARMERS: A PARTING GLANCE, 1890-1930

The historical investigations of the Russell Reservoir provide one last view of life in the region in the early twentieth century. This view is centered on one industrial site: Pearle Mill; four families: the Clinkscales, Harpers, McCallas and Grays; and three twentieth-century farms documented by HABS. While not as detailed as the antebellum and postbellum perspectives of the area, the history

of these sites and families carries the biographical timeline to its conclusion in the area.

Pearle Cotton Mill

Pearle Mill developed from the Heardmont Mill which was destroyed by fire in 1889. The loss of Heardmont Mill to the community as well as its investors was bewailed by the *Elberton Star* (June 20, 1890 in Worthy 1983:314):

(the mills)... were the pride and boast of our county, being our largest manufacturing enterprise and, as we fondly hoped the nucleus around which, encouraged by their posterity, would spring up many smaller industries that would give new vigor and stronger impetus to the era of prosperity that is just dawning on our grand old county, were no more.

The new vigor and impetus which the Heardmont Mill was to supply to the local economy was delayed until the former mill seat became the property of Thomas M. Swift and John K. Swift of Elberton in 1895. Thomas M. Swift was from the start interested in commerce and industry; he had organized Elberton's first oil mill (1888) and steam-powered cotton factory (1892). The latter, the Swift Cotton Mill, began operating with 600 spindles but soon purchased power looms enabling the facility to produce cloth. It was a sizable and successful establishment employing around 200 workers who lived in company owned housing. Hence, Swift was well versed as a textile entrepreneur, and he brought this experience to bear on his new venture, Pearle Mill, located at the old Heardmont millseat. Swift's industrial proclivity was laced with political fervor; he served as Elbert County's representative in the State Legislature from 1896 through 1899, as well as other political positions. Swift recommended the expansion of the textile industry into the South's traditionally agricultural economy (in Worthy 1983:317):

I have been making yarn for weavers in Philadelphia and have had all that I could do. That suit of clothes you wear is made of southern cotton transformed into clay worsted by the skill of a New England mill. Go into any store in the land and hidden under various deceptive names you will buy back some of the very cotton which you looked upon in the field last year.

Pearle Mill was Swift's answer to this offensive deception. Its construction coincided with Georgia's textile boom which reached its acme in the late nineteenth century. It was one of 27 cotton factories either organized or established in the state within the first three months of 1896; those 27 factories constituted one third of all the textile factories established in this period (Worthy 1983:316).

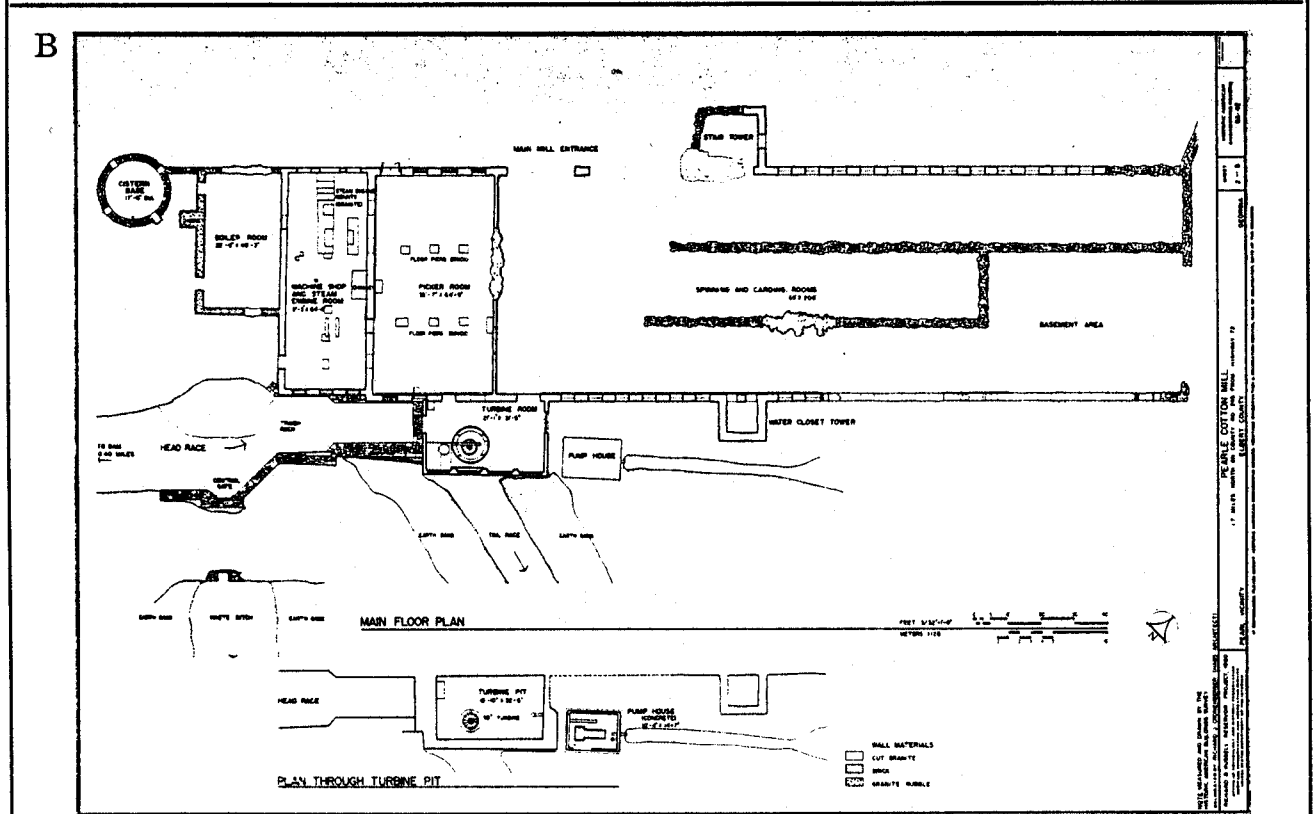
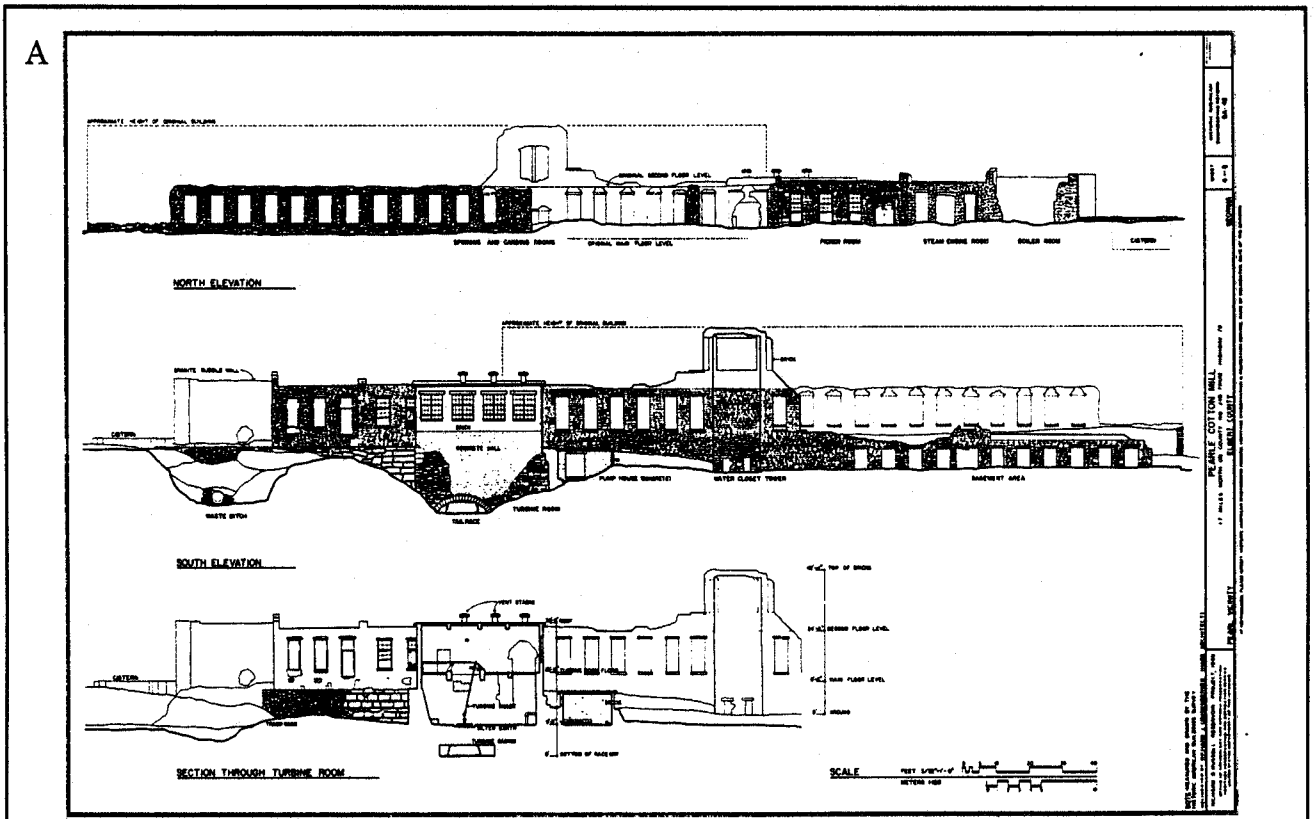
Pearle Mill was built one half mile downstream from the Heardmont millseat. A dam was constructed utilizing prison labor, and a half mile raceway was dug from the dam to the main building (Figure 135). The latter was two and a half

stories in height; one and a half stories were constructed in granite, the remaining story was brick (Figure 136a). The dimensions of the main building were 400 feet in length and 80 feet in width. The boiler room, engine room, and picker room were contained within a granite partition on the west side of the building (Figure 136b). Managed by William Swift, Thomas Swift's son, the mill went into operation in January 1896. The mill machinery included three picking machines, 16 carding machines, and 3,000 spindles to transform lint cotton into yarn and twine. In April 1896, James Monroe Smith, a planter from Oglethorpe County, lent the Swift operation \$20,000. In return, he held the deed to the land and the machinery at the millseat.

Monroe's money was a wise investment as the mill and its surrounding community, known as Beverly, came into its own (Figure 137). The mill was incorporated in December 1899. Three incorporators were named: Thomas M. Swift, and his sons William A. Swift and James Y. Swift. The purpose of the mill was to spin yarn, manufacture rope, sheeting, cheesecloth, and batting. The factory was a success, by 1905 it had doubled its spinning capacity. Three years later its composition included 38 company houses (22 four-room houses, three six room houses, two five room houses, four three room houses, six two room houses, and a seven room house for the Superintendent), three cotton warehouses, an oil house, and the mill.

The mill was powered by two turbines manufactured by James Leffel and Company which generated 150 horsepower. The location of the turbine pit is shown in Figure 136b. The textile machinery reflected the purpose of the mill: eight drawing frames, four slubbers, six fly frames, 22 Whitin spinning frames with 204 spindles each, 14 Lowell spinning frames also with 204 spindles each, four spoolers, three cone winders, two warpers, 11 reels for skein yarn, one slasher, two Lowell beam warpers, two roper machines, and four formers for the manufacture of cotton rope. The transformation of baled cotton to finished yarn which involved some of these machines was succinctly described in 1902 (in Worthy 1983:318):

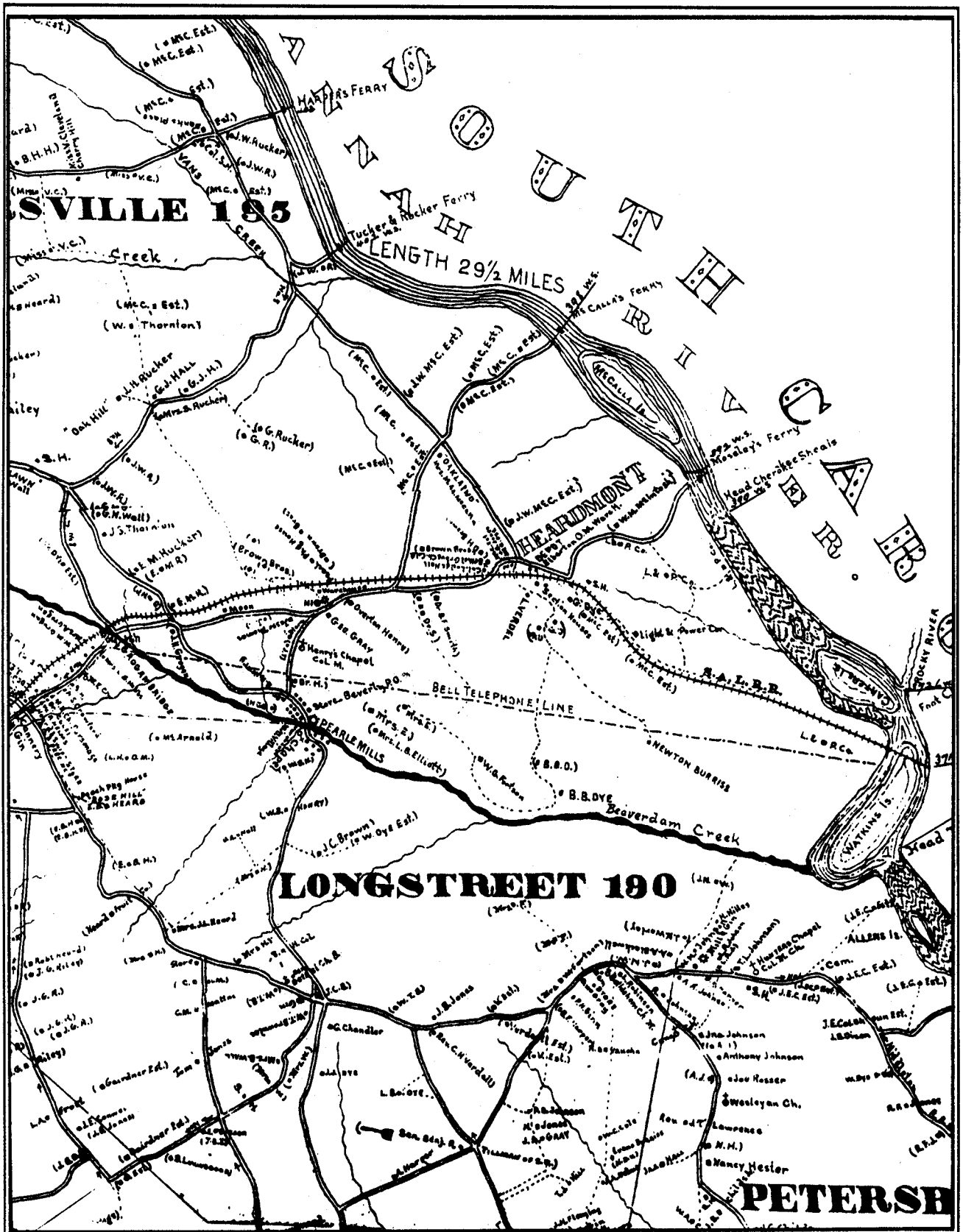
Baled lint cotton from the local ginneries entered the factory at the Picker Room. The cotton grades were mixed before being run through the picking machinery, which cleaned out the trash and delivered cotton in rolls of batting. The rolls were carried into the Carding Room on the first floor of the main mill. In the Carding Room the rolls were reduced by combing out the fibers into roving. The roving was carried to the Spinning Room on the second floor. From the spinning frames the cotton was spooled and some was twisted into yarn. Some yarn was sent to the warpers. The principal products of the mill were yarns, warps and skeins, rope and twisted yarns on tapes and cones. Orders were carried up the hill on wagons to a storage house on a rail siding for the Georgia, Carolina and Northern Railroad.



Source: Worthy 1983:339, 340.

Figure 136. Pearlle Mill. A - Elevations and Section. B - Main Floor Plan. Drawings prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey.

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Source: The History Group 1981:197.

Figure 137. Map of Elbert County, Georgia, Showing Pearle Mill and Beverly. Elbert County Post Office Department, 1914.

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The men and women who produced these goods were housed at Beverly. The 1900 Federal Census offers some information on these families. Fifteen families were enumerated of which 13 heads of households worked for the mill. The remaining heads of households were a farmer and a bricklayer; in both cases each had children working at the factory. Typically, each family did have children working at the mill with one exception. The bookkeeper, J. C. Thomas, had three children, none of whom were employed at Pearle (Worthy 1983:319-320). A photograph of a family in front of a pyramidal-roofed mill house is shown in Figure 138a; an interior view of worker's at the mill is also shown (Figure 138b).

Pearle Mill's success was destroyed by the flood of 1908, which finished most of the mills within the project area. Uninsured, the mill was unable to recover and Pearle Cotton Mill was declared bankrupt and put up for sale. Paul Bowden purchased the property in 1909 in hopes of starting the mill again as the Beverly Cotton Mill, but it was operated in only a limited manner between 1908-1916 and was vacant for the next four years. In 1910, only 14 individuals were present at Beverly. Swift's involvement in the textile industry was effectively ended with his loss at Pearle Mill; in 1909, his Elberton mill was reorganized as the Home Cotton Mills (Worthy 1983:321-322).

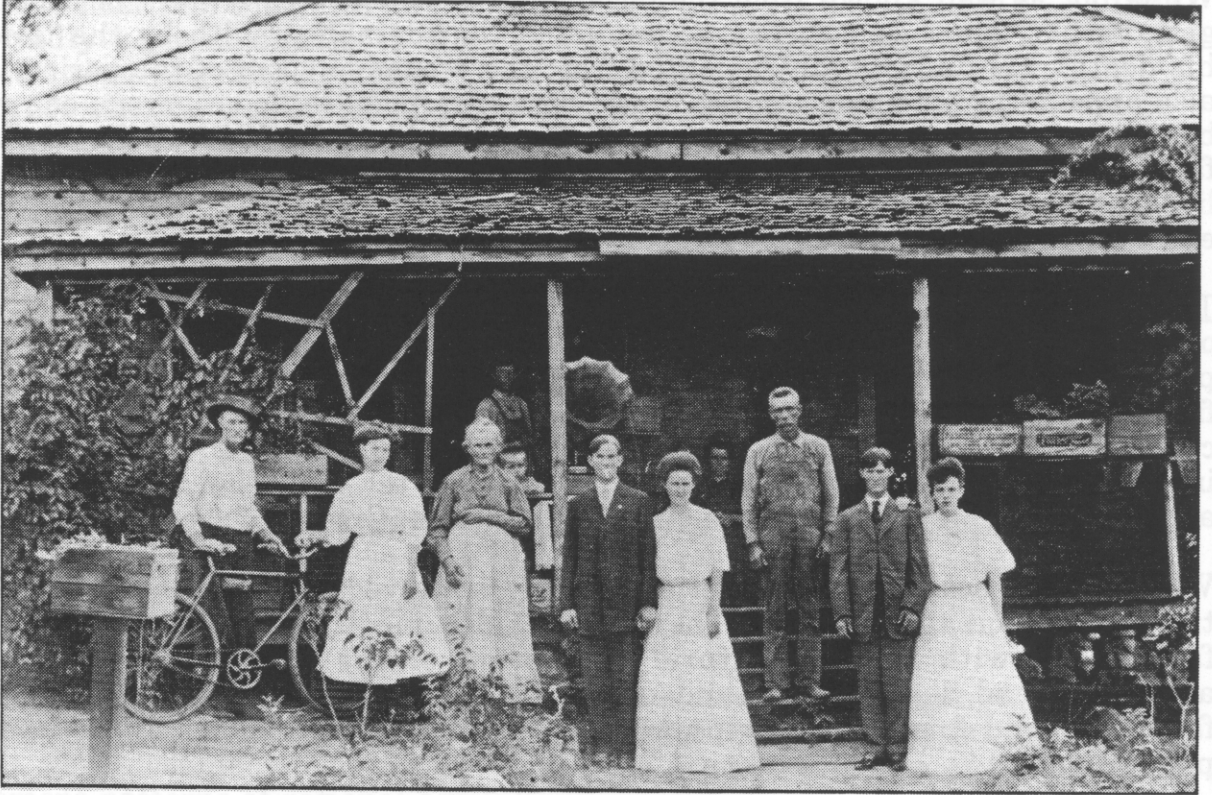
The history of the mill, known by the 1920s as the Beaverdam Mill, through the 1930s is checkered with financial troubles or idleness. The tract was sold to Webb Tatum in 1936 along with adjoining property for \$250. Tatum and his family moved to the mill tract, occupying the Superintendent's house. Under his ownership, the mill property was slowly dismantled; machinery was sold for scrap metal and the company houses for lumber. Tatum reused the mill as a corn mill which was in production to 1948. The remains of the Heardmont Mill were removed in 1949 (Worthy 1983:325).

Farmers

Biographical information is available for three of the families considered in chapters nine and ten: the Harpers, McCallas, and Clinkscales, and for an additional farmer, Gilbert Gray. This information provides some documentation of the fortunes of these families in the twentieth century.

The McCallas By 1894 George McCalla's second son Isaac had acquired the bulk of his father's real estate and had set about resurrecting the family's agricultural wealth. Isaac was apparently an aggressive businessman and farmer, and by 1913 he had increased the acreage of the plantation to a total of 3,490 acres. While the documentation for this period is limited (census returns after 1880 are restricted), Isaac apparently also pursued mercantile interests, and was listed as a partner in his brother John's business in John's 1904 will. In 1913 Isaac's tax assessment indicated he owned real estate valued at \$17,450 and personal property worth an additional \$8,910. Isaac died in 1913 (Gray 1983:93-96).

A



B



Source: The History Group 1981:198, 194.

Figure 138. Millworkers at Pearle Mill.
 A - Mill family outside mill house at Beverly.
 B - Worker's inside Pearle Mill.

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While not as well known from the documentary evidence as either his father or grandfather, Isaac had clearly accumulated considerable wealth by the time of his death. He undoubtedly benefited from the economic boom of the period, and also appears to have represented a new sort of farmer in the reservoir; one with business interests to balance his agricultural yield. Members of the McCalla family have remained in the project area into the present, although their recent life histories were not addressed by the project research. The McCallas are an excellent example of the shifting fortunes of agriculture in the region.

The Clinkscales William Franklin Clinkscales died in 1906. His son Ezekiel took over the operation of the family farm following his mother's death in the latter part of 1906. By 1908 he had acquired a total of 820 acres of farmland, while this figure rose to 1,316 acres by 1933 (his wife owned an additional 500 acres). Ezekiel continued as a farmer until his death in 1943, at which time the farm was inherited by his nephews, Ralph and Ray. By 1955 they sold the property to Alan and Winston Sibley, who acted as absentee landlords (Gray 1983:44).

William Clinkscales' son Ezekiel apparently improved on his father's fortunes, tripling his acreage by 1933. There is little documentation to indicate how the farm fared with the agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s, but agriculture had clearly been abandoned by the 1950s. The Clinkscales represent a family of solid farmers, the type who once made up the bulk of the reservoir's population.

The Harpers When last seen, Henry Harper had retired from the South Carolina House of Representatives, and had witnessed a substantial decline in his fortunes. Henry Harper died in 1886. By 1894, Weston, his oldest surviving son, had purchased the bulk of his father's real estate from his brothers and sisters, and was continuing in the agriculture tradition of the family. Weston owned 1,306 acres in 1900 valued at \$7,250 and 1,101 acres in 1913 with a value of \$5,585 according to the tax reports. His fortunes evidently declined in the 1920s, a fall that paralleled the boll weevil's arrival in the region, and by 1926 he had lost the farm in a court judgement. The property was then bought by Douglas Featherstone of Greenwood, S. C., and Featherstone acted as an absentee landowner until the property's sale to the U. S. government in 1979 (Gray 1983:73-76).

The Harpers are the best evidence for the economic depression associated with the 1920s in the project area. While Gray does not specify the exact nature of the court settlement against Harper, it most likely originated from debts against the farm during the economic depression of the 1920s. The Harper's decline from antebellum prominence was thus final by 1926.

Gilbert Gray Very little is known regarding Gilbert Gray, the only black farmer studied in the reservoir. According to the 1870 census Gray was born a slave in 1852. During the latter decades of the nineteenth century he was a tenant renter in Elbert County, and it was not until 1909 that Gray acquired his own land in the region, 143 3/4 acres purchased from C. F. Marshall of Fulton County. Gray was

unable to maintain this farm for long, losing the property between 1912 and 1914. Reportedly he was unable to make his mortgage payments, with one of his nephews reporting that he had buried a bag of silver on his land for the payment, but forgot where it was buried and thus lost the farm (Gray 1983:50-55).

Summary The histories of these four families in the project area reflect the historical trends outlined above. Most successful was Isaac McCalla, who combined agriculture with industry and other mercantile efforts and prospered in the early twentieth century. The Clinkscales managed to maintain their estate, as they had between the antebellum and postbellum, and generally continued to exhibit the behavior of industrious farmers which had characterized them in the previous century. The Harper's downfall from the antebellum period was final, apparently a victim of the depression of the 1920s, as their property was lost to a court settlement. Finally, Gilbert Gray's story was one repeated by many tenant farmers of the region. Able to finally acquire his own land, Gray was unable to maintain payments and lost the property after only a few years of possession.

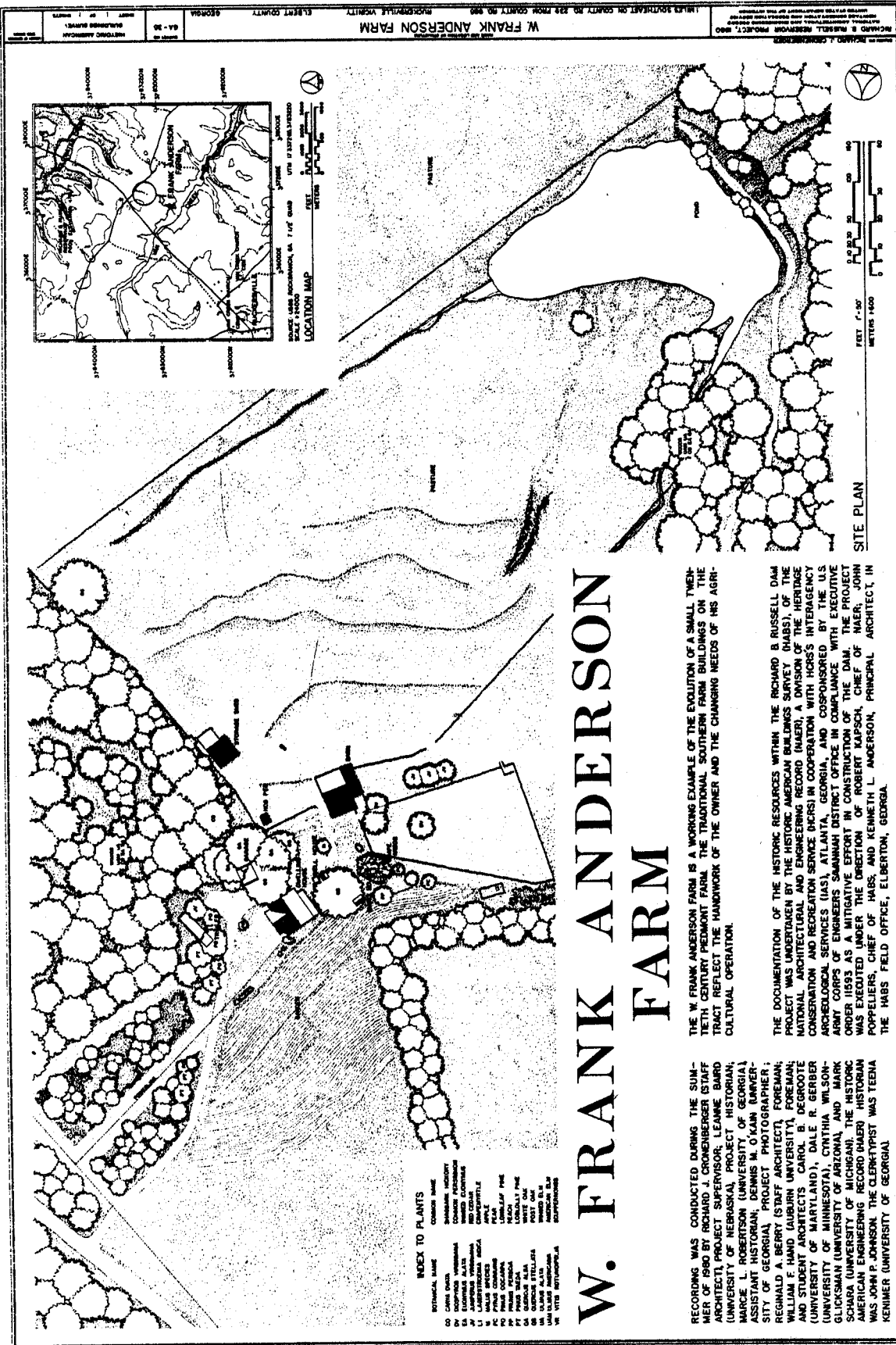
Settlement

The transition from mono-crop agriculture to diversified farming was briefly discussed above, and is presented in greater detail below. Three farms from this period were documented by HABS, and these provide evidence of the changing settlement patterns of regional agriculture.

The W. Frank Anderson Farm (Figure 139) was constructed during the period from 1928 to the 1950s by W. Frank Anderson and his nephew Martin Anderson, the son of Reuben Anderson, discussed below. W. Frank Anderson owned several parcels of land in Elbert County in the early twentieth century, most of which he lost during the agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s. The 61 1/2 acre tract containing his homestead was purchased by his brother Reuben from the Land Bank, and later purchased from him by his son Martin in 1949. Martin attempted to grow cotton, but found the boll weevil and depressed prices made his cotton production unprofitable, and then switched to grains. Grain profitability was also limited, and in 1955 Martin went to work at the Jackson Textile Mill in Iva. The farm was still operated by the Andersons at the time it was recorded, worked on weekends mainly for the production of vegetables which Martin sells at the mill (Worthy 1983:155-156).

The layout of the farm does not differ greatly from those of the postbellum or antebellum periods. All structures are located in relatively close proximity, although trees shelter the rear of the house from the storage shed, barn, and other outbuildings. Fields and pasture are located immediately adjacent to this complex.

Martin's father's farm is an example of a medium-sized twentieth century farmstead (Figure 140). The property was acquired by Reuben Anderson in 1930,



W. FRANK ANDERSON FARM

THE W. FRANK ANDERSON FARM IS A WORKING EXAMPLE OF THE EVOLUTION OF A SMALL, TWENTIETH CENTURY PIEDMONT FARM. THE TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN FARM BUILDINGS ON THE TRACT REFLECT THE HANDWORK OF THE OWNER AND THE CHANGING NEEDS OF HIS AGRICULTURAL OPERATION.

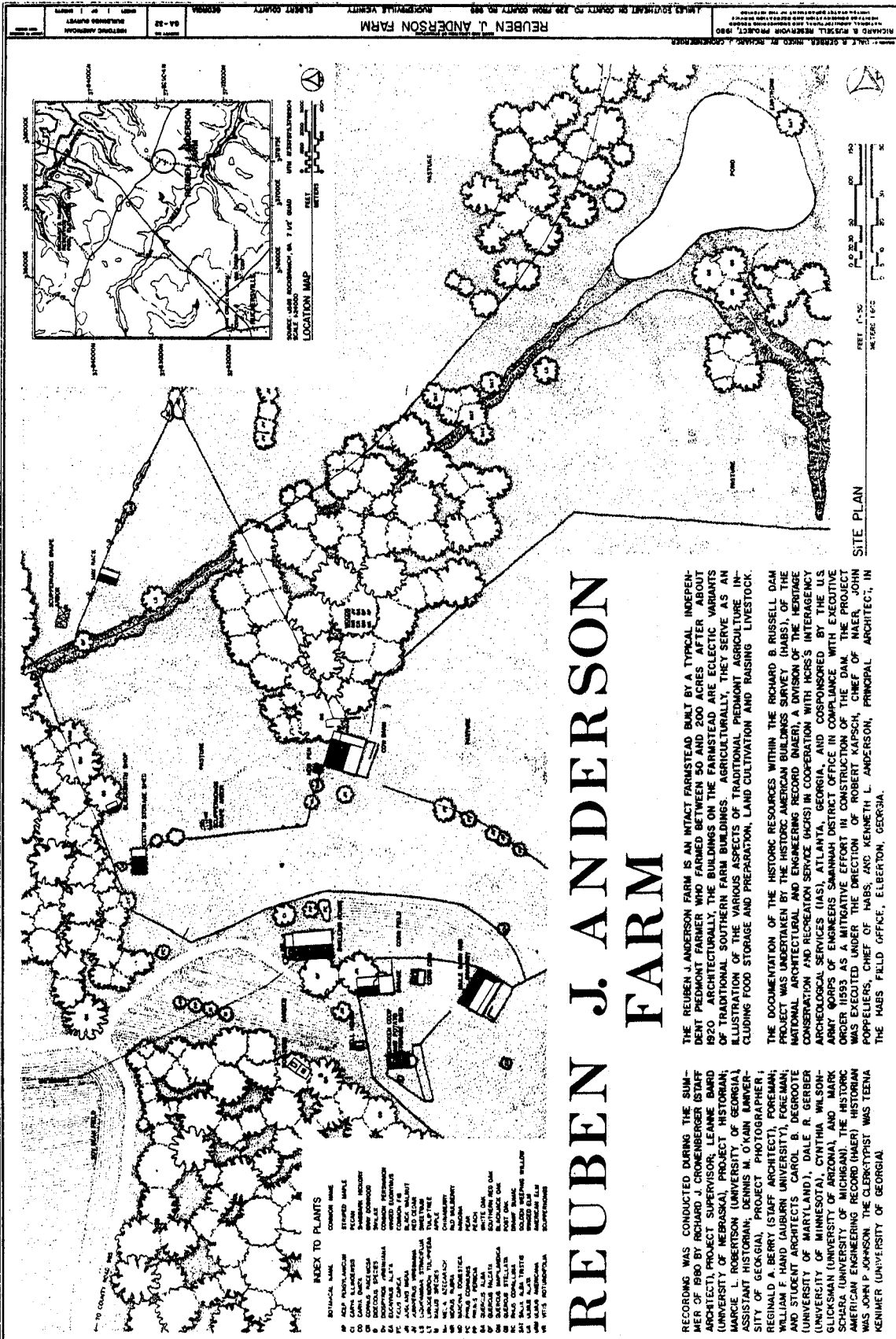
THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE HISTORIC RESOURCES WITHIN THE RICHARD B. RUSSELL DAM PROJECT WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY (HABS), OF THE NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING RECORD (NAER), A DIVISION OF THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE (HCRS) IN COOPERATION WITH HCRS'S INTERAGENCY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES (IAS), ATLANTA, GEORGIA, AND COSPONSORED BY THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS SAMUHAH DISTRICT OFFICE IN COMPLIANCE WITH EXECUTIVE ORDER 11659 AS A MITIGATIVE EFFORT IN CONSTRUCTION OF THE DAM. THE PROJECT WAS EXECUTED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF ROBERT KAPSCA, CHIEF OF NAER; JOHN POPPELLIERS, CHIEF OF IAS; AND KENNETH L. ANDERSON, PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT, IN THE HABS FIELD OFFICE, ELBERTON, GEORGIA.

RECORDING WAS CONDUCTED DURING THE SUMMER OF 1980 BY RICHARD L. CROMBIE (STAFF ARCHITECT), PROJECT SUPERVISOR, LEANNE BARD (UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA), PROJECT HISTORIAN, MARCE L. ROBERTSON (UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA), ASSISTANT HISTORIAN, DENNIS M. O'KANE (BARBER-SITY OF GEORGIA), PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHER; REGINALD A. BERRY (STAFF ARCHITECT), FOREMAN; WILLIAM F. HEND (LAUBURN UNIVERSITY), FOREMAN; AND STUDENT ARCHITECTS CAROL B. DEGROOTE (UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND), DALE R. GERBER (UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA), CYNTHIA WILSON (GLICKSMAN UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA), AND MARK SCHARA (UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN). THE HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD (NAER) HISTORIAN WAS JOHN P. JOHNSON. THE CLERK-TYPIST WAS TEDNA KEMNER (UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA).

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- BT BIRCH
- CA CACTUS
- CH CHERRY
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- DE DECIDUOUS TREE
- DR DROUGHT TOLERANT
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- HA HAIRY WOOD
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- TA TANNIN
- TR TREE
- VA VINE
- WE WEED

Source: Worthy 1983:163.
 Figure 139. W. Frank Anderson Farm Site Plan.
 Drawing prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey.



Source: Worthy 1983:152.
 Figure 140. Reuben J. Anderson Farm Site Plan.
 Drawing prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey.

after most of the farmers had moved out of the area due to the depressed cotton economy. Reuben J. Anderson focused his agricultural production on corn, vegetables, and livestock, and describes himself as "never wanting much." The farm features a range and diversity of structures not found on most antebellum or postbellum farms, a reflection of Reuben's diversified farming. The structures appear to be randomly distributed, and there is no evident separation of male and female functions in the farm complex.

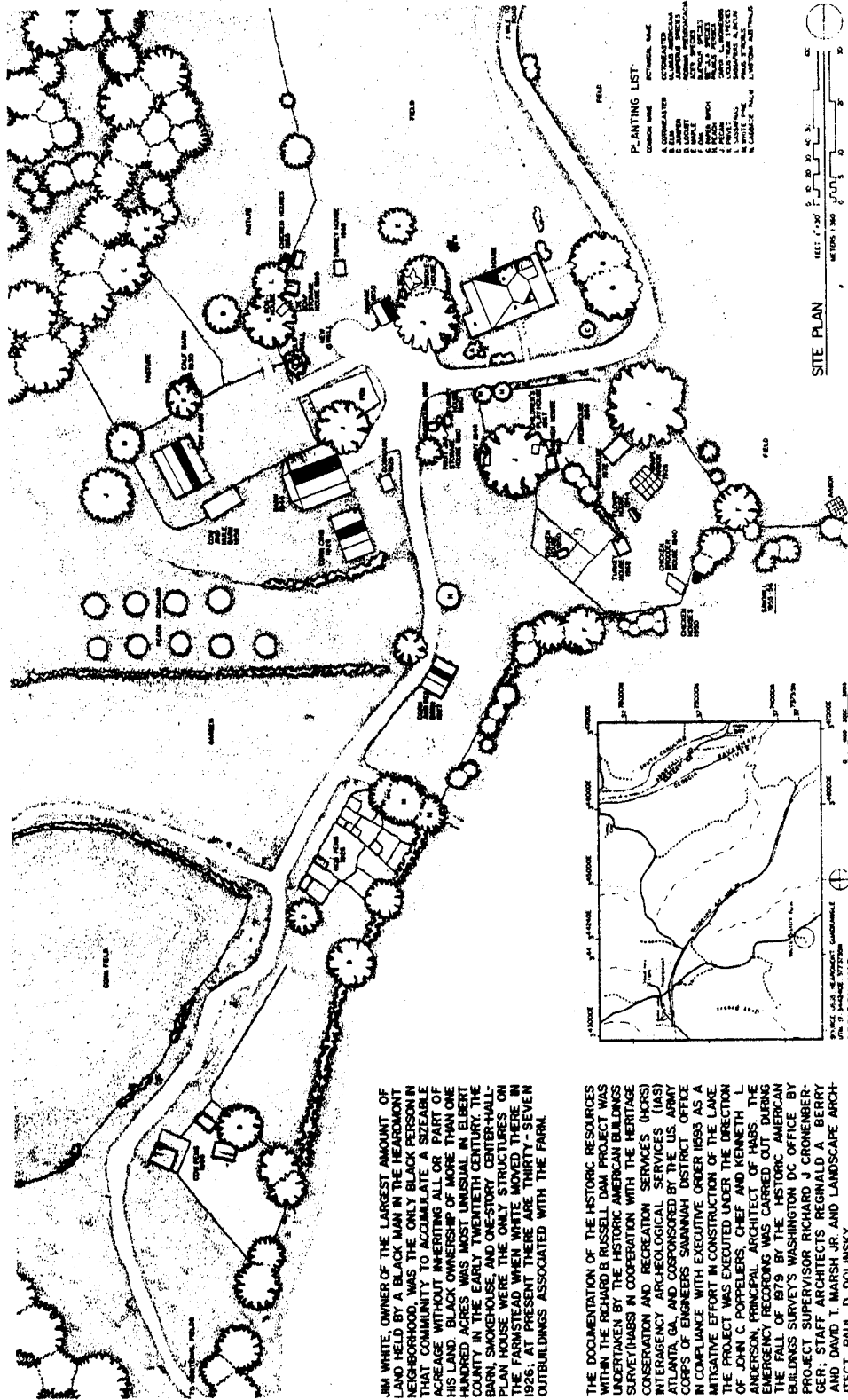
The Dye-White Farmstead (Figure 141) is one of the few black-owned farms documented by the project research. The farm was originally established by Bynum Dye, and purchased by Jim White in 1919. White was one of the few farmers who actually increased their holdings during the period from 1920 to 1930. Worthy (1983:167) attributes this increase to the fact that White diversified his agricultural production at an early date; was a firm believer in crop rotation and soil conservation; and also invested heavily in livestock. The White farm produced almost every crop known to the South: cotton, peas, corn, wheat, peanuts, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, vegetables, and fruits. The Whites sold about a third of their production, and held onto much of their crop for sale during the winter months, when they received the best prices. Thus several structures on the farm (for example the potato house) were constructed specifically for this purpose. The families success at subsistence farming is marked by the fact that they continue to farm in the region, having been relocated outside the project area in 1979 (Worthy 1983:165-167).

The farm possessed at one time 37 separate outbuildings, qualifying the settlement pattern as almost a neo-plantation. The family's dwelling was separated from other agricultural functions, flanked on both sides by large trees, with open field to the rear. The front of the house faced an area which contained grape arbors, a children's play house, a privy, and poultry houses. The agricultural functions of the farm are clearly separated by male and female tasks, as a second concentration of structures to the west of the dwelling contains barns, corn cribs, and other storage structures. Of the three farms, the Dye-White Farm most closely resembles antebellum patterns. The reason for this resemblance is uncertain, although the Whites were shrewd farmers, and this organization may have best suited their agricultural management.

THE CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE AND ITS INHABITANTS, 1930 - 1980

The period from 1930 to the present marks a quiescence in the economy and culture of the Russell Reservoir region. Agriculture continues to serve as a mainstay of the regional economy, but under a different organization employing a variety of crops and utilizing far less of the landscape. Industrialization including textile mills and the granite industry, which has developed around Elberton, serves as a second bastion of employment. The regional landscape has begun to recover from the agricultural practices of the postbellum and early twentieth century, as forests have taken over eroded fields and begun the process

DYE - WHITE FARM



THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE HISTORIC RESOURCES WITHIN THE RICHARD B. RUSSELL DAM PROJECT WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY (HABS) IN COOPERATION WITH THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICES (HORS) INTERAGENCY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES (IAS) ATLANTA, GA, AND COSPONSORED BY THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS SAVANNAH DISTRICT OFFICE IN COMPLIANCE WITH EXECUTIVE ORDER 11653 AS A MITIGATIVE EFFORT IN CONSTRUCTION OF THE LAKE. THE PROJECT WAS EXECUTED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF JOHN C. POPPELERS, CHIEF AND KENNETH L. ANDERSON, PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT OF HABS. THE EMERGENCY RECORDING WAS CARRIED OUT DURING THE FALL OF 1979 BY THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY'S WASHINGTON DC OFFICE BY PROJECT SUPERVISOR RICHARD J. CHRONBERGER, STAFF ARCHITECTS REGINALD A. BERRY AND DAVID T. MARSH, JR. AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT PAUL D. DOLINSKY.

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Source: Worthy 1983:178.

Figure 141. Dye-White Farm Site Plan. Drawing prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey.

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of soil recovery. The region still bears the scars of its heritage, as well as a number of its cultural traits, but connections to the outside world have made the project area much less distinctive as a region.

The period from 1930 to the present has witnessed dramatic decreases in the number of farms and total farmland, and equally dramatic increases in the average farm size. For example, Abbeville County lost 85 percent of its farms during the period from 1930 to 1974, while farms from 99 to greater than 1,000 acres in size increased from 18.2 percent of all farms in the county in 1930 to 63.2 percent in 1974. The shift in land utilization from small farm to agri-business is attached to an increase in agricultural mechanization. Mechanization and a diversified crop economy have made the agriculture of the region profitable, but agriculture no longer provides sustenance to the population which was supported in the antebellum and postbellum years. The total number of farmers in Elberton, Hart, Abbeville, and Anderson counties in 1930 was 16,605, while this number had decreased to 2,725 in 1974, an 83 percent loss for the period (The History Group 1981:153-154; 268).

Most affected by the transition from mono-crop to diversified crop economy and from human to mechanized labor have been the tenant and black farmers. The statistics from the region are striking; tenant farmers contributed 12,466 (75 percent) of all farmers in the four counties contributing to the reservoir in 1930, but only 127 (5 percent) in 1974, a decrease of 99 percent of all tenant farmers for the period. In general, blacks' participation in the agrarian economy has decreased across the South in the twentieth century, as the number of all black farmers has dropped from 908,351 in 1920 to 666,000 in 1940 to only 184,000 in 1964 (The History Group 1981:268, 156). Rufus Ballard describes the changes he witnessed in the region's economy upon returning home from World War II (in The History Group 1981:156):

I tell you, and this comes down to facts: farming had sort of played out, was on its way out... in the 1940s. It was on its way out. You know, people was quitting like they doing, and there wasn't too much farming. It was going to grass and cattle and stuff.... Yeah, farming was on the downswing. And it ain't picked up. It's just continued going out. You see, I'll tell you what really happened: Mr. Eisenhower paid the landowners so much money to get out of production - cotton and such stuff - that the tenant farmer didn't have anything to go on.... We had lots of people who hung around their houses [on tenant farms] for a long time. But, you know, they finally had to get out and find something.

With the loss of agricultural employment, many of the region's inhabitants have found jobs in the industrial and manufacturing sectors. Anderson County in particular has witnessed population increases thanks to its strong industrial base. Elbert County's granite industry, first started in the late-nineteenth century, has provided an impetus to the economy of that part of the reservoir. In 1955 ten companies produced 38,439 tons of stone with a value of \$1,401,114, while

the 1975 value of granite produced in Elbert County had risen to \$3,662,000. Granite production has also created jobs in related industries; in 1977 the Elberton Granite Association estimated that 125 companies were involved in granite-related work, and about 40 percent of the non-farming population of the region found employment in the granite industry. As one resident noted, granite is "really what made Elberton" (in The History Group 1981:159):

By 1920, they had three or four rock sheds in Elberton.... The first little place where they cut granite was up on the side of the railroad, up just above the Seaboard Rail Line.... A little place in there because they were afraid of the dust, you know. They wouldn't go in the shed, they would cut it in the outside there.... They didn't wear a mask or anything, no way to protect themselves.... That's really what made Elberton; we didn't have anything here. There wasn't too much cotton, since we would have had bad crops some years and that put it back. Good business in general we didn't have until the granite business come here. The granite industry is just what makes this county.

Once the land of King Cotton, the project area is now best known for its production of tombstones.

The last century in the history of our region was not scrutinized with the same intensity applied to earlier periods. In part, this derives from the perspective that what is recent is already known. For the project area such an axiom is probably inappropriate; it is much more difficult to characterize the region now than to characterize the postbellum, antebellum, or frontier periods. Of course, we undoubtedly ignored many of the variations of earlier life, knowing the course of history and how the story ended. Such knowledge does not exist for the region at the present. It is very difficult to chart the region's future. Agriculture and industry will both undoubtedly play important roles in the regional economy, although it is unlikely that agriculture will ever again so dominate the area's culture. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in charting the future of the region is that a regional identity no longer exists. The area is now simply part of the South, of the nation, a small component of a much larger whole. Its future history will most likely not be as distinctive as its past.

In his foreword to Linda Worthy's (1983:vi) report on the region's architecture, Dr. Victor Carbone, then Chief of the Archaeological Services Branch of the National Park Service, wrote:

All that remains of the White sister's old place is a lonely cabbage palm tilting incongruously among the ruins in the weedy landscape. It stands as a silent tribute to the people who worked the Piedmont fields which now lie overgrown, recalled to nature's way. The palm was one of the few things they said they would miss the most as they moved uphill to their new brick dwelling, making way for the Richard B. Russell Dam and Lake.

Carbone's words remind us that history is a landscape, an environment where trees, houses, fords, and fields act as symbols of past events. Like any landscape under man's care, we carefully prune and maintain certain portions, while other landmarks are masked by weeds and forgotten. Thus our perception of the past is always much clearer than that of the present. We focus on the big house, ignoring the row of slave cabins on its flank and the leaning log cabin of a poor white farmer down the road. We see the abolition of slavery, leaving the social and political repressions of tenancy hidden in the undergrowth. If the history of the Russell Reservoir stands apart from other histories, it is a tribute to the manner in which this history was gathered. At a time when their landscape was being submerged, Carbone and others asked the people to identify their landmarks. Their words rushed forward in a jumble of places, persons, and events; a garbled language but a common tongue. This report has tried to pull together that history, to see the region as it was seen by those who lived and died there. There will certainly be deficiencies, the product of our own perception of the landscape, but we hope we have done justice to the people of the Russell Reservoir, that landscape now submerged in memory.