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Change in the Textile Mill Villages of
South Carolina's Upstate During the
Modern South Era

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**Change in the Textile Mill Villages
of South Carolina's Upstate
During the Modern South Era**

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Claire Jamieson
May 2010

DEDICATION

To my parents, Jim and Peggy Jamieson,
my sister Beth and her family,
my grandparents, Jerry and Lil Jamieson,
and the rest of my family who have
supported and encouraged me as I wrote this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

While the textile mill and the textile mill village were once prominent features of the landscape of the American South, textile mills are rapidly falling into disuse. Because the mill village housing stocks were sold by owners of the mills to their employees in the 1950s and 1960s, the fate of the mill villages was, in part, divorced from the fate of the textile industry. This thesis demonstrates that mill villages are not abandoned after plant closures and explains why residents remain. This is achieved through a history of South Carolina's mill villages, a quantitative analysis of Spartanburg County, South Carolina's mill village housing stock, and the case of Piedmont, South Carolina. The study concludes that the mill villages of Upstate South Carolina became bedroom communities rather than ghost towns.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Here and there a dark-brick cotton mill one or two stories high, surrounded by a huddle of small cabins, stands for the new order to which the old is giving place, and as night falls the rows of brightly-lighted windows in these mills tell a tale of ceaseless activity strangely in contrast with the easy-going ways of the Old South. (Young, 1903)

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the agrarian Piedmont of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia witnessed the rise of industrization. The region was soon freckled with textile mills. With a few urban exceptions, every mill built before World War II was accompanied by a mill village in which operatives lived, worshiped, learned, played, and shopped. Textile mills and company-owned towns were a prominent feature of the southern Piedmont landscape until the 1950s and 1960s when textile companies systematically dismantled ownership and control of the villages. Counties, adjoining cities, or newly incorporated towns assumed responsibility for governance and services. Some companies did not entirely abandon their philanthropic role in the towns, but most relegated themselves solely to the role of employer.

Textile milling historically formed the spine of South Carolina's industrial sector. In 1933, for example, seventy-five percent of the state's manufacturing workforce was employed in 190 mills (Figure 1.1) (Economic Census, 1933). In the mid 1970s, the number of mills, employment in, and value added by the textile industry peaked (Figure 1.2). Soon, many textile mills began closing their doors or laying-off employees by the hundreds. This trend intensified after 1990, especially with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

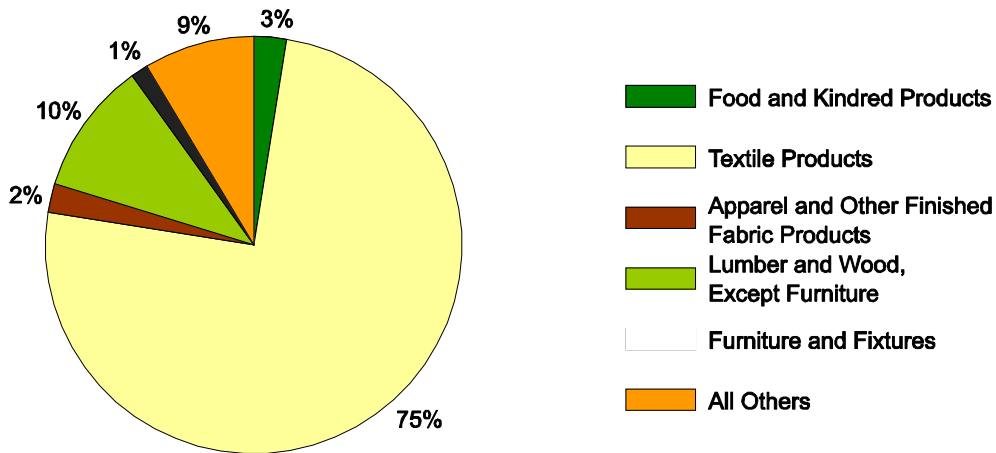


Figure 1.1 Manufacturing Employment by Major Industries, South Carolina, 1933. Source: U.S. Economic Census, 1933.

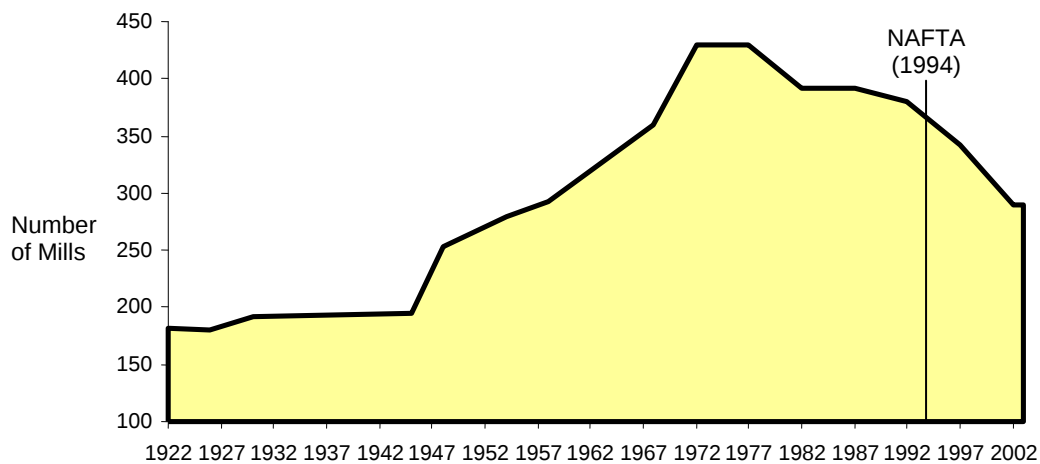


Figure 1.2 Number of Textile Mills, South Carolina, 1922- 2003
 Sources: Clark's Directory of Southern Textile Mills, 1922, 1926, 1930, 1935, 1945-1946; Davidson's Textile Blue Book, 1948, 1958, 1968, 1976, 1987, 1996, 2002; U. S. Economic Census, 1947, 1954, 1958, 1963, 1968, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2001.

in 1994 (Economic Census, 1954-2002). The recent closures of mills and layoffs have transformed the textile towns because the towns' *raison d'être* has disappeared. Dismayed residents of many communities, many of whom have never known employment outside a textile mill, are concerned about the collapse of the textile industry. As a result, South Carolinians are apprehensive about the effect this economic transformation will have on the mill-built villages throughout the state and are concerned about the effect a mill's closure will have on their communities.

Purpose

The purpose of my thesis is to evaluate the survival of South Carolina's mill towns following closure of the factories. Conventional wisdom assumes that one-company places will become ghost towns following the industry's withdraw. Coal mining communities and timber towns, for example, usually disappear when resources are exhausted and the labor force relocates. When the textile industry in South Carolina began to collapse, many expected the mill town to suffer the same fate as coal and timber communities. But, mill towns do not necessarily become ghost towns following a mill's closure.

My case studies of the mill towns of Upstate South Carolina demonstrate that mill towns are not abandoned after closure of the factory. Rather, the towns are transformed into bedroom communities since they are fortunately situated in a diverse and economically healthy region with alternative employment options. Many residents value their neighborhoods' historic value, sense of community, affordability of the housing stock, and proximity to the booming Greenville-Spartanburg-Anderson Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA.). I also hypothesize that

the fate of mill towns is linked to the textile industry's restructuring in the 1950s and 1960s; by relinquishing control of the towns, the mills opened them to change.

This study analyzes the creation of the textile mill village, changes brought by the transfer of the villages houses to the residents, and alterations caused by the closure of a village's mill. Spartanburg County is the primary study area for this investigation. Spartanburg County had and still has the largest number of textile mills in the state. But, a case study from neighboring Greenville County complements the story told by Spartanburg County's mill towns.

Study Area

The study is confined to South Carolina¹, and it specifically focuses on the Upstate counties of South Carolina where most textile mills are located (indicated by the palest green on Figure 1.3). Dot maps showing mill locations in 1948, the beginning of the post World War II era, in 1976, and in 2002, the era which follows the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), reveal a historic and contemporary concentration of mills in Upstate South Carolina counties (Figures 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6). Textile mills are less densely concentrated in the Midlands, and they are sparse across the Lowcountry.

The location of most of South Carolina's textile mills roughly corresponds to the Piedmont physiographic region, a hilly zone between the Fall Line and the Blue Ridge. The Upstate is located entirely on the Piedmont. Originally, textile mills located on the Piedmont to take advantage of the waterpower created along the area's many swift rivers. With the introduction of steam and electric power this locational advantage became less important.

¹ Historically, the Southern textile industry was concentrated on the Piedmont from Alabama to Virginia with the Carolinas at the core. The impact of mill closures in North Carolina has been compounded by the collapse of the furniture industry, so North Carolina is not in this study.

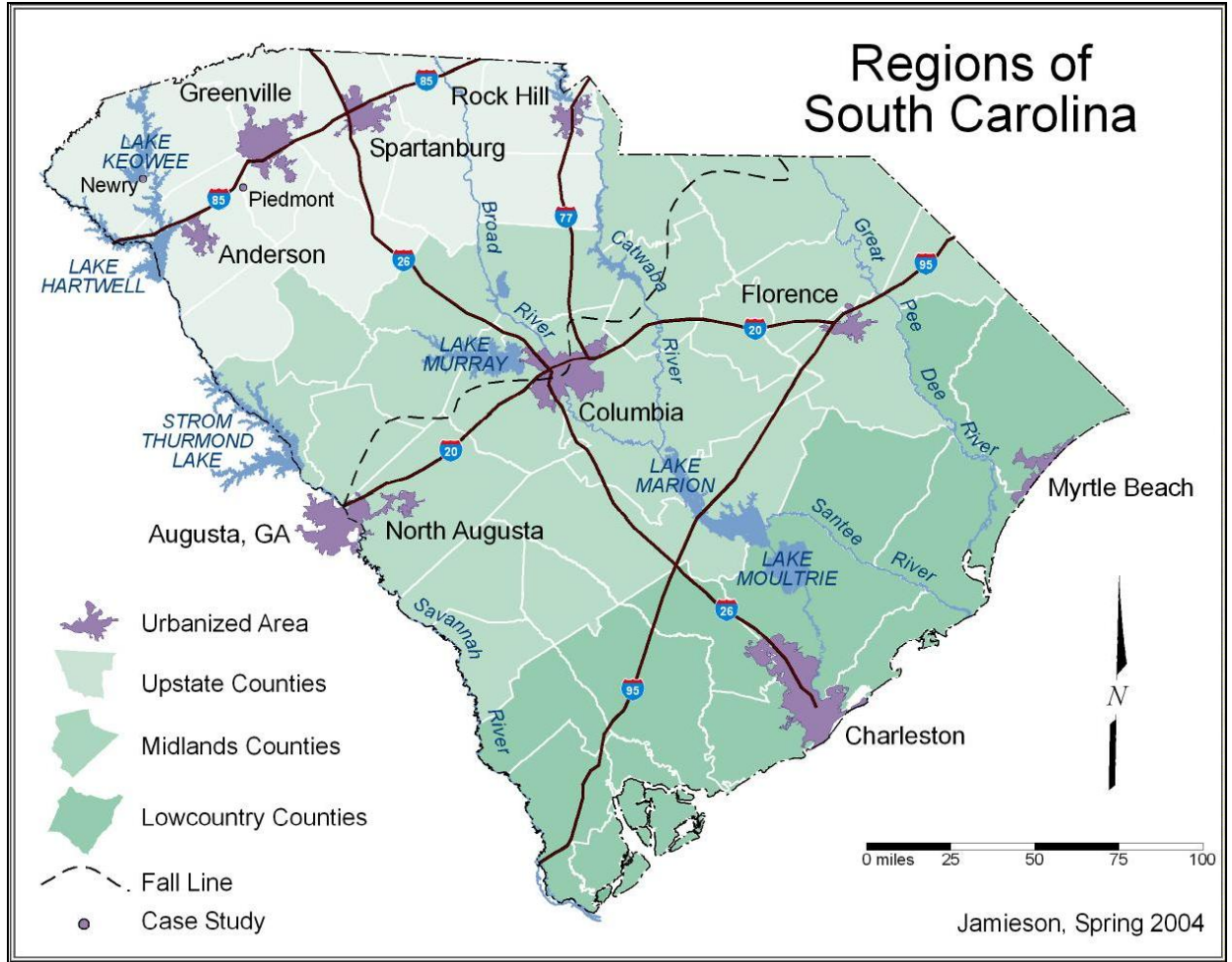


Figure 1.3 Regions of South Carolina
Source: U.S. Census Tiger Files

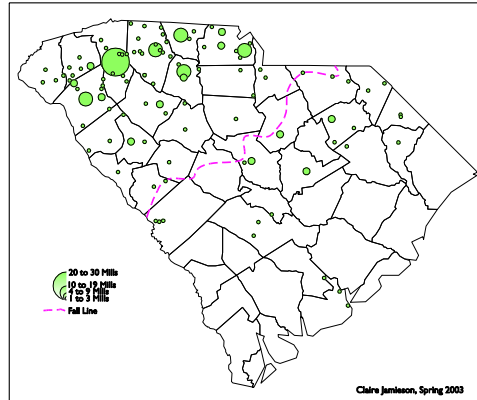


Figure 1.4 Location of Textile Mills, South Carolina, 1948.
Source: Davidson's Textile Blue Book, 1948.

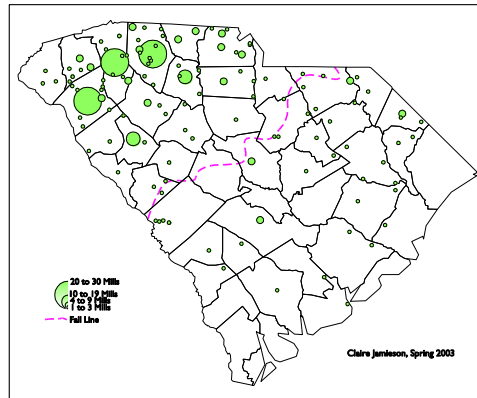


Figure 1.5 Location of Textile Mills, South Carolina, 1976.
Source: Davidson's Textile Blue Book, 1976

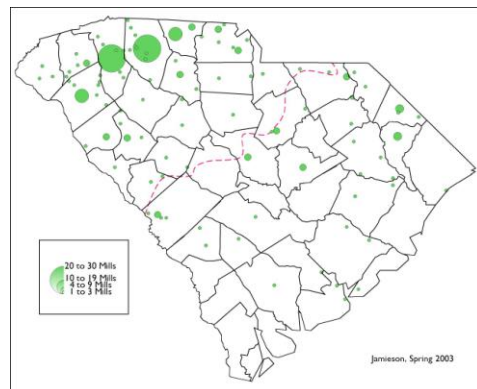


Figure 1.6 Location of Textile Mills, South Carolina, 2002
Source: Davidson's Blue Book, 2002

Race and the Southern doctrine of white supremacy served to cement the mills on the Piedmont. Slavery and antebellum plantations were generally confined to the coastal plain because of its unique suitability for the growth of rice and long-staple cotton. The Upstate had been relegated to poor whites who scratched out a living on subsistence farms until the introduction in the 1790s of Eli Whitney's cotton gin allowed them to produce short-staple cotton for profit. Southern industrialists believed in the superiority of whites and held that blacks were inherently unsuitable for factory work while whites were good industrial workers (Teter 2002). The early industrialists located their factories among the poor whites of the Upstate. The few jobs reserved for blacks involved heavy, physical labor. Blacks rarely knew employment in the textile industry until the late 1960s and 1970s. One journalist described the Piedmont as an electrified haven for poor whites in 1930,

The Piedmont area is the middle ground of the South... more water power has been harnessed and more factories have been established in this area than in any part of the United States. In these factories the highlander first meets that other "defeated farmer" the lowlander, struggling up from the coastal plains to exchange his mule and his tongue plow for a machine tender's job. However thin and precarious the pay envelope of the unskilled industrial worker, it can never be as thin and uncertain as the living either mountaineer or plainsman was able to pull out of the land. (McCormick, May 25, 1930)

Methods

To analyze South Carolina's mill towns, a variety of historic and contemporary primary data sources must be employed. The Census of Manufactures provides consistent data on the number of textile establishments, number of people employed in textile mills, wages of employees, and other information at the state and county level for every five years between 1958 and 1992. Before 1958, the Census of Manufactures provided the same data only at the state and national levels. In 1997, the Census of Manufactures's Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)

codes were reorganized into the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) codes in conjunction with the implementation of North American Free Trade Agreement. For example, tire factories were listed under textile mills in 1992 but were reclassified in the 1997 Census because cotton cord is no longer used in tires. Many categories related to the textile industry changed so much that comparisons between 1992 and 1997 are difficult. Census data, nonetheless, provides a relatively consistent and inclusive snapshot of the industry since 1958.

Four industry directories, Davison's Textile Blue Book, the Textile World Red Book, the Textile World Blue Book, and Clark's Directory of Southern Textile Mills, list textile mills every year by state and town. These directories record data about individual mills including number of spindles. Davison's Blue Book indexes the mills of North America and has been published since the turn of the twentieth century. Textile World Blue Book, a continuation of the ATI Directory: Textile Red Book, indexes the mills of the world and has been published since the mid-1990s under different titles. Clark's Directory of Southern Textile Mills indexes only textile mills in Southern states and has been printed since the 1920s. All three publications rely on voluntary submission of information by textile mills. Some mills respond inconsistently; some mills omit important figures such as number of employees or number of spindles. These sources, despite their spotty records, are useful because they escape the disclosure issues of census documents and are able to provide data specific to individual mills.

The data from the Census of Manufactures together with data from the industrial directories make tracking the growth and decline of number of textile mills, textile mill employment, and number of spindles in South Carolina and its towns possible, but not precise.

These data establish the locations of modern and historic textile mills and textile mill villages within the state as well as the location of recent mill closures.

The Census of Population provides data at the state, county, and municipal level about the population, income, education, employment, and housing. The census can be supplemented with data from the County and City Data Book about crime, health, and employment.

Unfortunately, most textile mill villages are too small to be listed in the County and City Data Book or in the Census of Population as Census Designated Places (CDPs).

Spartanburg County's Assessor's Office's online Real Property Search (<http://www.spartanburgcounty.org/assessor/asrinfo.asp?action=search>) reveals a wealth of information about the county's mill villages, especially the construction and condition of mill-built housing. For the purposes of this study, important characteristics of mill village housing are: the builder, age, condition, size, materials (floors, walls, exterior), value, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, date of last sale, and sale price. These data reveal common materials used in mill housing and common ways in which homeowners have made improvements to their dwellings. Owner improvements indicate upgrades or inadequacies. These data also illustrate how mill villages were built in stages as mills were established and then expanded. These data reveals details about the homes constructed by mills for their operatives and the effects of mill closures on mill villages.

Spartanburg County mill towns were identified using Clark's Directory of Southern Textile Mills from 1922, 1926, 1930, 1935, and 1945/46. Any mills established before or during these years would almost certainly have built a village and should be listed. Managers, who voluntarily listed their mills in Clark's Directory often included the number of employees and/or

the number of spindles. Unfortunately, Clark's Directory records for individual mills are not always continuous.

Once the mill towns of Spartanburg County were identified, digital line graphs (digitized United States Geological Survey topographic maps) and digital orthophotos (digitized aerial photos) from Terraserver USA (www.terraserver-usa.com) were used to locate the mill-built portions of the towns. Mill villages are identified easily from maps and orthophotos because mills are always located along rail lines, and factories surrounded by dense, orderly rows of houses (Figure 1.6). Where mill buildings were demolished, small, non-municipal water towers near densely packed houses are good clues to the presence of a mill town. Even when mills are razed, smokestacks are rarely destroyed. A street map may then be referenced to establish the names of that area's streets to be queried in Spartanburg's Real Property Search engine. Names



Figure 1.6 The Pacolet Mills (upper portion of photo) and Pacolet Park (lower portion of photo) mill towns. The mill complex is apparent on the south bank of the Pacolet River. Source: Terraserver-USA.com

of known textile mill villages were typed into Spartanburg Real Property Search. The system returned records for any house associated with that town name by street address (“100 Dillard St Arcadia” or “250 Maple St Pacolet”). Additional records were located by querying the name of each street from every town. Every effort was made to exhaustively survey all mill housing in the county. The following parts of records were then transferred to a spreadsheet: Footage, Appraised Value of Land, Appraised Value of Building, Year Built, Condition, Walls, Floors, Exterior, Bedrooms, Baths, and Stories².

Because the Real Property Search system identifies the textile mills by the the same developer who built each house, no doubt remains that each house in the data set is a mill-built house. However, houses may have been missed³. Seventeen Spartanburg County mill villages and 2,497 houses were surveyed. The houses studied were built between 1878 and 1945; most were built around 1900. The villages studied were large and small, in rural and urban locations, and had experienced mill closures between 1955 and 2001 or still had an operating mill.

Other Upstate counties, including Greenville, Anderson, and Oconee also make tax records available via the internet, but none provide a comparable level of detail as does Spartanburg making the county important not only for the large presence of textile milling but also because of the availability of this detailed data. Descriptions of the quantitative methods used to analyze data in the Appendix. The Appendix elaborates on data from Spartanburg

² The following parts of records were not copied: Owner Name, Previous Owner, Deed Volume/Page, Number of Units, Assessed Value of Land and Building, Land Use, Property Type, Fireplace, Foundation, Roof, Heat/AC, Utility, Design, Roof Material, Heat Type, Basement, Attic, Garage, Road, and Topography.

³ This is especially true if the Real Property Search system did not record the mill associated with a property as developer.

County's Real Property Search. It sheds light on the construction of the mill villages and the effect of mill closures.

Important records from the towns and the companies involved in this study are available in libraries and archives across South Carolina. Clemson University's Special Collections maintains a collection of records from the textile industry. The Courtenay Manufacturing Company Records, 1889 – 1971, at Clemson provide a glimpse into the operation of the mill and village at Newry while the Courtenay family still ran that mill; letters, memos, and pay stubs all recall life and work in Newry. Historic photographs and numerous newspaper and newsletter clippings from significant events in Newry history, which are gathered in the Henry Cater Collection, 1899 – 1985, add to a researcher's understanding of the town and its history. Finally, taped interviews about life in Newry done by Daniel E. Wegner for his Master's thesis in 1979 are preserved at Clemson, but his documents were not used in this study.

The Alester Furman Company Records, 1918 – 1977, is a significant collection at Clemson University Library's Special Collections for a geographic study of textile mills. The Alester Furman Company, a prominent real estate firm in Greenville, South Carolina, handled the sale of many mill village houses to operatives on behalf of textile companies throughout South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia in the late 1940s, the 1950s, and the early 1960s. Included in this collection is correspondence between the Furman Company, and textile companies, homebuyers, and financiers. Reports detailing the numbers of houses sold and the prices are especially significant. Large and small plat maps of the towns show the villages at the moment when companies relinquished control over them.

Archives at the Pendleton District Commission supplement the information available at Clemson on Newry with some valuable historic photographs of the town. These archives are more important because they contain a small but rounded collection on the Piedmont Manufacturing Company and the town of Piedmont gathered by assistant director Donna Roper and her father Don Roper, both residents of Piedmont; Don Roper also serves as editor of the Piedmont Informer and historian of the town. They gathered important newsletter articles, pay rolls, rent records, photographs, and the personal correspondence of many mill officials.

The village of Newry and the mill at Piedmont were both placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Detailed records about these two South Carolina institutions were collected to document their importance to the state and nation as well as the worth of their preservation for future generations. While the Piedmont mill was taken off the Register because it burned in 1983, the designation records and documents generated were retained. The records and documents related to Newry are of special interest because the entire village was nominated. These records and the collections at the University of South Carolina's Carolina Library, the Greenville and Spartanburg Historical Societies, and those counties' libraries have potential for further study.

The second chapter of this thesis explores the literature relevant to this study. Chapter Three details the history of the textile industry and the villages. Chapter Four examines the foundation, form, and function of textile mill villages employing data from the Spartanburg Assessor's site so changes in these places can be marked later. Chapter Five details the village sales with evidence from the Furman Company records marking this event as a watershed in the

fate of the mill villages. Chapter Six reexamines the data from the Spartanburg Assessor's site to discover the fate of mill village housing after mill closures. Chapter Seven concludes this thesis.

Chapter 2: The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South⁴

Historians, sociologists, and economists have conducted most of the research on the Southern textile industry. Historians are responsible for the bulk of the literature; their studies usually focus on the establishment of the industry and the businessmen and innovators who were responsible for the industry's success, on oral histories of former mill workers, and on mill village life. The literature has been complemented by important works by sociologists, who usually focus on labor relations and unionization, and economists, who focus on the infrastructure of the textile industry. While, most work on the textile industry in the South has focused on its foundation and village life during the first half of the 1900s, some work has been done on the recent transformation of the industry. But, virtually nothing has been written about the post World War II period when the textile companies sold their mill housing to their employees changing these places forever.

The dearth of research by geographers on the textile industry begs attention because textile mills and their villages were such a prominent feature of the Southern landscape during the New South Era. The demise of the textile industry and the resulting effect on the places which once depended on the mills, furthermore, is of immediate interest. Geography provides a useful lens through which the demise of an industry can be examined. For example, Merle Prunty and Charles Aiken, in their article "The Demise of the Piedmont Cotton Region" examined the

⁴ Broadus Mitchell's classic work on the South Carolina textile industry was titled The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South.

end of cotton culture on the Piedmont of Georgia and the Carolinas. Prunty and Aiken proposed that “If the processes which generate agricultural regionalizations are of geographical significance (and they are), then the processes underlying disintegrations of such regions also should command our attention” (Prunty and Aiken 1972, 283). The textile landscape is undergoing such a disintegration and commands attention.

Before a scholar approaches the history of the textile industry, more general works on the New South and Modern South Eras contextualize the “cotton mill fever” of the 1880s and 1890s and the modernization of the textile industry after the mid-1970s. The merits of these historical works have been discussed in countless literature reviews and historiographies, so little more than a list of some classic works is necessary. Wilbur Cash’s Mind of the South, C. Vann Woodward’s Origins of the New South, and Robert Tindall’s The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 figure considerably in this group of works. Broadus Mitchell’s The Industrial Revolution in the South is of special interest to those researching the textile industry because Mitchell discusses the role of cotton mills in the South’s industrialization.

Early Histories

Broadus Mitchell’s three works on the foundations of the textile industry in the South still rank first among chronicles of the southern mills; his books include The Industrial Revolution in the South, The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South, and William Gregg: Factory Master of the Old South. In the classic The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South, Mitchell notes the continuous nature of the industry with its roots in the antebellum period which blossomed into the New South Era. Mitchell goes on to discuss the New South apologists’ successes in recruiting labor to work the mills and capital to build mills.

In The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South, Mitchell sees textile mills as a saving grace for “poor whites” – desperate whites to whom the slave economy of the antebellum period was a great disservice. He justifies the low wages paid to the poor whites by citing the “welfare work” done by the mills. While The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South illustrates well how closely the textile industry was tied to larger themes within Southern history, Mitchell’s special emphasis on the development of the industry in the state of South Carolina makes this book a significant work for my study. The book especially helps me to understand the shape of mill villages.

Mitchell’s William Gregg: Factory Master of the Old South provides insight into one man’s efforts to save the South from economic stagnation by building mills. William Gregg founded a large, antebellum factory and town at Graniteville, SC, which served as a model for many early enterprises into textile milling. Gregg’s influence on the state’s textile industry cannot be overstated. Mitchell’s The Industrial Revolution in the South joins the literature on the New South Era more generally.

Scholars working with Mitchell’s books will note the many ways in which the books are dated. For example, the books are stained by Mitchell’s obvious contempt for blacks and immigrants who he believed were unsuitable for work in textile mills. He even goes so far as to name failed mills which used slave labor in the antebellum era as proof that the mill labor force should remain purely white. Similarly, his works are wholly positive about the mills and their influence on labor and omit discussions of the problems created by mills for people.

Mitchell’s works are accompanied by August Kohn’s The Cotton Mills of South Carolina, 1907. This book compiles letters Kohn wrote to Charleston’s News and Courier in October through December of 1907. Kohn provides an eyewitness account of South Carolina’s

mills during a major mill-building decade. An interesting companion to Kohn's work is The American Cotton Industry by T. M. Young. In 1902, Young visited American cotton mills in the North and South on the behalf of the British newspaper, The Manchester Guardian, in order to assess the threat the American textile industry posed to the British textile industry. Both Kohn and Young carefully record insightful details about Southern textile mill villages amid their observations about the industry as a whole at the turn of the twentieth century.

Finally, Cotton Mill, Commercial Features: a Textbook for the Use of Textile Schools and Investors by Daniel Tompkins instructs potential mill builders or managers on how to construct and run a turn-of-the-century mill. Tompkins delves into the practical details of building a mill, so he necessarily discusses why and how to build a mill village from management's point of view. Holland Thompson's From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill: A Study of the Industrial Transition in North Carolina rounds out these expressive, early sources with a contemporary academic approach.

Recent Research

Recent scholarship on the textile industry and mill towns is lead by David Carlton of Vanderbilt University's Department of History. His recent work, Mill and Town in South Carolina: 1880-1920, examines the social implications of the creation of a landless, white proletariat by the urban class and is the most significant recent book on the history of the textile industry. Articles and other publications by Carlton have fleshed out the literature on the Southern textile industry. For example, he was a contributing author to Textile Town: Spartanburg County, South Carolina, edited by Betsy Wakefield Teter.

Textile Town is the commendable effort on the part of the Hub City Writers Project to document the historic depth and breadth of the textile industry and mill life within Spartanburg County, South Carolina. This well-illustrated and documented work is a must read for anyone interested in the mills of this area. Local historians and journalists have published many similar histories for individual towns which, when well done, establish valuable chronologies on which further research may rely. For example, Michael Hembree's Newry: A Place Apart explores the story of the Courtenay Mill which served as the nucleus of life in Newry, South Carolina through documents, pictures, and first hand accounts.

Douglas Flamming's far-reaching book, Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton Georgia, 1884-1984, is a case study of Crown Cotton Mills which dominated Dalton, Georgia from its establishment in 1884, through the mill's closure in 1972. This work provides valuable insight into community dynamics surrounding a textile mill and into the plight of mill workers. Like Carlton, Flamming studies management's role in building Dalton, but Flamming focuses on the role of paternalism in town building, on changes in the town once paternalism was abandoned and the mill stopped providing housing in the post World War II Era, and on the role of unions. Flamming concludes with the decline of the industry in the South including the mill and its community's susceptibility to market variations in the post World War II era.

Timothy J. Minchin's Hiring the Black Worker: the Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry, 1960-1980 describes the integration of the textile industry in the fifteen years after the civil rights era through court documents and interviews. This book provides valuable insight about the economic consequences of the civil rights movement on Southern workers;

blacks were able to make “rapid gains in an industry that had traditionally excluded them” (Minchin 1999, 3). Minchin also reveals the nature of industry labor issues during the same period.

Other important works on the history of the textile industry include: Patrick Hearden’s Independence and Empire: The New South’s Cotton Mill Campaign, 1865-1901 which focuses on the New South’s efforts to secure an industrial base by building cotton mills. G. C. Waldrep’s Southern Workers and the Search for Community explores life in the mill villages, unionism, and momentous strikes in Spartanburg County. Waldrep also explores the dependence relationship between village residents and the mill. The Conquest of Labor: Daniel Pratt and Southern Industrialization by Curtis Evans follows Daniel Pratt’s extensive cotton gin and textile empire village life in Prattville, a mill town he built in Alabama. Race, Class, and Community in Southern Labor History is a compilation of articles by historians who research on the textile industry or the New South Era. Finally, James C. Cobb’s Selling of the South examines the diversification of Southern industry in the post World War era.

Oral Histories, Memoirs, and Autobiographies

Like a Family: the Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al. is a classic collection of oral histories of former textile workers in the Carolinas. Like a Family gives readers a sense for life in mill towns and helps outsiders understand how, despite many hardships, residents can still feel nostalgia when these communities pass. Victoria Byerly’s Hard Times Cotton Mill Girls, a collection of “personal histories”, complements Like a Family with first person stories of female mill operatives.

Oral histories may be supplemented with personal memoirs such as Wilt Browning's Linthead; Growing up in a Carolina Cotton Mill Village or Mildred Gwin Andrews' The Men and the Mills: A History of the Southern Textile Industry. Wilt Browning's Linthead depicts his own childhood around Easley Mill. Because he left Easley at 18, his memories mostly center on village life, but not the actual mill. Linthead calls the men and women who were influenced by the textile industry to arms; Browning encourages them to record their experiences for posterity as in his own example. Mildred Gwin Andrews' The Men and the Mills is an industry insider's account of management's story. Andrews was an influential force in the textile industry for years, and her work reflects her intimate, inside knowledge with a bias favoring management. This history reads like a Who's Who of the textile industry with personal stories of the men who impacted the Southern textile industry most significantly.

Sociology's Contribution

Sociologists have tended to focus on labor issues like child labor, working conditions, and the philosophy of paternalism. The Social Consequences of Economic Restructuring in the Textile Industry: Change in a Southern Mill Village by Cynthia Anderson explores how globalization, though not mill closures specifically, has effected Southern textile workers. Jeffery Leiter, Michael Schulman, and Rhonda Zingraff's study Hanging by a Thread: Social Change in Southern Textiles does the same.

Melton McLaurin's Paternalism and Protest; Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Organized Labor, 1875-1905, Andrea Tone's The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America, and Mary Jackman's The Velvet Glove: Paternalism and

Conflict in Gender, Class, and Race Relations all explore the paternalistic philosophy that shaped management/labor relations in the first half of the 20th century.

Economics' Contribution

Economists have been the only scholars to research the decline of the Southern textile industry since 1972. The most comprehensive study of the textile industry of recent years is Kitty Dickerson's Textiles and Apparel in the Global Economy. Dickerson's book, written like a text book, discusses the textile industry within the context of a globalizing economy. Dickerson is unconcerned with individual mills but examines the American textile industry as a whole.

An historic economic analysis of the textile industry with a more limited, historic focus is Textiles in Transition: Technology, Wages, and Industry Relocation in the U.S. Textile Industry, 1880-1930 by Nancy Frances Kane. Kane examines the economic reasons for the relocation of the textile industry to the American South and hypothesizes about the contemporary relocation of the industry overseas as the industry continues to mature. Similarly, Mary J Oates, in her published dissertation The Role of the Cotton Textile Industry in the Economic Development of the American Southeast: 1900-1940, discusses the locational advantage Southern mills enjoyed over Northern Mills.

The textile industry has conducted a few internal studies of the current situation. Authors usually call for protectionism from the Federal Government. "Crisis in U.S. Textiles; The Impact of the Asian Currency Devaluations and U.S. Dollar Policy and the U.S. Government Actions Urgently Needed to Rebalance the Competitive Situation" published by The American Textile Manufacturers Institute (ATMI) is especially interesting. As the article's title suggests, the ATMI carefully documents the industry's woes and links mill closures to events in the global

economy and to U.S. policy. The ATMI encourages the American government to protect domestic industry by making the American dollar weaker.

Geography and the Textile Industry

Geographers have conducted very little work on the industry that so shaped the Southern experience and landscape. Dennis Lord's 1998 article, "Globalization Forces and the Industrial Restructuring of Greenwood County, South Carolina," comes closest to the theme of this thesis. But, for Lord, mill villages are just an aside in the more complex story of Greenwood County's largely successful efforts to recruit industry and compete in the global marketplace. Also, "Old but New: An Inventory of Textile Mill Reuse in the Charlotte Urban Region" by Gerald Ingalls and Tyrel Moore catalogued the plight of mill buildings in the Charlotte area, but the authors discussed no other feature of mill villages. James Wheeler's article, "Locational Factors in the New Textile Industry: Focus on the U.S. South" discusses the locational factors important to modern mills competing in the global economy.

Geographer Toby Harper Moore's dissertation The Unmaking of a Cotton Mill World: Place, Politics, and the Dismantling of the South's Mill Village System, explores why management sold the mill-built housing to their employees. Moore's dissertation is one of only two full-length studies of this watershed in the history of mill villages. The second is historian Harriet Herring's Passing of the Mill Village written in 1949 which studied this trend as it occurred. Herring outlined changes in the textile industry that precipitated or coincided with the sales, identified the reasons for the sales, and looked at reactions to the sales by management and labor.

John Sharp Fox's dissertation The Locational Dynamics of the United States Knitting Industry, completed for a doctorate in geography at the University of Tennessee, examines the locational factors that influenced the knitting industry. Though the knitting industry persisted in the Northeast longer than the cotton goods industry, many knitting mills also eventually made their way South. Fox makes comparisons between the Northern and Southern cotton and knitting mill and describes the mill village as a financial liability generally forgone by the knitting industry and eventually abandoned by the cotton goods industry. Some trends experienced by the cotton textile industry like the loss of mills and employees in the mid 1970s are reflected in Fox's account the knitting industry.

J. D. Porteous's "The Nature of the Company Town," a more general survey of mining, lumber, fishing, oil, and manufacturing towns, differentiates between pioneering company towns like logging camps in uninhabited areas and socially controlling company towns like textile mill towns in Britain, the United States, and other countries. Porteous identifies the defining features of company towns and explains their evolution. This invaluable article places textile mill towns into a broader context spatially and creates a company town typology.

Charles Aiken's The Cotton Plantation South Since the Civil War provides a useful framework in which a historic geography study may be structured. Aiken revisited cotton plantations well after watershed events in their history and mapped the resulting effects upon the landscape. While many historians, geographers, and Southerners assumed the plantation had died with Emancipation or the end of tenancy, Aiken demonstrated that the institution is alive and well in American agriculture by establishing its continuity on the landscape.

Planners have contributed little to the research on mill communities. One exception is “From Mill Town to Mill Town” by John Mullin, Jeanne Armstrong, and Jean Kavanagh. The authors examined Maynard, Massachusetts, former home of a major woolen mill which closed in 1950, for evidence of rebirth in the mid 1980s. Maynard successfully recruited a large minicomputer manufacturer; the authors offer “potential lessons for planners in towns undergoing similar changes” (Armstrong, Kavanagh, and Mullin 1986, 47).

Other Company Towns

Historian Ronald Eller’s Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930 explores the industrialization of the Appalachian Mountains which parallels the industrialization of the Southern Piedmont. In fact, Eller acknowledges that “the migration of thousands of mountaineers to the cotton mill districts of the piedmont South is an important chapter in the modernization of the mountains” (xxvi). However, because Eller understands that the cotton mills lay outside his study area, he goes no further than a simple comparison of the two institutions’ histories. His study, especially his focus on coal towns, often confirms or provides interesting contrast to the story of Piedmont mill towns. Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960 by Crandall Shifflett complements Eller’s work. Shifflett discusses how and why coal towns were built, life in the towns including the role of the company built store, church, etc, and perceptions of the towns.

A pair of articles by two geographers, Raymond Murphy and Tyrel Moore, goes further to shed light on coal mining towns. In 1933, Murphy depicted a West Virginia coal town in “A Southern West Virginia Mining Community.” In 1998, Moore, in “A Southern West Virginia Mining Community Revisited”, explored the area in Murphy’s article “to document community-

level impacts of economic restructuring within the region's coal industry, and those that occurred with reindustrialization during the 1980s" on a temporal scale not unlike that attempted in this thesis. Moore found that mining towns in McDowell County have dearly felt changes in the industry which built them dearly. The coal mining towns of West Virginia are now devoid of most activity, and little housing survives.

Geographer John Benhart, Jr.'s Appalachian Aspirations: The Geography of Urbanization and Development in the Upper Tennessee River valley, 1865-1900 looks closely at the capital and construction of iron towns in East Tennessee. In his 2007 book, Benhart focuses on capital's and capitalism's roles in place building through the cases of three East Tennessee towns built to support iron mills. Rather than focusing on New South evangelism in industry building, Benhart takes a unique look at the temperance movement and social and sanitary reform movement's influence in capitalist enterprises between the end of the Civil War and the Panic of 1893. He explains paternalism's role in community building.

Need for Further Research

While much scholarly attention has been given to the establishment of the textile industry in the American South in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twenty-first century and to life in mills and their villages, scholarly attention the industry in the second half of the twentieth century is insufficient. Research on this period is overdue because the recent closure of so many American mills signals the passing of an institution. With that institution pass livelihoods, lifeways, and communities whose sole purpose was to support a textile mill. Where this transformation might take Southern communities is not yet understood, but Southerners are anxious about the future.

My thesis begins the process of filling part of this gap in the literature. The physical well-being of the textile mill villages is an important part of the story of Southern industry and a barometer for the health of the communities. By exploring the fate of the physical well being of mill villages since the textile companies divested themselves of their housing stocks and since the textile mill closures, and important part of the story of Southern industry is fleshed out and one barometer for the health of the communities is established. This study also furthers knowledge about one company towns.

Chapter 3: Foundation of Southern Textile Mills

In his book, Mill and Town in South Carolina, historian David Carlton demonstrated that prominent men in the state's important cities and towns raised capital for most of South Carolina's New South era mill villages. Most of these men hoped to make healthy profits, but they were simultaneously motivated by a desire to boost local economies and employ poor whites. While Northerners rarely financed South Carolina mill villages, the Southern factory masters employed the Northern model of textile production based on the first American textile mill built by Samuel Slater (Carlton 1982). Slater imported the British model of a textile factory which included a town where workers were provided with housing and institutions like churches to tend to their well being. This paternalistic system was selected by Southern factory masters who were interested not only in profits but also the uplift of the underclass of poor whites.

Extraregional Roots: The Early Textile Industry of Britain

In the seventeenth century, handloom weaving dominated textile production in England, but developments in the Midlands of England over the next century would revolutionize the British textile industry and, eventually, textile milling in the United States. Textile milling emerged in the northwest of England around Manchester and in the east Midlands around Nottingham in the form of a "putting-out" or cottage industry (Chapman 1967). In the eighteenth century, merchants supplied spinners with raw material. The spinners spun the wool, flax, silk, or cotton in their homes and returned yarn to the merchant who turned that yarn over to weavers. Then, cloth was woven in the weaver's home and returned to the merchant who sold

the cloth at market (Tucker 1984). American textile production similarly operated as a cottage industry during this period (Rivard 2002).

These merchant manufacturers, faced with increased demand in the 1760s and a system replete with waste and inconsistency, turned to workshops. Workshops housed eight to ten workers and a spinning jenny or hosiery frame in one building (Tucker 1984; Chapman 1967). Simultaneously, British cotton consumption soared until it became the fiber of choice (Robson 1957; Howe 1984). Richard Arkwright is remembered for improving the jenny and introducing the water-frame and carding machine. With this new technology, he and his contemporaries developed a factory system which concentrated the stages of textile production in a multistoried stone building that allowed for the harnessing of water power, the division of labor, and the employment of children and families (Chapman 1967; Tucker 1984). Arkwright's numerous mills demonstrated the profitability of the mill and spurred its dissemination (Chapman 1967). England continued to dominate the industry until the mid-1800s when competition from the United States and other countries finally reduced Britain's market share (Robson 1957).

Early British factories had to locate near good sources of water power not centers of population. So, in addition to wages and bonuses, the factories built low-rent housing in the form of mill villages to attract, accommodate, and retain their labor (Simpson 1966; Chapman 1967). In general, this housing was superior to both the housing of local residents and of cities like London (Boyson 1970; Howe 1984). These homes, along tree-lined avenues, featured gardens. Other less common lures for labor included pig sties, privies, ovens, or subsidized coal, access to milk cows, and clubs and societies which provided medical care. Some British mills operated farms or other manufacturing enterprises to provide employment for the fathers and

husbands of mill operatives who were typically women and children. Thus, the industry accommodated the influx of population that a mill brought to the small villages of the Midlands (Boyson 1970).

Many industrialists strove to maintain rural character in their towns, and most factories provided public houses, churches, markets, recreational facilities, and schools (Chapman 1967; Boyson 1970). The eighteenth century British factory masters used churches and Sunday schools to instill desired behavior in employees (Tucker 1984; Chapman 1967). In the late nineteenth century, as industrialists in the American South built mills and villages, many of these same features and paternalistic practices would be repeated on the Piedmont landscape, but first, the British control on textile milling had to be broken.

The Textile Industry of New England

At the time of the Revolutionary War, the new American people expected agriculture and commerce to form the backbone of the American economy. Textile production was limited to homespun wool and linen for domestic manufacture of cloth for local trade (Ware 1966, and Rivard 2002). Women produced most American cloth (Rivard 2002). Whatever cloth was not produced in this manner was imported from the British Empire; this British cloth included woolens and cottons and was of far finer quality than could be produced in the average American home (Ware 1966; Rivard 2002).

Americans attempted to use tariffs to reduce their dependence on England for many goods, but the agrarian Americans lacked factories (Ware 1966,; Rivard 2002). Any meaningful attempts to reduce dependence on British trade had to be coupled with an emergent American manufacturing sector, but the British actively defended against the export of the technologies

which ensured their dominance of world markets by prohibiting the emigration of skilled workmen or the export of plans for machinery (Rivard 2002, Tucker 1984, and Ware 1966).

Samuel Slater of Belper is often credited with the industrialization of the United States and for the similarity between the factories of the English Midlands and American South. Slater apprenticed and worked in an English mill between 1783 and 1789 as a mid-level manager. As a manager, his responsibilities would have included maintaining the quality of cotton, maintaining the machinery, recruiting, disciplining, and paying workers and generally ensuring order in the factory and village (Tucker 1984). When Slater immigrated to the United States in 1789, he knew enough to build and run a cotton textile mill⁵ (Tucker 1984).

Slater founded a spinning mill at Pawtucket, Massachusetts, where the Blackstone River formed a series of ideal shoals already employed by water-powered industries (Rivard 2002). Slater partnered with William Almy and Smith Brown. The latter was later replaced by Obadiah Brown. Their partnership was fraught with mistrust and power struggles, but the enterprise was otherwise an unmitigated success (Tucker 1984). “From Pawtucket the factory system spread throughout Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New York” (Tucker 1984, 89). Pioneering mill workers gathered in new towns (Tucker 1984).

Like the British, New England factory masters established communities to support their mills because most of the mills were not located near centers of population but near sources of waterpower. Therefore, mill villages were built to attract and retain labor. The villages started small but expanded to accommodate growing mills (Rivard 2002). “The entire village was owned by the company and nothing could exist in the village without the company’s consent”

⁵ According to Slater’s biographer, Barbara Tucker, “the American factory system that emerged under his guidance represented an adaptation, not a carbon copy of his British experience.” (Tucker 1984, 46).

(Ware 1966, 40). Many industrialists implemented paternalistic policies to assure the moral quality of their employees, though when immigrant labor entered the mills, the mill owners de-emphasized these efforts (Ware 1966, 40-41 and 119).

Samuel Slater and his contemporaries built mill villages which preserved “links with New England’s colonial past such as the open-field village pattern, single-family dwellings, the church, and the town meeting” and thereby eased the transition of their operatives to industrial life (Tucker 1984, 125). Some observers still found the villages distastefully crowded. Slater’s town, Slatersville, featured stores, a church, a school, and housing for six hundred. These houses were single-family units with garden plots lining the main road. His town at Webster had 25 homes and a boarding house. These “mechanic-entrepreneur” run mills also typically included a home for the owner, a company-run farm, a bank, and a post office.

Most food for the villages came from company-owned farms operated by the fathers and husbands of mill labor or from family garden plots. Any needs not met by the farm and gardens could be furnished by a company store that accepted credit. Mill villages with single-family units were equally suited to large, poor, farm families and to immigrant families who eventually filled the mills (Rivard 2002). All of these features, common in early New England textile mill villages, kept with the tradition of the British mill village.

Many industrialists followed Slater’s blueprint for a mill village, but some large mills of the time, like those in Lowell and Chicopee, did not pander to rural sensibilities (Rivard 2002; Tucker 1984). Rather, Lowell and Chicopee housed laborers, usually girls, in “multifamily, block-style tenements and barracks-like boarding houses” (Tucker 1984, 128; Ware 1966). Only skilled laborers like overseers and mechanics would have enjoyed nicer, single family housing

(Ware 1966). The girls who lived in mill housing were subject to strict discipline administered by a matron. Industry leaders and contemporary journalists celebrated these boarding houses for the preservation of the operatives' character; the young ladies remained suitable for marriage after a stint in a mill, because rules concerning curfews and church attendance were strictly enforced (Ware 1966; Rivard 2002). The boardinghouses, which lacked privacy, "helped create a sense of community for the mill's female labor pool" (Rivard 2002, 103-104).

The early New England textile industry was integrally tied to water power, so mills were often built in isolated locations necessitating villages. As these mill villages grew, they developed into towns and cities. The need for company-supported housing diminished, and competition for the mill's stores emerged. New England textile companies were markedly less paternalistic and less involved in housing than their Southern counterparts by the turn of the twentieth century (Lahne 1944).

New England would dominate American manufacturing for nearly a century despite its distance from many markets due to a large labor supply, access to capital, a tradition of enterprise, and historic inertia (Ware 1966). Melvin Thomas Copeland demonstrated that, in 1860, New England led the nation in production followed by the Middle Atlantic, the South, and finally the West (see Table 3.1). Most of New England's production was centered in Massachusetts and Rhode Island (Copeland 1912).

Table 3.1 Millions of Spindles by Region, 1880 - 1910

Source: Copeland 1912, 34

<i>Millions of Spindles by Region</i>								
	1880	1885	1890	1895	1900	1905	1910	30 Year Increase
North	10.1	12.2	12.6	13.7	14.5	15.3	17.4	7.3
South	0.5	1.1	1.7	2.4	4.5	8.8	11.2	10.7
Total	10.6	13.3	14.3	16.1	19	24.1	28.6	18

The Colonial and Antebellum Southern Textile Industry

During the colonial period, extractive activities like mining and forest products played an important role in the colonies' economies, but, especially in the South, agriculture was the single most important sector of the economy (Cooper and Terrill 1996, 36). Some historians argue that, in this period, the South actually led the colonies in manufacturing, and others argue that the South lagged behind New England (Tompkins 189; Cooper and Terrill 1996; Mitchell 1930). According to Mitchell, the foundations of the Southern textile industry were laid during the Revolutionary period when "the South was well started toward a balanced economic development, with manufactures as well as agriculture" (Mitchell 1930, 11, 23). Many South Carolinians processed cotton at home, and these pioneers constantly attempted to improve the available technology and to expand their operations (Simpson 1948, Mitchell 1930).

The slave economy cemented the importance of agriculture in the antebellum period because slaves, an expensive form of labor, were most economically employed in the cultivation of cash crops (Tompkins 1899; Teter et al 2002, Mitchell 1930). "Overwhelmingly, slaves toiled in the fields to grow tobacco, rice, indigo, and grain" (Cooper and Terrill 1996, 52). Beyond the plantation regions, poor whites eked out livings from marginal lands. Most manufacturing was

an extension of individual planters' operations producing yarn and cloth to clothe slaves and selling surpluses to local markets. Despite a hostile political atmosphere, some entrepreneurs began to pursue commercial manufacturing ventures. After 1810, small "old mills" were founded; their size preserved a domestic character. However, the trade relationship the South shared with the industrial giants of England and the American Northeast together with the institution of slavery discouraged further industrial development in the South (Mitchell 1921).

Though Southern industry remained immature relative to the North, the region witnessed industrial growth in the 1850s and 1860s. This development was heralded by increased rail connectivity and consisted of ironworks, tobacco processing, and textile mills. Visionary men like William Gregg and Daniel Pratt led the charge to industrialize the region (Cooper and Terrill 1996; Mitchell 1930); both men constructed model textile mills. By the mid 1800s, large, commercial textile mills became visible on the landscape of the Southern Piedmont. These first textile mills, built between 1840 and 1860, accounted for between one-fifth and one-fourth of the national output by 1860 (Cooper and Terrill 1996).

"In 1860, the [South Carolina]'s eighteen textile factories⁶ were all located above the fall zone" (Edgar 1998, 280) because the topography of the Piedmont generated waterpower for the enterprises. The Piedmont offered a second advantage over the Lowcountry: a large, poor, and nearly exclusively white workforce. Southern, white supremacist society believed that blacks were unsuitable for factory work while Anglo-Saxon whites were considered naturals (Carlton 1982.) This locational trend, carried by historic momentum, continues to this day though the textile industry now relies on electric power and has been integrated; manufacturing is

⁶ William Hays Simpson counts only 17 mills in South Carolina in 1860 (Simpson 1948).

concentrated in the Upstate and Midlands than in the Lowcountry where few factories operate (see Figures 1.4 and 1.5).

The Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Cotton Mill Campaign

When the Civil War swept the South, Southern society seemed entrenched in an agrarian lifestyle that became associated with Southern identity during a time of heightened sectional awareness. A few voices among the elite, like South Carolinian William Gregg, called for industrial development, but the message of other men like John C. Calhoun, who emphasized the importance and superiority of agriculture, held far more political sway.

The Civil War, together with Reconstruction, was a watershed in Southern economic development. The war temporarily paralyzed the Southern economy; then Northern-led economic Reconstruction redeveloped the social and economic organization lacking in the wake of emancipation and the destruction of war. Seven of South Carolina's textile mills were destroyed by Federal troops in the conflict (Simpson 1948). Cotton reemerged during this period in the Lowcountry and midlands, and yeoman farmers began to cultivate the fiber in the upstate (Aiken 1998; Cooper and Terrill 1996). The economic dominance of cotton culture emerged after Eli Whitney's saw gin opened the regions interior to short staple cotton; King Cotton ruled supreme through the Antebellum Era (Prunty and Aiken 1972). "Textiles were the only Southern industry to grow significantly in the 1870s, and that growth was modest⁷". The cotton mill era, and with it Southern industrialization, truly commenced circa 1880, just after the close of the Radical Reconstruction period when social, economic, and political factors finally aligned producing a favorable climate for industry (Cooper and Terrill 1996).

⁷ This growth is discussed, in some detail, on pp 16-19 of Southern Textile Communities by William Hays Simpson, 1948.

Recognizing that the era of the plantation had ended with Emancipation, some Southerners began to call for a New South “based solidly upon busy factories as well as green fields” (Andrews 1987, 9). These visionary men, often called the Apologists, balked at the region’s backward reliance on agriculture alone and devoted themselves to restructuring the Southern economy in the industrial image of the North. In a now-famous speech, Henry Grady made the first declaration of this New South based on work.

The Cotton Mill Campaign, led by men like William Gregg, Henry Hammett, and Daniel Tompkins, ushered in a key component of this strategy -- the establishment of mills (Cash 1991). The New South’s Cotton Mill Campaign swept over the South “to become in the years between 1880 and 1900 the dream of virtually the whole Southern people”, and soon about 400 mills were erected despite a shortage of capital (Cash 1991, 176). This industry created low skill, low wage jobs for the masses of poor white farmers who, the Apologists believed, had been disadvantaged by the slave economy (Cooper and Terrill 1996).

This homegrown cotton textile movement began what Mitchell calls “Real Reconstruction” because actual and lasting change happened locally and established a new economic and social order – an achievement which neither Presidential (as led by Andrew Johnson) nor Radical Reconstruction (as led by Congress) were ever able to accomplish. State and regional leaders reevaluated Southern economic aims and determined that a more diverse economy would benefit the region, and they used a publicity campaign to help convince Southerners of this truth. Southern men with wealth and connections financed mill building; these men also often also assumed responsibility over the mills (Mitchell 1921, 232).

Reconstruction had momentarily laid waste to the land-based class structure of the Old South and enabled the ambitious to emerge as a new ruling class (Cash 1991, 109).

The message of the New South and the Cotton Mill Campaign spread, revival style, through communities by powerful orators and enthusiastic newspaper men and picked up by “doctors, lawyers, teachers, planters, and even clergymen.” Community leaders urged average citizens “to take stock in the mills for the town’s sake, for the poor people’s sake, for the South’s sake, literally for God’s sake” (Cash 1991, 177-178). Established communities coveted the employment and development which would be associated with mills (Andrews 1987). The mantra of the apologists was expressed by Cash: “Let us introduce the factory in force. Let us, in particular, build cotton mills, here in the midst of the cotton fields. Let us build a thousand mills – and more than a thousand mills, and erect the South into a great industrial and commercial empire” (Cash 1991, 173).

The Redeemers extolled the virtues of work to Southerners and equated factory work with God’s work. Work would be the salvation of the region after its defeat in the Civil War, and work would carry the South out of poverty (Moore 1999). Of course, neither the, profit also motivated potential industrialists. The textile industry would create a fortune for any individual or group who could gather enough capital to establish a mill. By 1910, the Southern textile industry was growing at a greater rate than its Northern counterpart. Even still, Southern textile mills tended only to produce coarse goods until after 1900 (Cooper and Terrill 1996).

Despite the considerable outlay needed to establish a mill, Southern mills were successful and profitable (Andrews 1987) The region’s economic advantage lay in low overhead attributable to low taxes, proximity to raw materials (cotton), low land and construction costs,

cheap power, and labor willing to work for low wages (Andrews 1987; Cash 1991). The only disadvantages from which Southern mills suffered were distance from Northern textile machine factories and an initial labor shortage. The lack of an experienced labor force posed a challenge, but management strenuously recruited white labor from around the Southeast and occasionally as far away as England (Anderson 1987).

By 1900, some of this economic development had spread to the Appalachian South and took the form of railroads, towns and villages, increased industrial employment,⁸ and “adjustments, responses, and defenses on the part of the mountaineers” (Eller 1982, xix). These “adjustments” were as much a reaction to town life as to industrial work itself. The men and women who descended from the hills to find work in the mills shared the fate of other mountaineers who opted to work in coalmines. These mountaineers exchanged their independence for a steady wage income and access to more modern conveniences. Eller explains the experience of an Appalachian transplant who:

...exchanged the independence and somewhat precarious self-sufficiency of the family farm for subordination to the coal company and dependence upon a wage income. He lived in a company house, he worked in the company mine, and he purchased his groceries and other commodities from the company store. He sent his children to the company school and patronized the company doctor and the company church. The company deducted rent and school, medical, and other fees from his monthly wage, and, under the prevailing system of scrip, he occasionally ended the month without a cash income. He had no voice in community affairs or working conditions, and he was dependent upon the benevolence of the employer to maintain his rate of pay. By the 1930s, most upland Southerners had been affected by the industrial revolution and were no longer engaged exclusively in agriculture. (Eller 1982)

⁸ Increased industrial employment was associated with a decline in Appalachian subsistence agriculture.

Charlotte, North Carolina, served as a hub for the textile industry. In 1905, one half of Southern looms and spindles lay within one hundred miles of the bustling town. “The manufacture of cotton was the lifeblood of the Piedmont” (Andrews 1987, 77). By the 1920s, mill building across the region began to slow and “by 1925 the heyday of textile mill expansion without orderly planning was over” (Andrews 1987, 85). Meanwhile, Southern mills began to diversify with the introduction of processes like knitting and finishing, as well as an increase of weaving facilities (Andrews 1987).

By the 1930s, the Northern textile industry had already begun to decline, and the Southern industry soon began to show symptoms of decline. McCormick indicates that this slump, which preceded the stock market crash of 1929, can be blamed on overproduction and low quality created by low wages (McCormick 1930). The Depression naturally dealt the industry a significant blow because demand for textile goods dropped a great deal, but the industrial reform instigated by the federal government towards the end of the Depression period proved to be a boon for the mills and their workers. World War II triggered another boom of production and technology advancement for the industry, but after the war, considerable investment was necessary to repair and replace worn out machinery. At this time, many mills divested their villages, selling all homes to their employees (Anderson 1987).

Southern Labor and Paternalism

The story of labor is an especially important and interesting aspect of the rise of the cotton mills. Plantation agriculture, Reconstruction, and King Cotton left the poor, unlanded whites to fend for themselves, but the mills provided a new opportunity to engage in the Southern economy (Mitchell 1921, 162). Many men and women responded to the promise of the

cotton mills; they abandoned a way of life they knew in hopes of better futures. One reporter recounts: “Like a gold rush they are descending to the mill villages of the Piedmont. Without batting an eye, the Elizabethans relinquish the handloom for the fastest and most intricate machines of the modern textile factory (McCormick 1930). Mill workers across the South experienced wide variations in wages, conditions, and the paternalistic nature of their employers.

Southern operatives earned low wages and the right to live in company housing for low rent; their wages amounted to perhaps one-half to two-thirds of Northern wages. These wages were so low that a whole family – mother, father, and any child tall enough to reach the machinery – was compelled to work to keep all from hunger. They worked long hours under poor conditions, ate meager diets, lived in squalid homes, and suffered from disease. Despite the low wages, mill operatives earned cash and so could afford the simplest luxuries (Cash 1991).

Though mill-built homes were little more than simple shacks, these homes still constituted better shelter than the operatives had enjoyed as sharecroppers because mill housing effectively kept out rain and was painted. The mill operatives also could return to agriculture. Mill hands with titles to farms in the hills frequently acted as “free agents” coming and going at will. The mills could always find more croppers to take their place (Cash 1991). Broadus Mitchell enumerated the ways in which Southern mills supplemented the low wages paid to operatives through “welfare work” before a Congressional Committee on Manufactures in 1929. He pointed out, “no charge for bathrooms..., garden plots, and visiting nurses”, so according to industry experts at the time “actual earnings” were more important than “wage rates”, yet he admits wages were insufficient (Working Conditions 1929, 137).

Factory masters, while aloof, usually took a paradoxal personal interest in the lives of mill village residents. These men did welfare work because they believed the operatives could plainly not have achieved as much on their own (Cash 1991). This welfare work fulfilled the needs of the operatives and provided factory masters with a control mechanism while padding the egos of the men who conducted this work. The mills provided housing, churches and schools, ministers and teachers. Cash explains, “It was an essential part of the Southern paternalistic tradition that it was the duty of the upper classes to look after the moral welfare of these people and get them safely into heaven at last – because that tradition had been introduced and firmly established in the mills by the founders of Progress... it gloriously flattered his vanity.” (Cash 1991, 210). The operatives were frequently reminded of what the mill had done on their behalf. As a result, the textile workers harbored less resentment than might be expected considering their conditions (Cash 1991.)

Chapter 4: The Textile Mill Towns of South Carolina: Establishment and Features

Mill building inspired town building⁹, and mill towns had distinct forms and functions. Despite overtones of control, most residents of these villages remember life there with fondness and mourn the degradation of these communities. In order to discuss mill villages after mill closures, the form and function of mill villages under mill control will first be defined.

Many textile companies invested only a bare minimum into the communities which bore their names; others went above and beyond the call of duty and constructed fine homes and provided good services. Contemporary accounts of the mill villages reveal their varied nature. “The worst are huddles of sad shacks on ravaged hillsides, or shacks wobbling on stilts in red clay; the best are suburban developments in the modern manner, prim cottages set behind hedges on curving roads, paved and landscaped” (McCormick 1930). Almost all village housing was far superior to the homes many operatives had left on the farm, plus the villages afforded them access to education, child care, health care, and recreation unavailable in rural areas (McCormick 1930). Some generalizations about mill village forms and functions can be made and are discussed in this chapter.

⁹ Mill building inspired town building until the 1930s and 1940s when the textile industry stopped building villages. Before that time, southern mills only rarely

South Carolina Mill Towns

William Gregg, the “father of Southern cotton manufacture,” trumpeted industrial development in the pre-Civil War South when the region seemed mired in the plantation economy¹⁰ (Mitchell 1921). Gregg constructed the South’s first mill village, Graniteville, South Carolina, at his pioneering plant in the mid to late-1840s between Aiken, SC and Augusta, Georgia (Simpson 1948; Mitchell 1921). Graniteville featured homes with garden plots, churches, a school, and a library for employees of the mill¹¹ (Mitchell, 1921). In Graniteville, Gregg established a model for New South industrialists to follow. South Carolinians looked to Graniteville, and other early mills such as Henry Hammett’s “Piedmont” in Greenville and Anderson counties, and a manual written by Daniel A. Tompkins (1899) for clues as to where and what to build. Evidence of their influence can be found in the mill villages of the Carolinas.

Southern textile mill towns were built around a mill on company-owned property. The mill owner retained control over all property in a manner Cash connects to the plantation tradition (Cash 1991). On this matter, the venerated Cash is mistaken. The order and organization of the mill village was not an outgrowth of the plantation but of Northern and English mill villages (Simpson 1948). So completely did the Southern factory masters, including Gregg and Hammett, model their operations on Northern mill towns that many of the South’s oldest textile mill villages feature saltboxes houses. The saltbox is endemic to New England where the structure was commonly constructed through the mid 1600s and the early to mid 1800s. These houses have an upside-down, checkmark-shaped roof line designed to shed snow

¹⁰ Mitchell literally refers to Gregg as a voice in a wilderness (Mitchell 1921).

¹¹ Gregg’s Graniteville is described by William Hays Simpson on page 16 of Some Aspects of America’s Textile Industry: with Special Reference to Cotton, 1966.

(Figure 4.1) (Pillsbury 1970). Sometimes called a “cats-slide” in the South, this house shape is rare outside textile mill villages in the region. Southerners modified saltboxes in one important way; they usually added a front porch to the structures. Most Southern houses feature a porch which provides shade and cooling, vital during summers in the region (Kniffen 1965).

Prominent Mill Town Features

Daniel A. Tompkins, a prominent Charlotte architect, made a career of financing and designing textile mills and cotton oil mills; Tompkins planned and constructed over 100 cotton mills on the Carolina Piedmont. In 1899, Tompkins published Cotton Mill, Commercial Features: A Text-book for the Use of Textile Schools and Investors, which outlines how to set up a textile company. Tompkins includes advice on how to raise capital, organize a company, and, most importantly for the purposes of this study, what to build. His advice, together with the layout of “model” mill towns like Graniteville and Piedmont, establishes the characteristic features of the textile mill landscape although small operations rarely constructed “luxuries” like museums or women’s buildings.



Figure 4.1 Saltboxes in Graniteville
Source: Carolinana Library

Tompkins's advice concerning sites reflected common locational conventions and influenced many managers. He suggested that industrialists allot “for a ten thousand spindle mill, 5 to 10 acres for the mill lot and 40 acres for operatives' houses” (Tompkins 1899, 34-35). Mills were usually located just above the flood plain on a large stream or small river. Even after water power was abandoned in favor of steam, mills depended on a good source of water for production of steam. Alternatively, the owner of the mill would have to drill a well to produce power and to supply the village with sufficient drinking water. Mills also had to be located on or near major rail lines for transport of cotton to the mill and cloth from the mill.

Textile mills built between 1880 and 1945 were multistoried, brick buildings (Figure 4.2); most were two-to-four stories in height. Windows lined the exterior walls to allow natural lighting¹². During production, cotton had to be picked, carded, drawn, slubbed, roved, spun, and woven (Tompkins 1899). Cotton bales were raised to the topmost level of the mill and passed



Figure 4.2 Buffalo Plant of the Union-Buffalo Mills Company at Buffalo, SC
Source: Mill News, 10/14/20¹³

¹² Many mills bricked up their windows after the introduction of air conditioning. The textile industry was an early adopter of air conditioning because the new technology allowed for the control of humidity. If the air is too dry, cotton fibers will break in the spinning and weaving.

¹³ <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/millnews/millnews.html> © This work is the property of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

from the picking section down to the carding section and on down to spinning and weaving. As some operations grew, mills built additions or auxiliary plants.

Besides the mill building and machinery, warehouses, a powerhouse, and an office for management were necessary to support operations at the mill. Warehouses were usually sizeable brick buildings adjacent to the mill and connected to markets by rail spurs, or dummy lines, to major rail lines. Management's office commonly included room for the offices of the president, the factory master, and a small support staff. The powerhouse had to be located at a dam on a large stream or small river which was backed up by a mill pond. Waterpower or steam generated the power to run machinery in New South Era mills. A mill's powerhouse, which can often be identified by its tall smokestacks, was sometimes incorporated into the mill building and sometimes located away from the mill. If a mill employed waterpower, water was run from the mill pond via a sluice to turbines in the powerhouse.

Mill management built stores or commissaries near the mill and office (unless the mill was located too near a larger town or city business district to compete¹⁴). A company store would be stocked with necessities not unlike the furnishing merchants who operated on the New South plantation landscape. These cradle-to-grave stores brought "consumerism and the physical artifacts of modern life" like ready-made clothes to textile village families (Cooper 1996). Larger mills frequently ran more than one store as well as other commercial establishments like a barbershop, a butcher, or laundry services. By the 1920s, the textile mills closed the company stores, and small commercial groceries emerged to serve the villages (Moore 1999b).

¹⁴ Mill employees could purchase goods on credit against their mill paycheck or use company scrip to buy whatever they needed (Moore 1999, 79).

Churches were another prominent feature of the company built town. Many mill owners first built a lyceum or auditorium which hosted the towns' congregations on Sundays and housed "proper entertainments" during the rest of the week until those congregations were healthy enough to, with support from the mill, consecrate permanent places of worship (Tompkins 1899). Larger towns usually had more churches; common denominations in mill villages included: Southern Baptist, Church of Christ, Church of God, and Methodist. The church buildings were usually fairly simple frame or brick structures (Working Conditions 1929). The mills built or supported schools to tend to their employees' children. In these schools, a few teachers provided a rudimentary education to very large classes. Some mills maintained a library and occasionally even small museums filled with artifacts from around the world (Tompkins 1899).

Schools and other community-serving institutions simultaneously served the company because preachers and teachers exercised influence over villagers in ways the mills could not (Tompkins 1899; Working Conditions 1929). Meanwhile, mill-sponsored functions in mill-built community buildings gave the mills control over residents' free time. Owners of mills of all sizes provided for some recreational outlets such as baseball and football fields, scout troops, community centers, basketball and tennis courts, pools, auditoriums, gyms, youth centers, theaters, private lakes, bowling alleys, and even golf courses (Gilman 1956). Baseball parks were especially popular, and Southern textile baseball league games are favorite memories of many former mill village residents. (Browning 1990).

The village functioned as a control mechanism designed to "bind workers to themselves through paternalism and dampen the inherent conflicts between boss and worker (Moore 1999). Within a mill village, no resident enjoyed free speech or civil liberties; crossing management

meant risking one's home. Residents of the mill village could not vote for their civic leaders in these unincorporated towns. Paternalistic services failed to make up for deficient cash wage; for example the education and medical care afforded to workers and their dependents was inferior. The mill schools molded new generations of pliant workers. Preachers followed the company line promoting complacency. Textile companies encouraged a cycle of debt to the company store or to the mill. Recreational and social activities were often subsidized not by company profits but by employee wages (Dunn 1931). McKelway echoes these concerns and emphasizes that the entire town, even the streets, were the private property of the mill giving the mill power to expel unwanted employees, rule breakers, and trespassing investigators (McKelway 1913).

Housing

Owners of early mills were compelled to shelter their employees because of isolation or populations grown beyond the local housing capacity of established towns (Herring 1929). Houses were built within walking distance of the mill and formed the body of a village. According to Tompkins, these villages often functioned as insular communities even if they were located within or adjacent a larger urban area. For example, operatives usually attended mill churches and schools even if others were accessible (Tompkins 1899). Members of surrounding communities tended to look down on the "lintheads" of mill villages which reinforced a sense of otherness in villages (Browning 1990).

When constructing a village, a mill allowed for about one room for every employee¹⁵ in its village, so 100 three room homes might be built for a workforce of about 300. Generally, the houses rented for twenty-five cents per room, and the size house a family could rent was

¹⁵ Dependents were not included in this calculation.

determined by how many members worked in the mill (Tompkins 1899). Families in mill villages were usually large and most family members employed at the mill¹⁶ (McMahon 1929). Young women not attached to an area family, were housed in boarding houses. The women's house in Piedmont, South Carolina, provides an illustrative example of such a structure; the large home is of frame construction with pine floors like the town's other houses. The six rooms upstairs and seven rooms downstairs, two baths, and two showers accommodated many women. Mill presidents, superintendents, foremen, and other high ranked employees enjoyed bigger homes and better, more modern facilities and equipment (Herring 1929).

Mill villages built before the turn of the twentieth century typically feature tight rows of identical saltbox houses. Most of these saltboxes had about 6 rooms and a porch. Some mills split these houses into duplexes. The saltboxes were usually of frame construction with weatherboard to cover cracks; and the houses featured brick chimneys. The mills added ceilings and plaster later. Only one other cottage was common; this modest house style had two rooms separated by a hall with an ell addition of a room or two off the back of the house (Herring 1929).

By 1900, textile mills began to vary the size, style, and floor plans of employee housing in response to the latest architectural trends as well as the needs and desires of employees for variety. In the 20th century, efforts were taken that no two neighboring houses should look exactly alike (Tompkins 1899, Herring 1929). Tompkins reasoned, "Different families have different tastes, and as operatives grow in intelligence and prosperity, this differentiation in taste becomes more marked" (Tompkins 1899, 116). Tompkins attributes this sophistication to the

¹⁶ Most members of the family worked because an individual wage was insufficient for the whole family to survive; who ever was able to work was compelled to do so (McMahon 1929).

positive result of the influence of the mills and town life on Southern poor whites (Tompkins 1899).

Towns founded before this call for variety often benefited from this trend for diversification. As mills on the Carolina Piedmont prospered and increased production capacity, their payrolls grew, and more housing was required. Houses of the latest style were constructed along new streets. This did little to break the visual monotony in the village core, but operatives did enjoy more choices in size and floor plan. Some mills, appreciating the effect of a varied housing stock, took steps to alternate paint and trim jobs or encouraged operatives to landscape their yards (Herring 1929; Lahne 1944). However, this “monotony” may also be interpreted as visually charming consistency. Repetitious house types lend cohesion to these communities even if they abut a larger town.

By 1900, most mill houses were cottages with a gabled roof extending over a porch, four rooms, no halls, and two front and back doors; these were built until about 1920 (Figure 4.3 and 4.4). Tompkins’ textbook illustrates typical turn-of-the-twentieth century styles and floor plans (see Figures 4.5). Note the similarities between the houses illustrated in Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5. Soon, a cottage with a hip roof and a central hall appeared in mill villages alongside the gabled cottages (Figure 4.6). Mill housing continued to reflect changes in residential architecture after 1915; and mills were building simple craftsman bungalows during and after World War I. By this point, mill housing was somewhat varied even along a street just as Tompkins prescribed (Herring 1929).

Not only did house style vary within and among towns but so did quality and construction materials (Herring 1929). The worst mill homes were outdated even as they were



Figure 4.3 Front gabled cottage, Fingerville, Spartanburg County, SC, 2004



Figure 4.4 Front gabled duplex cottage, Fingerville, Spartanburg County, SC, 2004

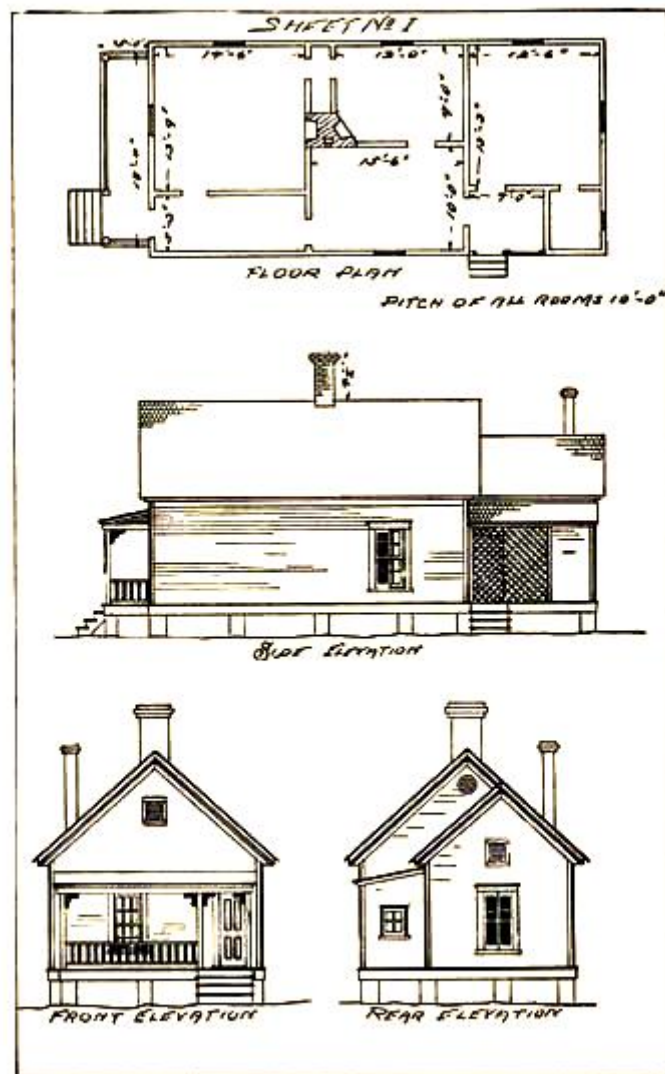


Fig. 34. Three-Room Narrow House. Cost \$325

Figure 4.5 Tompkins' 3 Room House
Source: Tompkins, 1899, p 115¹⁷

¹⁷ <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/tompkins/tompkins.html> © This work is the property of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Figure 4.6 Hip roofed cottage, Spartan Mills, Spartanburg, SC, 2004

being constructed; these were left unpainted, lacked electricity and modern plumbing, and sat on brick or stone pillars. The best mill homes were new bungalows with electricity and bathrooms connected to sewers, built with nice floors, porcelain baths, enameled kitchen sinks, hot water heaters, and screened windows (Herring 1929; Lahne 1944; Mill News 10/14/20,). Older houses required updating by the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s with addition of electric light fixtures, and plumbing with sinks, bathtubs, toilets¹⁸ (Herring 1929; Lahne 1944). Modernization and basic upkeep of village homes began to cost the mills. According to one industry representative, upkeep and “[repairs are] a great losing proposition...” (Working Conditions 1929, 119).

In 1929, homes often rented for the low price of four to five dollars a month. The mills sometimes included the cost of water, sewage, and electricity in employee’s rent or sometimes charged residents a small fee for these or similar services. For example, one company subsidized

¹⁸ Many operatives, being unused to such conveniences, were at first unfamiliar with their uses (Herring 1929).

coal and wood for heating homes. Some generous mills furnished the houses and provided gardens (Working Conditions 1929). The mills offered either insurance or access to subsidized health care (Working Conditions 1929; Jones 1936). Many mills sponsored first aid clinics which addressed injuries incurred on the job, and others provided medical attention for their employees and their dependents (Jones 1936). The textile industry often boasted about the work they did in the mill villages and the low rents enjoyed by their employees. For example, Mr. Paul Blanshard testified about company housing in the South before a Congressional committee:

They have been exceedingly generous in renting the houses, at from 25 cents per room per week up, and while the houses are sometimes rickety and dilapidated, and old, and badly painted, actually I think they are much better places to live than in the places where Northern workers live. They have all the light and air and sunshine in the world. While it is true they have plenty of garden space, whether a worker has any energy, after coming home from working 11 hours in the mill to make a garden is another thing (Working Conditions 1929, 149).

However, both the industry and the employees would soon opt to abandon this paternalistic institution due to its financial and psychological costs.

A 1936 study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics investigated personnel policies in the textile industry found most or 78.5 percent of Southern mill employees lived in company-owned homes even as Northern mills were selling off their housing stock (Jones 1936). The typical mill village house was a four-room bungalow and some did have bathrooms. Average rent was \$1.24 per week¹⁹. Some villages boasted gardens, company subsidized fertilizer and seed, pastures, barns, garages, laundry services, and ice (Jones 1936). Company stores were competitive with chains but allowed employees to buy on credit (Working Conditions 1929). A major advantage to living in the mill village was that, during slack times, the mills continued to house village

¹⁹ Rent often included electricity and water (Jones 1936).

residents (Jones 1936). Also, when the mill was temporarily shut down, and workers were not drawing wages, the mill usually waived rent (Jones 1936).

Evidence of much of what contemporaries and historians catalogue about mill villages is still evident on the landscape. The villages have often suffered neglect and decline, and style and quality varied in and among villages. So, a study of all of the mill villages of Spartanburg County, where extant housing is plentiful, demonstrates the form of the mill village as it was constructed.

Spartanburg County Mill Housing

Spartanburg County, together with neighboring Upstate counties, has long served as the capital of South Carolina's textile industry. More mills operated in this county than in any other county at any given time though neighboring Greenville County trailed by only a few mills (Economic Census, various years). In 1816, two brothers from Rhode Island established one of the South's first mills on the Tyger River in Spartanburg County. This operation, like most antebellum textile mills in the South, was a small, family operation running only 500 spindles (Teter 2002). The County would eventually become home to some fifty textile mills, with the twenty oldest mills featuring village housing. This housing stock illustrates much about village construction like durability and quality, materials, and mill expansions.

According to the Spartanburg County Real Property search engine, the bulk of Spartanburg County's mill village housing was built in and around 1900 even though twelve of the seventeen towns studied were established before 1900. Little of the pre-1900 housing survived (see Figure 4.7). Perhaps this is because the earliest housing was rudely constructed as

early critics of the industry have accused in their travelogues²⁰, so that few of these homes survived. Elsewhere, 100 plus year old mill housing has survived the passage of time²¹. So, county tax assessors, unsure of the exact year in which some of the oldest mill-built houses were constructed, may be generalizing and identifying older homes as though they date from 1900. The data selected from the Spartanburg County Real Property search engine enabled an enumeration of construction materials and a far more accurate descriptions of these houses. With the exception of a handful of homes sided with stucco, brick, asphalt shingles, or asbestos shingles, every house surveyed was a clapboard house (see Figure 4.7). Some homeowners have since recovered the exterior of their homes with aluminum or vinyl siding or with “other” materials as shown on the chart in Figure 4.8). Local pine forests made wood an abundant and affordable building material (Cater Collection). All of the houses were built with wood. Pine was used most frequently. Heart-of-pine was often used in the homes and the mills. While this quality flooring has rarely needed replacement, some homeowners have covered or replaced at least part of their floors with carpet, vinyl, and tile. Original materials used for the mill houses’ walls include plaster and pine paneling (varies by town) (Figure 4.9). Twenty-four percent of these houses have pine walls. However, both materials have frequently needed repair and replacement, and many homeowners have ripped out walls to install better insulation. Sixty five percent of textile mill houses had drywall walls in 2003. Textile mill architect, Daniel Tompkins, published advice on the construction of mill houses which is reflected in Spartanburg County’s textile mill housing. Tax records indicate that the houses were often set on block or

²⁰ See August Kohn’s book, The Cotton Mills of South Carolina, 1907 or Anne O’Hare McCormick’s series “The South: Empire and Providence” in the 1930 and 1931 New York Times.

²¹ For example, Newry, Oconee County, and Piedmont, Greenville and Anderson Counties have large housing stocks dating to the late 1800s.

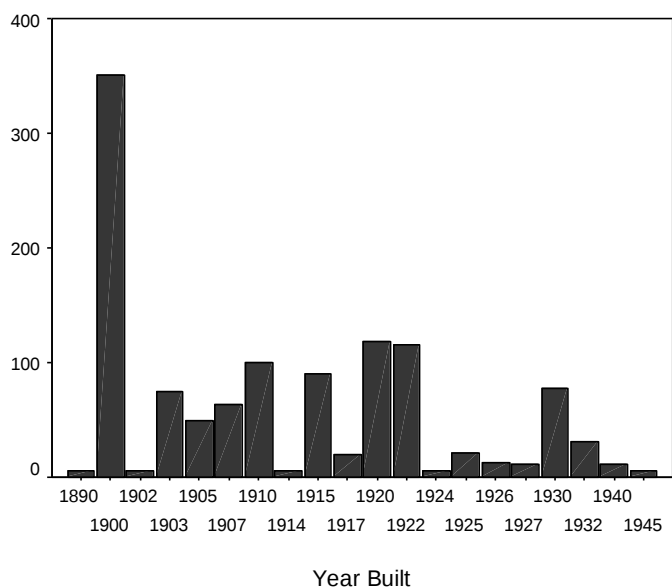
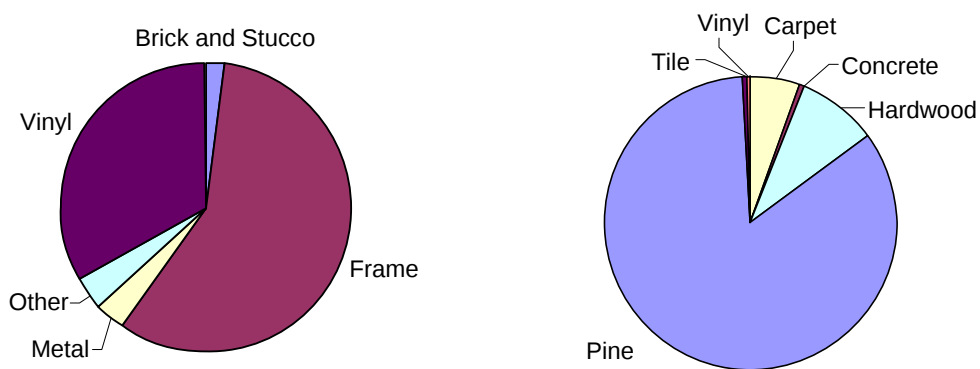


Figure 4.7 Date of Construction of Spartanburg County's textile mill housing.



Construction Materials, Exteriors

Construction Materials, Floors

Figure 4.8 Construction Materials, Exteriors and Floors

Study Sites, Spartanburg County

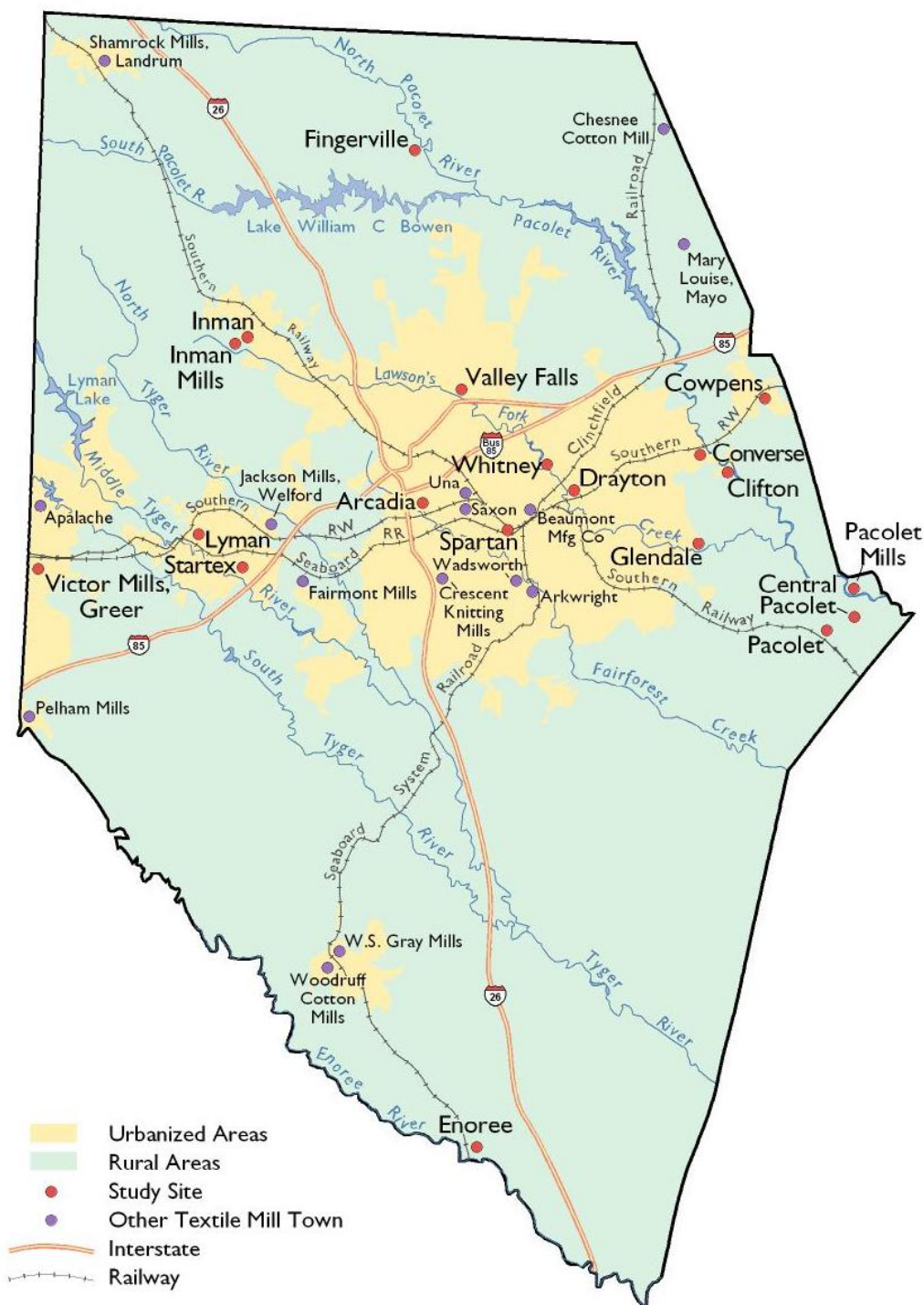


Figure 4.10 Map of Spartanburg County Study Sites.

Table 4.1 Towns and Mills of Spartanburg County, South Carolina

Sources: Davidson's Textile Blue Book; Teter, 307-318; Spartanburg County Real Property Search

<i>Towns and Mills of Spartanburg County, South Carolina</i>						
Town Mill	Built	Closed	Number of Homes	Average Sale Price	Appraised Value of Land	Appraised Value of Building
Arcadia Arcadia/Mayfair Mills	1903	2001	83	\$19,142	\$4,488	26,390
Clifton Clifton Mfg. Co.	1880	1969	170	\$14,820	\$7,089	22,944
Converse Clifton Mfg. Co.	1890	1973	112	\$16,283	\$4,576	21,674
Cowpens Cowpens Mfg. Co.	1889	1955	33	\$18,195	\$4,629	22,081
Drayton Drayton Mills	1902	1994	128	\$25,001	\$5,965	29,191
Enoree Enoree Mills/ Riverdale	1888	2001	124	\$15,349	\$7,444	24,268
Fingerville Fingerville Cotton Factory	1849	1995	55	\$11,679	\$3,745	20,396
Glendale Glendale Mills	1836	1961	114	\$23,357	\$6,779	24,754
Greer Victor Mills	1896	Open	280	\$26,995	\$5,263	32,414
Inman Inman Mills	1901 1928	2001	263	\$31,920	\$8,259	37,303
Lyman Pacific Mills	1924	Open	280	\$34,374	\$5,595	54,557
Pacolet Pacolet Mills	1882	Open	189	\$15,753	\$7,123	28,631
Pacolet Mills Pacolet Mills	1896	1983	57	\$13,465	\$7,069	26,039
Spartanburg Spartan Mills	1888	2001	162	\$22,096	\$5,938	\$23,422
Startex Tucapau/Startex Mills	1896	Open	221	\$22,936	\$5,226	\$28,217
Valley Falls Valley Falls?	1900	Open	118	\$17,175	\$3,739	\$29,438
Whitney Whitney Mfg. Co.	1888	1996	108	\$23,260	\$7,457	\$31,280
Spartanburg County Average				\$20,694	\$5,905	\$28,412
Spartanburg County Total			2497			

Most of these variables are somewhat redundant; if a house sits in Pacolet, then the values for the age of the mill, and time since the mill closed will be consistent with its neighbors. So, to know a house's town is to know most of the geographic variables associated with that town. Some of the variables are somewhat collinear. For example, larger houses often have more bedrooms. Square footage and number of bedrooms are, therefore, highly intercorrelated (Appendix 1). Also, the appraised value of each house should be omitted from the study because condition, together with square footage, is an important part of the equation the county tax assessor uses to determine a home's value.

Housing construction in most mill towns follows one of two patterns. Either houses were constructed piecemeal as needed as the mill itself made small expansions (piecemeal accretion of housing units), or houses were constructed when the mill was built and then again when the mill had a major expansion (sharp disjunctions in the number of housing units available). In the case of a few large and usually locally owned operations, individual towns were not only expanded as their mills' spindleage rose, but entirely new towns were founded around new mills built nearby; Pacolet Mills' expansions are a good example of this. Companies headquartered outside of South Carolina were more likely to build decentralized mills across the Upstate. Patterns of house styles within and among communities vary according to when they were constructed. The mill villages in Spartanburg County reflect D. A. Tompkins' advice. In the oldest parts of these towns, the mill-built homes are of uniform size and composition. Housing expansions provided for some variety within the housing stock, plus later additions to the villages tended to include different style houses and more variety in size. Variety in mill villages, however, is a result not

of any effort on the part of the mills but of the changes introduced by homeowners after the mills sold their housing to employees and locals.

Chapter 5: Sale of Mill Villages: Change Comes to the Community

Company-owned towns were a prominent feature of the South Carolina Piedmont landscape until the 1950s and 1960s when textile companies systematically dismantled ownership and control of the villages. Homes were sold to employees, and town governance and services were transferred to the community. These changes coincided with a transformation of the employer/employee relationship. Paternalism and “welfare work” became passé because these practices cost the mills money and caused the workers to bristle under management’s control.

Northern mills had already dismantled their mill village system as the areas around the mills became more densely populated²² (Simpson 1966,); Lahne explains:

The demise of the mill village system in New England was the result of the growth of population in the mill centers, the willingness of private real estate operators to compete with the mills in offering housing accommodations to the mill workers and the readiness of the mill owners to withdraw from all activities and responsibilities beyond that of manufacturing itself (Lahne 1944, 35).

The Northern mills sold their boarding houses to private operators, and sold individual houses at auction or through some arrangement to their labor. From then on, private, and usually substandard, tenements were constructed to house any additional residents (Simpson 1966).

²² Tompkins noted this trend as early as 1899. He optimistically and erroneously attributed the change to the civilizing influence of mill work on operatives’ opinions: “As operatives become better educated and more prosperous, they will be less disposed to live in groups to themselves, and more disposed to mingle with people in other callings, thus acquiring a broader and more equable view of life.” (Tompkins 1899, 116).

Within two decades almost all of the Southern mills followed suit, divesting their villages and abandoning all support of the community except the occasional company softball team.

Historians hail the village sales as the end of the mill village and have paid little attention to the communities' reaction to independence. I argue that these sales were an important watershed in the continuing mill village story. Many houses deteriorated because residents could not or would not keep up with maintenance. Other houses were significantly improved or altered by homeowners. Residents could sell their homes to outsiders, and thus the composition of the communities changed. Meanwhile, the textile companies had freed capital to modernize the mills.

Disadvantages of Divestiture

Through the 1920s, mill management touted the paternalistic nature of their operations. With time, voices from within the mill villages and from outside the South began criticizing the institution²³. Mill managers wanted to be rid of the hassle and expense of maintaining a village (Simpson 1948). The village required constant vigilance and care on the part of the mill which was responsible for both the quality and maintenance of the homes as well as the quality and behavior of the residents (Gilman 1956). Mill operatives wanted independence and a psychological distance from work. Outsiders perceived the operatives as equivalent to serfs enmeshed in a feudal society (Herring 1949).

The textile industry first began debating the merits of mill ownership of a housing stock in the early 1930s when, according to Herring (1929), the Southern textile industry housed

²³ For example, the September 30, 1929 New York Times article "Urges Higher Wage in Textile Industry: North Carolina Governor Also Favors Shorter Hours, Abolition of Company Houses" or Alexander McKelway's pamphlet Child Wages in the Cotton Mills: Our Modern Feudalism written for the National Child Labor Committee.

approximately seventy percent of their employees (276). Though paternalism would become passé, many textile industry leaders still extolled the virtues of company housing during this debate. Most emphasized the virtue of their ability to evict undesirable residents or undesirable employees from the community. For example, management of many mills, often at the behest of community members, evicted families of “immoral” girls or boys found with air rifles (Herring 1929; McKelwey).

Some mill owners believed that they should retain control of the houses for the sake of the employees because the employees, as homeowners, would let the villages fall into disrepair (Herring 1929; Lahne 1944). Herring reported, “The men of this group are certain that mill ownership and control insures better houses and standards of sanitation and cleanliness” (Herring 1929, 271). Similarly, they pointed to services which no county or municipality could duplicate such as water, power, repairs, police and fire protection for “free or at ridiculously low charges” (Simpson 1948, 130).

Maintaining a village often netted the mill a loss (Simpson 1948), but any alternative, whether the operatives paid market rents to some other landlord or had to make house payments, would necessitate an increase in cash wages (Herring 1929). In down times, mills owners usually waived rent altogether making homeownership even less attractive. In 1944, Lahne suggested that southern textile workers were disinterested in homeownership because the prospect of saving enough of their meager wages to buy property and a house was daunting and because housing was available for nominal rent²⁴; rentals in mill villages rarely stayed vacant for long (Lahne 1944). Additional financial burdens

²⁴ At the time, rent averaged twenty five cents per room and often included water and power (Lahne 1944).

associated with homeownership like upkeep, electricity, water, garbage removal, and property taxes could cost much more than rent had (Simpson 1948).

For labor, homeownership could mean sacrificing mobility (Simpson 1948). This was a particular concern to textile operatives, except in cities, because textile work was notoriously inconsistent and layoffs frequent. But, labor's stereotypical unease with being tied down was of greater concern. Mill operatives were notoriously instable; they frequently left jobs in search of a better situation. Because the mills often operated under a labor shortage, the operatives were secure in the knowledge that they would be able to find another position. Rather than altruism or paternalism, the inconsistent nature of the textile market and the transitory nature of mill employees, compounded by the too-low rents so long enjoyed by employees, and the isolation of many of these one-industry towns, compelled many Southern mill owners to retain their villages far longer than their Northern counterparts (Carlton 1982).

Owners of isolated mills were especially hesitant to sell because they feared the loss of their labor base; a mill closure would strand the new homeowners, and because they relied on the housing incentive to attract labor (Herring 1948; Lahne 1944). These companies could see no way out of the village system. Yet, they continued to be burdened by the fixed overhead cost of a village (McHugh 1988).

Some industry leaders, acknowledged the financial advantages of unloading the villages, but were fearful of what would happen to the communities' integrity if the operatives became homeowners. So, they suggested alternatives. Simpson anecdotally relates a few from the late 1940s: one industrialist suggested that village operations fall under an independent corporation separate from the mill. The property managers could recoup the actual costs of upkeep and

services to the homes through market rents, but not burden labor with the costs of homeownership. Another industrialist suggested that while the majority of a company's housing could be sold to the operatives, some homes should be retained for the care and retention of "key personnel" (Simpson 1948).

Advantages of Divesture

Even while many voices argued for the maintenance of the mill villages, as many or more from within and beyond the industry argued for divesture. Federal labor laws and child labor laws reduced the number of family members who were able to work in the mills, so the number of employees housed per unit dropped dramatically (Herring 1949; McHugh 1988). Mill management could no longer require that families produce one worker per room rented. In 1929, mills expected to house about three-eighths or two-thirds of a worker per room (Herring 1929); by 1956, most mills were resigned to house less than one person per room per house (Gilman 1956). By the mid-1950s, a mill could not house even half of its employees in its village without considerable expansion. Meanwhile, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 mandated a minimum wage which was raised again in 1949, 1955, and 1961 (U.S. Department of Labor, March 28, 2007). Employees who rented a company home essentially received an ever-increasing wage subsidy not shared by their fellows (Gilman 1956; McHugh 1988).

Some textile industry leaders felt that unloading the industry's housing stock would profit both the mills and the operatives. Mill owners would be relieved of an expensive and troublesome aspect of their operation especially as much of the aging housing stock required repairs or updates at significant cost (Herring 1929). Profits from sales could recapture the higher wages and be reinvested into capital improvements for the mills (Moore 1999b). After

unloading their housing stock, textile mill owners could focus on the business of spinning and weaving (Simpson 1988). The elderly would not have to vacate the village upon retirement (Herring 1949). The most compelling justification for the sale of the mill villages was the difference between incoming rent and the cost of maintenance and services (Simpson 1948).

Those who argued for sale of the villages to employees predicted that residents would become invested in the communities where they lived, so they would take better care of their homes while paying taxes to support the town's infrastructure (Simpson 1948). Homeownership would discourage labor turnover while it transformed the operatives into "better citizens" (Moore 1999a; Herring 1929; Lahne 1944). Historian Moore suggests that by "better citizens", mills meant "workers who would not strike or flirt with radical politics" (Moore 1999a, 171). The owners and operators also suggested that mill employees would become more integrated with the community at large opening the wider community as a source of labor²⁵ (Moore 1999a).

Voices from outside the industry joined the mill village debate. In an appeal to the industrial leaders of the South, some Southern clergy and church officials expressed a laundry list of common complaints about the insular textile mill village's affect on operatives,

Life in a mill village under company control, while an advance of status in the beginning, is not the best training ground for citizenship in that it does not train residents for participation in government. It has generally proved in recent years, however it may have been at first, to be unfavorable to education, to religion, and to understanding and sympathy between the citizens of the mill village and those of the larger community. In spite of the difficulty of the problem, we are convinced that these villages should be merged as rapidly as is consistent with safety into the larger community (Working Conditions 1929, 14-15).

²⁵ Unfortunately, this idea was met with some resistance since many cotton textile mill village residents objected to living alongside other blue collar laborers like employees of hosiery mills and lumber yards (Simpson 1948).

Another observer complained about the quality of the housing in many mill towns: “As to the housing conditions in South Carolina....the term ‘shack’ is better in its application generally” (Working Conditions 1929, 60). Families of eight or nine people lived in four room shacks with unsanitary and unpleasant outhouses (Working Conditions 1929).

For journalist Anne McCormick in 1930, the paternalistic institution of the mill village, though often benevolent, was outdated and illustrated “the peculiar, traditional, and personal relationship between employer and employee in the South.” She called the mill village a “feudal institution” necessary in the rural south but still “out of place in a democracy and out of date in a modern industrial system” (McCormick, 5/25/30). All of these outsiders helped shed light on conditions in mill villages and influenced public opinion. By divesting villages, the textile industry would be spared more black eyes like these.

In the first half of the twentieth century, workers began to balk at welfare programs just as management became more “detached” and “impersonal” (McHugh 1988). Gilman suggests that unions resisted the sales though workers often welcomed the prospect. Herring indicates that mills sometimes sold their villages to get out of trouble with a union (Gilman 1956; Herring 1949). Ultimately, every textile mill owner or operator came to rationalize the divestiture of their villages. They abandoned most pretenses of paternalism. And, labor welcomed the opportunity to own homes.

Village Sales Begin

The 1950s and 1960s were notable in United States history for mushrooming suburbs and burgeoning homeownership. More Americans than ever owned their homes thanks to a building boom, higher incomes, and low-interest loans to World War II veterans (Cohen 2003).

Meanwhile, the textile industry was changing. Many mills were consolidated under a few large corporations like J.P. Stevens, Deering Miliken and Co., and Springs Cotton Mills. Decisions were increasingly made at corporate headquarters away from the mill villages (Moore 1999a). By 1956, one author reported that the sale of mill villages was a “definite trend” since the practice of company housing was no longer “an economic or a social necessity” (Gilman 1956). Mill operatives were soon provided with an opportunity to join the world beyond the village in homeownership (Cohen 2003).

Harriet Herring wrote the only book-length study of the sale of the mill villages in 1949 until Toby Moore’s dissertation in 1999. In her seminal work on the subject, Herring identified five changes which precipitated the sales as follows. 1) Good roads and inexpensive, mass-produced cars freed workers from the village system by allowing them to commute to jobs beyond the mill’s hinterland; 2) the expense of bringing houses up to modern standards daunted mill owners; 3) federal wage legislation made a rent subsidy a disadvantage. The forty-hour work week created a housing deficiency because mills had to hire more workers than they could afford to house; and finally, 5) new management was more interested in efficient production than in paternalism (Herring 1949).

Mill owners had seen that they could function without mill villages. Some early, Depression-Era mill village sales occurred when mills folded in that economic crisis. Following a bankruptcy, the mill’s assets were liquidated, and the mill village housing was sold apart from the mill since most new operations were no longer interested in constructing villages²⁶. Mills no longer had to be sited on isolated shoals, but could be located near cities and towns with electric

²⁶ According to Herring, new mills stopped constructing villages in the 1930s (Herring 1949, 9).

power. Employees enjoyed mobility afforded them by the car. Southern mills no longer needed villages. In the early 1940s, a few mills sold their houses off, but World War II halted the trend as the industry redoubled its efforts to produce for the war effort. After D-Day, village sales began in earnest (Herring 1949).

Harriet Herring's study named six common reasons for the sale of mill villages during that decade. First, the mill villages proved expensive to maintain, and most needed modernization. Secondly, by selling off the village, capital for improvements could be made available for modernization of the mill itself. Thirdly, the mills' management was also compelled by new federal legislation to pay higher wages and to implement a forty hour work week. Fourthly, this legislation did not account for the wage subsidy the industry afforded its employees through low rents. Fifthly, mill owners hoped that employees who invested in a home in their town would settle into a stable labor supply; and finally, the mill owners hoped to make citizens of the villages by creating tax payers and invested voters of the occupants (Herring 1949).

Toby Moore, in his article "Discourses of Work and Consumption in the Demise of the Southern Cotton Mill Village System," calls the divestment of the villages: a radical restructuring of the relationship between work and home. Fordist industrialization restructured factory work. Spatial control over workers was deemphasized, and the mills came to favor increased wages over subsidized rents. As a result, textile laborers could finally afford to own a home. The mills hoped that, in the process, mill communities would break down widening the pool of potential employees to include locals (Moore 1999b).

Many operatives had to be sold on the idea of homeownership because they would sacrifice mobility and some disposable income to buy homes situated in unincorporated places with no municipal services (Lahne 1944). Mill management emphasized sentiments like pride and security through their publications like company newsletters, local newspapers, and pulpits. And, real estate agents were engaged to guide potential buyers through the process (Moore, 1999b).

Role of the Alester Furman Company

When management decided to sell off company housing, they faced a daunting task because many companies owned multiple mills in different counties or states. Sales were carried out by a variety of different selling agents. Some mill owners, especially those operating smaller mills, opted to negotiate the sales themselves. Other owners selected a local lawyer, real estate agent, or a local loan officer to facilitate the sales. These professionals were accommodating, and worked on commission. They appraised the homes, calculated prices and the size of down payments, and developed payment plans (Herring 1949; Simpson 1948). The real estate professionals worked with bankers near the textile company's headquarters to arrange loans for the employees. And, they brokered the actual sales (Alester Furman Company). Typically, mill owners sold their entire housing stock, but some retained houses to accommodate key employees. Mill owners sold their entire housing stock²⁷ but retained business property²⁸ and, occasionally, large rental properties like boarding houses or apartment buildings. Churches and parsonages were usually given or sometimes sold cheaply to congregations, and schools were usually given to the county or city who would administer them (Herring 1949).

²⁷ Some mills retained a few houses for key employees (Herring 1949).

²⁸ Some mill owners did sell vacant or unused mill property (Alester Furman Collection).

The Alester Furman Company, a prominent Greenville real estate company, managed the sale of at least seventy-nine mill villages across South Carolina; the Furman Company was also involved in the sale of sixty-two villages in Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, and Delaware (Alester Furman Collection). The Alester Furman Company stayed in close touch with the presidents of the textile firms as it identified the property for sale in each village, surveyed, and mapped those properties. The houses were appraised according to their site, situation, condition, and lot size (Alester Furman Collection). According to Herring, the best situations were usually near the business district and mill. Usually, the least desirable locations were in hollows, on hills away from the mill, or the streets furthest from the center of a town²⁹ (Herring 1949).

The agencies involved sought “a general price level that would be ‘fair,’ ‘acceptable to the employees,’ ‘a generous price,’ and most of all, what [the employees] can afford to pay” (Herring 1949). Because prices were generally below market value, a mill and its agents had to structure the sale to give preference to employees³⁰ (Gilman 1956). The Furman Company contacted and gave a mill’s resident employees the first opportunity to buy the house which they rented³¹. If a family did not want to buy their home, that house was made available to any company employee (Alester Furman Collection; Simpson 1948). Failing sale to company employees, remaining houses would be offered for sale on the open market³² (Alester Furman

²⁹ These peripheral locations were usually the most rundown, even under the care of the mills (Herring 1949).

³⁰ Mills sometimes placed restrictions on property owners. For example, the mills rarely sold the homes to anyone who intended to rent them. Clauses and covenants written into the sales often stipulated that no buyers could operate businesses out of their homes, that no alcohol would be allowed in the town, and that no homes in the main section of town could be sold to blacks (Herring 1949).

³¹ Herring indicates that occasionally residents may have swapped houses before buying (Herring 1949).

³² Alester Furman, with the seller’s approval, would advertise remaining properties in area newspapers (Alester Furman Collection).

Collection; Lahne 1944). Mill management usually continued to rent these unsold homes in the interim. Furman encouraged the companies to set rents relatively high so that homeownership became attractive (Alester Furman Collection).

Prices, Sales, and Loans

The textile companies assigned the homes reasonable prices in an effort to liquidate the mill villages quickly. In 1955, the average price of a home in South Carolina was \$5,112; the national average was \$7,354 (U.S. Statistical Abstract 1955). In the same year, Abney Mills sold their village at Newry, South Carolina, for \$3164.40 on average. Prices ranged from \$2,000 to \$5,250, omitting the president's mansion and the town's two boarding houses,. The most expensive homes were also the newest. The cheapest homes were the smallest (Alester Furman Collection). A homebuyer usually had the option to pay cash for their home³³ or they could finance the sale, paying off the cost in installments. The mill owners, banks, and building and loan associations carried the mortgages (Herring 1949). Loans were designed to ensure that most employees could buy their home even if they had no down payment³⁴. The Furman Company, usually in conjunction with a bank, arranged for loans on behalf of buyers. Some veterans were able to procure low interest GI loans (Alester Furman Collection). Mortgage payments were sometimes deducted from paychecks, but with time, most people were able to make payments at a local loan office or bank or by mail. (Herring 1949). The Federal Housing Authority and the Veterans' Administration guaranteed mortgages and tax write-offs of mortgage interest and property taxes helped make homeownership achievable (Moore 1999a).

³³ Occasionally, an individual, usually a widow, was able to purchase his or her home outright (Alester Furman Collection).

³⁴ Herring found that, in most cases, down payments were required for purchase. These payments usually amounted to ten percent of the price (Herring 1949).

Herring reported that the most frequent cause of defaults on loans was the loss of a family's bread winner to illness or family breakups (Herring 1949).

The newly independent and usually unincorporated communities' first concern was securing services. Many new homeowners preferred that the mill owner not retain ownership of a town's infrastructure because this arrangement kept residents reliant on the textile company. With a few exceptions, mill owners chose to relinquish control of services and infrastructure (Lahne 1944, Herring 1949). Some third party then had to be tapped or governance had to be developed from scratch to maintain services and village governance (Gilman 1956). Towns in or very near a larger town or city were often incorporated into the larger community. This required that the mill owner sell or deed the mill village's streets and sewer system to the local city government which also sometimes assumed responsibility for services like garbage collection. Owners of villages away from a larger place usually deeded roads to the county or state for maintenance. The towns might create a sanitation district. Too often, these places were given police and fire protection that could be described as "sketchy" or inadequate. Meanwhile, no matter the size of the mill, almost all mill management abandoned their "welfare work" beyond occasional sponsorship of a company softball team or some other club (Herring 1949).

Results

In her 1949 study of the sale of mill villages, Herring heralded the passing of a southern institution, and she pointed to a profound change on the southern economic and social landscape (Herring 1949). Herring predicted that village sales would bring diversity to the housing stock and to the inhabitants of mill villages. Village residents were free to take jobs in other industries, and outsiders were able to move into the towns. Herring believed "The separatism that has made

it a thing apart” would break down (Herring 1949, 115). Meanwhile, Herring pointed to inevitable changes that would result from the transfer of services and infrastructure to local communities, the county, or a service district, or from the incorporation of the town which would allow residents fuller citizenship (Herring 1949).

Moore’s 1999 study of mill villages confirms many of Herring’s instincts and predictions. Mill communities did become diluted as a result of village sales; workers moved away from the village or retired, and non-mill employees moved to the towns. Many village residents were no longer directly tied to the mill, and mill employees no longer necessarily lived in the village. Institutions and landmarks historically associated with the mill like schools, churches, and teams became associated to the larger community rather than to the workplace *per se* (Moore 1999b). But, change in brought by private ownership of village housing went farther than demographics. Private ownership introduced more change to the physical landscape than anyone predicted.

Herring and Moore both found that the new homeowners altered their homes in some way soon after their purchase. The average homeowner found ways “to make his place look different or just to do something he had not been allowed to do before” (Herring 1949, 57). Many painted the exterior or trim or nailed up asbestos tiles or tar paper to differentiate their property from their neighbors (Herring 1949). Residents also took the opportunity to renovate (Moore 1999b). Most made basic repairs or updates around their homes. Occasionally, families constructed additions to their homes. Duplexes were usually turned into single family homes³⁵ (Herring 1949). The workers found themselves excited to spend time and money on other

³⁵ Some homeowners did continue to rent to their housemates (Herring 1949).

improvements such as lawn care (Moore 1999a). Some added fences or landscaping to their yards, moved their steps, or added a walk to the street. Many bricked up the space under their homes (Herring 1949).

In the interiors, residents commonly added blinds to the windows and linoleum to kitchen and bathroom floors. Some added baths or toilets for the first time. Other investments included convenience appliances like electric stoves or central heat, better furnishings, and decorations (Herring 1949). Home improvement projects increased home values, differentiated homes from one another, and made home suit their families as never before possible (Moore 1999b). Not every buyer was a good home owner; some let their homes go unpainted, their porches rot, and their yards become unkempt (Herring 1949). By and large, however, village sales naysayers' predictions that textile industry employees would make poor home owners, were clearly wrongheaded. The villages, themselves, stand as testimony to the pride that most home owners took.

With homeownership came financial burdens. The new homeowners now faced property taxes, insurance payments, water and power bills. The textile industry was, under federal mandate, increasing wages. Homeownership also meant sacrificing mobility. The industry soon saw a reduction in labor turnover (Herring 1949). But, should an employee lose or choose to leave a job, homeowners could sell or to rent their homes for far more than the mill had. Either way, the new homeowners could realize an appropriate return on their investment (Simpson 1948).

Herring believed that the sales successfully helped incorporate mill employees into the hinterland. They were no longer tied by low rents to a place controlled by their bosses, and

anyone could move into the villages if the employees opted to sell or rent their properties. Church congregations and classrooms mingled with people from the hinterland. Herring reported that the operatives felt less apart or ostracized by area residents. She reported increased participation in local government confirming a common prediction that homeownership would make better citizens (Herring 1949).

Moore was also positive about the effect of homeownership on labor: “The transformation to homeownership itself marked a significant victory for mill workers, who enjoyed rising living standards and improved work conditions” (Moore 1999b, 170). The benefits of these sales reached farther than Herring dreamed or Moore discussed. These sales were the catalyst for the disconnect between the fate of the mills and the fate of the villages. With time, a majority of village residents were no longer employed at the local mill as a result of retirements, inheritance of homes by non-residents, and sales to outsiders. So, mill closures in the 1990s and 2000s would affect a minority of residents of the mill towns.

Chapter 6: Decline of the Southern Textile Industry and the State of Mill Villages

At the end of her 1987 book, Mildred Andrews concluded that “Southern textile mills will continue to show the way. The climate is very good.” Andrews felt sure that the textile industry would remain a stable employer. Unfortunately, her rosy forecast has proven inaccurate. Textile mills have been closing since the 1970s, and since the late 1990s, the mills have closed at an astounding rate. Many have relocated production facilities to less developed nations which offer some economic advantage over the American South³⁶. In 1987, David Goldfield pointed to the naissance of this trend. He blamed the loss of one-fifth of textile jobs between 1975 and 1985 on mill closures and layoffs caused by cheap imports, poor management, and overdue mechanization (Goldfield 1987).

Mill villages across the South and in South Carolina are facing a future without the industry which built them. Residents fear that their communities will become ghost towns like other one company towns such as the coal mining towns of West Virginia explored by Tyrel Moore. In his 1998 article, Moore revisits a Southern West Virginia mining community studied by fellow geographer Raymond Murphy in the 1930s. Mining communities were as important to the development of Appalachia as textile villages were in the development of the Carolina Piedmont.

³⁶ Ironically, the advantage offered by less developed nations, low cost of labor, is the same advantage which won the American South the Northern textile mills at the turn of the century.

The mining towns were built by coal companies to support their operations and to house their employees. In 1933, Murphy identified the quintessential landscape features of the mining community: the tipple, the company store or commissary, company housing, and an infrastructural complex of transportation, processing and service features. Geographer Tyrel Moore examined the integrity of those features in 1998, after “plant closings, employment downsizing, and abandonment that characterized deindustrial landscapes” (Moore 1998, 2). Moore was searching for “community-level impacts” of restructuring of the industry that once shaped the region (Moore 1998).

Moore discovered that while the mining communities of West Virginia nominally persist, most of the features which defined a mining community in the 1930s have disappeared. The mining towns have lost their tipples; the business districts are abandoned; the mining infrastructure is crumbling. The housing stock in these towns tends to be old, occupied by pensioners, and only a fraction of the houses built by the mines survives today. In some towns, “single rows of houses... stand alone as remnants of the once crowded place of which they were a part” (Moore 1998, 17). The mining towns have become ghost towns.

Moore’s work is corroborated by other work on one industry towns after a mine or plant closure such as Austin’s 1974 article. Austin elaborates on the challenges one company towns face after the demise of the industry which founded them; often these places are abandoned by most residents and become ghost towns. The plant or mine in question usually propped up local infrastructure either through taxes or direct investment. Loss of that revenue or support can be overwhelming. The youth is forced to leave the area to look for employment, and they often face lower wages in some other industry. The town’s businesses fail since most household incomes

drop. Real estate values fall. The town's people suffer from anxiety. Ultimately, the population is smaller, older, poorer, and somewhat depressed.

According to the Census of Manufactures, the Southern textile industry's growth peaked in the mid 1970s. At that time, South Carolina hosted 437 textile mills that employed 143,500 men and women; the industry pumped \$7,439,224 into the state's economy. Since then, the number of mills in South Carolina and across the Southeast has decreased (Figure 1.2). The 1997 Economic Census indicated that South Carolina had lost ninety-two mills in the preceding twenty-five years. Sixty-five more mills were lost between 1997 and 2002 with the influence of NAFTA. The impact of this trend is better illustrated by the corresponding decrease in the number of people employed in the mills (Figure 6.1) in South Carolina. This statistic reflects the affects of downsizing and layoffs in addition to mill closures; also, some mills are quite small while others employ thousands. All of these indicators have shown steady decline since the 1970s. Between 1972 and 1997, the textile industry payroll was reduced by half; in 1997, 65,568 people were employed in the mills – a loss of 77,932 jobs in twenty-five years. By 2002, South Carolina's mills employed only 39,648 people. The textile industry has played a correspondingly declining importance in the state's manufacturing sector (Figure 6.2).

A report to Congress by the American Textile Manufacturers Institute (ATMI) in June 2001, bemoans the contemporary plight of the textile industry. The ATMI details a startling number of closures and layoffs across the Southeast since 1997. In South Carolina, forty-seven mills closed between 1997 and August of 2001 which amounted to the loss of at least 12,220 jobs. Meanwhile, seven mills had laid off approximately 1,236 more employees since 1998. In

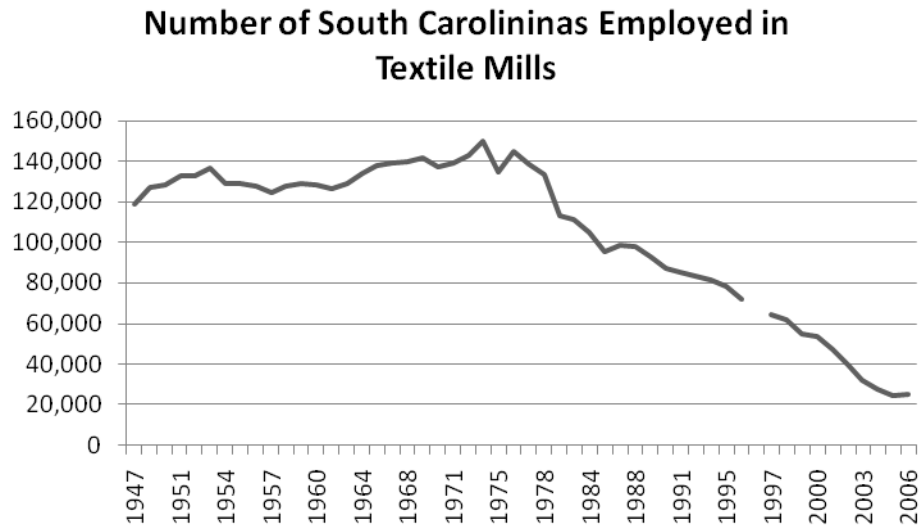


Figure 6.1 Number of South Carolinians Employed in Textile Mills 1947-2006
 Sources: The Annual Survey of Manufactures and the Census of Manufactures, various years.



Figure 6.2 Percentage of South Carolina's Manufacturing Labor Force Employed in Textile Mills
 Source: The Annual Survey of Manufactures and the Census of Manufactures, various years.

the exceptional year of 2001, twenty-five mills closed and 7,192 jobs were lost between mill closures and some layoffs. Other Southern states suffered from similar blows; in the year between August 2000 and August 2001, one hundred mills closed across the nation resulting in the loss of 60,000 jobs (ATIM 2001).

Layoffs and Textile Mill Closures

In the 1980s, the Southern textile industry faced increased competition from developing nations like China where labor accepts much lower wages³⁷ (Zingraff 1991, 207). Rowan warned, “the industry is highly vulnerable to foreign price competition,” and since the industry was so heavily concentrated in the South, changes in the region could have industry wide implications³⁸ (Rowan 1987, 13). This threat was compounded by the inefficient, low-skilled, labor-intensive production process which persisted into the 1980s.

The textile industry in the American South was late to modernize. Increasing competition pressed the textile industry to automate, diversify, cut employment, and centralize the industry into the hands of a few corporations. Owners of the strongest textile companies began to implement the most modernized, automated production processes to do more work more quickly. Mechanization provided management an alternative to the rising cost of American labor, eliminated jobs, and increased productivity. Industry experts predicted that productivity would continue to grow as more plants modernized and implemented robotics and computerized control processes (Rowan 1987; Zingraff 1991). Automation is responsible for a large portion of lost jobs between the 1970s and the 1990s (Figure 6.1). In the 1980s, some textile firms

³⁷ The apparel industry’s fate is tied to the same forces and pressures (Zingraff 1991, 207).

³⁸ At the time of Rowan’s article, the South continued to enjoy advantages over the North because labor, transportation, and taxes all remained cheaper in the South (Rowan 1987, 13).

consolidated, and the industry became largely vertically integrated. Many firms chose to eliminate some plants to become more efficient and more specialized. Small or weak textile companies went bankrupt in the face of competition (Anderson 2000). These early plant closures are also responsible for job losses reflected in Figure 6.1.

The majority of lost jobs in either case were low-skilled and semi-skilled jobs. “Most jobs are manual, repetitive, and require no previous training” (Rowan 1987, 18). Despite all efforts, technological backwardness and slow response to its market undermined the textile industry. The drive to modernize American textile plants was probably too late and expensive to save the industry (Zingraff 1991). The mills continued to undergo modernization, automation, and mechanization of the production process despite the expense; jobs continued to be lost (Anderson 2000).

Communities proved to be as vulnerable as jobs as the textile industry integrated vertically. Individual communities remained totally dependent on a single plant. In 1991, Zingraff warned that one-plant towns are “at risk of being the industry’s economic hostage.” She looked at the example of Ware Shoals, South Carolina, where Riegel Textile Corporation closed a plant in 1985 after a few major layoffs. The community thereafter struggled with “not only severe unemployment but also mortgage foreclosures, empty stores, an eroding tax base, and out-migration of the residents who would have otherwise provided a vital small town population”. The town’s older population struggled most (Zingraff 1991).

As technology advances, “the automated mill of the future” has become reality. These mills need little labor, and only the biggest firms are able to afford to compete (Anderson 2000). So, the old mills are passing out of use. Many of the mills are structurally unsuitable for modern

textile milling. The buildings have been damaged by modern machinery because they were “built for slower, lighter, and smaller looms and spinning machines” (Moore 2000, 687). The multistory design of the buildings causes “production bottlenecks in stairways or elevators” (Moore 2000, 687). Modern industrial engineers prefer single story, Fordist layouts which facilitate the movement of goods. The old mills, dating before the Second World War, require modernization like the installation of HVAC units. Meanwhile, the areas around these mills have urbanized and access to transportation networks has become somewhat restricted (Moore 2000). Older mills are rarely adjacent to an interstate. All of these issues conspire to make mills old enough to have a mill village particularly sensitive.

In the 1990’s, Mexico, India, and the countries of Southeast Asia offered compelling advantages such as lower taxes, wages, and overhead and inevitably attracted textile mills and other low skill industries. So, the Southern mills continued to close after the 1980s. In 2001, the ATMI emphasized these advantages in light of the devaluation of Asian currencies and the corresponding strength of the dollar since 1997:

In 1997-98, the currencies of almost all the major textile exporting countries in Asia collapsed, causing a shockwave of artificially low priced textile and apparel products to the United States... Textile imports from Asia, which had shown relatively little growth over the past ten years, jumped 80% over the next four years as Asian currencies measured against the dollar dropped by an average of forty percent (ATMI 2001, 1).

Finally, free trade and the increasingly global economy has meant that few but the most modern and efficient textile mills can compete with the low operating costs in less developed nations.

Globalization

When a mill lays off employees by the hundreds or closes its doors all together, the effect on mill towns communities, some of which are isolated hamlets, includes most or all of the

following: a spike in unemployment, increased crime and drug use, the out-migration of residents, and decaying of town infrastructure. The landscape of the mill village physically manifests these issues and the community's viability.

In the meantime, South Carolina's economy has diversified. In 2002, textile mills employed eighteen percent of the manufacturing workforce (Figure 6.2) and only 3.5 percent of the state's total workforce (US Government, Economic Census, 2002). While the American textile industry has suffered from competition from countries with large pools of cheap labor, the state has benefited from globalization.

Upstate South Carolina boasts over 215 manufacturing facilities built by European and other foreign firms like BMW, Michelin, and Fuji (<http://www.upstatealliance.com>; Lord 2001). The Greenville Chamber of Commerce touted in 2005, "The Upstate is a designated foreign trade zone area, and boasts the highest level of foreign capital investment per capita in the nation, and is home to more than 240 international firms from 23 nations, including BMW, Hitachi and Michelin" (www.greatergreenville.com/development/facts.asp, accessed Jan. 13, 2005). The low wage mill jobs are giving way to higher paying manufacturing and service jobs. The average textile mill worker in South Carolina made \$27,414, but the average manufacturing worker made \$36,569 (Economic Census, 2002).

Closures and Mill Buildings

Carolínians are disturbed by the empty, abandoned textile mills in the midst of their communities. Many of the old mills are falling to fire, demolition, or neglect, but thanks to "historic preservation, nostalgia, architectural innovation, political rhetoric and... the dictates of economic development" many mills are passing from a "landscape of production" to one of

consumption as people reuse the mills for purposes like retail and residences (Moore 2002, 685). This transfer began in mill villages when the mill owners unloaded housing divorcing them from production (Moore 2002). Ingalls and Moore explored the fate of 118 textile mill buildings in the Charlotte area in 2001. Rather than attempt to trace the story of every mill in the area, they focused on mill building reuse since the end of textile production (Ingalls 2001).

Ingalls and Moore conclude that mills seem vulnerable to high population growth rates and that almost one-fourth of Charlotte's mills had been destroyed or were in jeopardy. But, three-quarters of Charlotte's mills were extant; some of these were used in some real way. About thirteen percent of old textile mills were vacant or used to sell, but not produce, textiles. Almost half of the mills were used for manufacturing, and of those, thirty-seven percent were producing textiles.³⁹ Typically, mills in smaller places were still involved in manufacturing. However, mills in smaller towns which were closed were more likely to be vacant. Vacant mills in larger places were likely adaptively reused (Ingalls 2001)

These differences may well reflect the capacity of larger, more diverse urban markets to absorb and reuse such large structures. In larger urban markets, space for development is at a premium and alternatives more limited. Conversely, in smaller cities a number of factors may mitigate against reuse. Smaller cities have limited markets for reuse and they have, by virtue of being at the periphery of urban centers, sizable amounts of open spaces of expansion (Ingalls 2001, 84).

Developers, especially in smaller places where green fields beckon, shy away from adapting mills because of risks like the potential for pollution of the site. In the Charlotte area, mills in larger places were three times more likely to be reused than mills in smaller areas (Ingalls 2001).

³⁹ Mills used for any type of industrial activity, including textile milling, have required extensive modification (Ingalls 2001).

All reuse involves some alteration to the interior of a mill to lesser or greater degrees. Some warehouse or retail operations which simply require space altered little, but most owners made significant efforts to stabilize their properties with new roofs, windows, and doors as well as new walls to divide the building into smaller units. Some owners significantly changed the interior for new uses like housing and mixed-use developments with office, storage, retail, restaurant, or residential spaces (Ingalls 2001). Most mills are unsuitable for manufacturing for the same reasons that the textile industry elected to abandon them. Modern plants away from city centers serve the needs of manufacturers better.

Toby Moore reports that some adaptive reuse of mill villages has been attempted by Preservation North Carolina which is attempting to preserve “not only the landscape but a sense of place of the village” (Moore 2000, 692). This trend is reflected in the occasional calls on the parts of officials and residents for the revitalization of degrading textile mill villages, often near the city’s center, where “visual blight and eroded municipal tax bases that accompany empty or underutilized buildings” have become problematic (Ingalls 2001, 75-76). The mills themselves are often symbolic, representing the community’s identity. Ingalls’s and Moore’s results mirror what is happening to South Carolina’s mill stock. Most mills in the South Carolina Upstate are in small towns and are either still engaged in textile milling or are vacant. Opportunities for reuse outside of the textile industry are rare. However, in the central business districts of Greenville and Spartanburg, mills have been converted into loft and office space. Many unused mills have been razed or burned.

Mill Closures and Mill Villages: The Case of Spartanburg County

Spartanburg County is the heart of the textile industry in South Carolina. Textile milling began with a small, family operation in 1816. In 1976, fifty-three mills hummed in the city of Spartanburg and in surrounding towns and employed tens of thousands of people (Economic Census, 1976). By 1998, forty-nine textile plants employed 7,013 people⁴⁰. In 2003, thirty-four textile plants employed 3,813⁴¹ (County Business Patterns, 1998 and 2003). The twenty oldest mills, all of which predate the World War II era, were associated with a mill village which consisted of housing for operatives and management, a store, churches, and a school (Teter 2002).

Most of the textile mills that remain in the county and across the state are newer, low and sprawling buildings where the most modern and labor saving technologies are employed; they are situated on manicured, college-like campuses near interstates (Lord 2001). Only a handful of the historic mills are active. Most have been abandoned; some have been razed to reduce insurance liabilities and to scrap the mill's lumber and bricks like Spartan Mills or burned like the March 2004 fire at Glendale (see Figure 6.4). Unlike Spartanburg's neighbors, Greenville and Charlotte, no mills have been adaptively reused yet⁴² (Ingalls and Moore). The destruction of physical mill buildings seems to compound the urgency with which South Carolinians feel the

⁴⁰ Seventeen of these plants employed fewer than 20 people.

⁴¹ Eleven of these plants employed fewer than 20 people.

⁴² Users at <<http://www.urbanplanet.org/forums/lofi/version/index.php/t7379.html>> have a useful and often illustrated message board about mill reuse and scrapping mostly in the Columbia, Greenville, and Spartanburg areas. Some posts are pure conjecture; some are well informed. Some users report that the Clifton mill may be slated to become condos.



Figure 6.4 Site of the razed Spartan Mills (left) and Glendale Mill after the fire, March 27, 2004 (right)

loss of their “textile heritage”. Every time a mill burns or is razed, local papers like The Greenville News cover the event with nostalgia⁴³.

The Spartanburg County Assessor records detailed data about the county’s homes including construction materials and condition. These data can be examined to understand the effect modern mill closures have on these historic homes. The bulk of mill housing in the Spartanburg area (seventy-one percent is in average or fair condition (Figure 6.5). Only one home is in excellent condition though nine percent of the homes are in good condition⁴⁴. Twenty percent are in poor or worse condition (Figure 6.6). An informal survey of the mill towns of

Spartanburg County done in March of 2004 suggested that condition of the housing stock varies less among the towns than within the towns. Decrepit, abandoned homes often sit next to nicely kept homes; the houses in Figure 6.7 sit directly across the street from one another in

⁴³ See, for example, John Boyanoski and Andy Paras’s article “Once-Thriving Greenville Mill Destroyed.” *Greenville News*, 28 June, 2003.

⁴⁴ This record was lumped together with the homes in good condition for modeling.

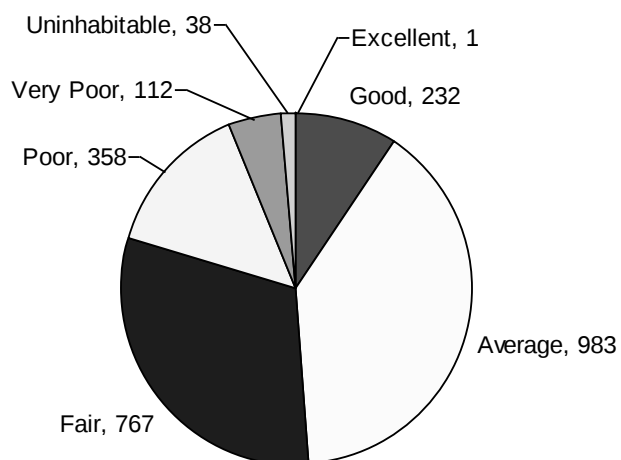


Figure 6.5 Condition of Spartanburg County Mill Housing, 2003



Figure 6.6 Deteriorated housing, Converse, Spartanburg County. March 2004



Figure 6.7 Neighboring uninhabitable (left) and well kept (right) homes in Fingerville.

Fingerville. Still, when the data set is arranged and summarized by condition, a relationship between housing condition and mill closures emerges (Table 6.1). The best homes, on average, experienced mill closures more recently than the worst homes. A linear regression has been employed to test this relationship⁴⁵.

Linear regression analysis tests the strength of influence of independent variables on a dependent variable. Since the Spartanburg County tax assessor uses condition to determine a house's appraised value, and since condition and appraised value have a Pearson's Correlation value of 0.689⁴⁶ (Appendix 1), appraised value of home will be used as the dependent variable in the regression that follows to test the influence of mill closures on house conditions.

Presumably, if mill towns deteriorate and become ghost towns following mill closures, the longer a town has been without a mill, the stronger the effect on the condition and therefore the appraised value of mill town housing. However, when appraised value and years since mill closed are regressed, the effect of closures on housing condition exists but is negligible.

The R value demonstrates the strength of the relationship between observed and predicted values of the dependent variable and ranges from zero to one. Larger absolute values indicate stronger relationships. With a R value of only 0.144 (Appendix 2), the relationship between appraised value and years since the mill closed is weak. The R Squared value demonstrates the amount of variation in the dependent variable that the regression model "explains" statistically. With a R Squared value of only 0.021, the model did not explain much of the variation in the

⁴⁵ To perform a regression using condition of housing as the dependent variable would require ordinal regression, an obscure and somewhat difficult method. Common and simpler linear regression avoids some of the issues associated with ordinal regression, so a non-ordinal dependent variable will be selected.

⁴⁶ Correlation measures the strength of the relationship between two variables. As the Pearson Correlation approaches a value of 1, the variables in question are more closely related. In this case, appraised value and condition are fairly well related.

<i>Mill housing classified and summarized by condition classification.</i>							
Condition	Price of Last Sale	Value of Land	Value of Building	Age of Home	Number of Bathrooms	Number of Bedrooms	Years Since Mill Closure
Good	\$36,056	\$5,722	\$48,483	85	1	3	13
Average	\$28,430	\$6,111	\$38,887	89	1	2	11
Fair	\$18,196	\$6,228	\$26,169	90	1	3	15
Poor	\$13,373	\$6,219	\$18,756	93	1	3	19
Very Poor	\$10,942	\$6,527	\$12,859	95	1	3	21
Uninhabitable	\$11,239	5,167	\$3,487	98	1	3	20

Table 6.1 Mill Housing Classified and Summarized by Condition Classification.
Source: Spartanburg County Real Property Search

data. The B Coefficient, which indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables, is small and negative. So, while mill closures do have a statistically significant negative effect on the condition of mill housing, that effect is slight. As the mills have closed, therefore, the mill towns have not deteriorated into ghost towns.

If the model is run again and variables that are commonly used to explain housing value (value of land, square footage, age, number of bathrooms) are regressed against the time since a mill closure the result is largely the same (see Appendix 3). With an R value of 0.366 and a R Square value of 0.134 the model is still weak and does little to explain variation in appraised value of the mill housing homes. So, the apparent effect of mill closures on housing condition breaks down under statistical modeling (see Appendix 2). The effect of mill closures and even the effect of traditional variables which are used to explain values do not seem to apply to the mill villages. If the mill towns are not being abandoned, what is happening here?

The ghost town scenario underestimates residents' affection for these places and the actual health of the local economy. According to geographer Ben Marsh (1987), place is

important to residents because of the economic opportunities available there and but also because of the meaning accorded to the landscape by residents. He examines anthracite coal mining towns where, like in the case of textile mill towns, a single industry which supported places has since failed. While as much as one half or one third of the area's population left since the mines closed, as many or more people have remained in the towns they called home for so long despite the fact that these towns are ill-equipped to carry such large populations. As one might expect, many residents are elderly and draw pension or social security checks, but for the rest, too few jobs are available for too many people, and underemployment is rampant. Even the landscape itself is hostile; the author calls the region the "most disturbed rural landscape in Pennsylvania" (Marsh 1987, 346?). The anthracite towns are notorious for rubble left behind by strip mining, for unstable and subsiding ground, for groundwater pollution and for large, underground fires (Marsh 1987).

Marsh suggests that a town or a place is both means (by which residents can make a living) and meaning (derived from the place's past). His theory is grounded in Pred's geographic version of structuration which suggests that through "the inescapable continuity through time of the world and its parts" landscape continually molds both users and the landscape itself (Marsh 1987, 339). Local histories play a crucial role in defining place for residents and continue to mold those communities long after watersheds in those histories alter the means available to residents (Marsh 1987). Marsh points to,

first an early industrializing stage, when the landscape provided a means (i.e. jobs) but relatively little specific meaning to the new inhabitants, and now a declining stage, when landscape is rich with meaning from that past but deficient in means. The period of growth made these into anthracite towns – close, proud, hardworking, and ethnically diverse. When the industry failed, the community

that had defended individuals from the problems of mining continued to protect them from the problems of no mining (Marsh 1987, 339).

Interestingly, the homes of these towns, if they are still inhabited, remain in good condition though values remain low (Marsh 1987). Marsh's idea is collaborated by Edward Glaeser and Jesse Shapiro (2000). The authors note that, while population declines in Northeastern Rustbelt cities, these places do not empty at a rate which matches the out-migration of jobs, but the authors do little to explain this trend (Glaeser and Shapiro 2000).

Marsh believes that coal mining towns in Pennsylvania retain populations well beyond their carrying capacity because, for a time at least, resident's loyalty and affinity for the places cause them to hang on long after coal mines closed. Without a renewed balance between means and meaning, however, the towns, the downtowns, the churches, and the schools do fail. Marsh predicts that a continued disconnect between means and meaning will accelerate the exodus eventually creating ghost towns (Marsh 1987).

While the anxiety may be common to all communities undergoing this sort of transition, the textile mill towns of South Carolina are in a better geographic situation. The Southern Piedmont region is experiencing a dramatic economic transformation. The Upstate's economy is more robust than ever and benefits from globalization as much as it suffers; the region has seen an influx of better paid manufacturing jobs. Also, while some of the region's towns are in rural areas, most are within commuting distance of the Greenville-Spartanburg-Anderson Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) or the Charlotte MSA.

This landscape still provides sufficient means to support the populations of the mill towns, and the meaning afforded to mill town residents will encourage them to remain loyal to

these close knit communities. However, these residents will be lucky to find employment in the village where they live. Also, the historic stores and downtowns of these communities have almost always failed (see Figure 6.8). Residents must drive to areas of strip commercialization. The schools once supported by the mills have been supplanted by the public school systems. The only institutions which survive are churches. So, these towns transition into bedroom communities after a plant closure.

Data provided by the Spartanburg County Assessor's Office's online Real Property Search reveals if and how mill closures effect market value and condition of mill village homes. A correlation matrix comparing all the variables collected for thirteen Spartanburg County mill towns for over 1,200 homes shows few important correlations, so further quantitative tests like regression are unnecessary (see Appendix 3). This goes further to support the hypothesis that mill closures do not affect the condition of village homes. The social effects of mill closures are significant. Inevitably, when the major employer in a town closes its doors, the workers and their community suffer. Too often, when the workers navigate the stressful job market find employment again, they have to accept worse jobs making lower wages. Meanwhile, poverty and welfare payments increase in that town. Anderson (2000) found that as people were no



Figure 6.8 Historic stores Glendale, South Carolina. March 2004

longer employed by the Cannon mill at Kannapolis, fewer jobs were available in Kannapolis, so commute times lengthened for most residents who began driving towards and into Charlotte for employment. Some found jobs in higher-paying industries; more found jobs in the lower-paying service sector. Many laborers are forced to hold down a part-time job in addition to their full time job due to higher cost of living, lower real wages, and loss of services once provided by mill management. Once mill management supported or supplemented housing, recreation, entertainment, banking, and shopping opportunities. Now, private businesses serve the communities. While this eliminates the “paternalistic relations of deference and control”, it has also left a gap as yet unfilled by the marketplace or the government (Anderson 2000). Another change Anderson noted in mill villages was the appearance of a new minority. No longer is the landscape black and white; now, Latinos also work in textile mills and live in the villages (Anderson 2000).

Ordinal regression of the condition of these houses and the lapsed time since the mill closure shows only the slightest relationship between condition and mill closures. So, as the mills have closed, the mill towns have not steadily deteriorated. In fact, the relationship is

slightly positive. So, towns that experienced a mill closure some time ago are actually in slightly better condition than those that experienced a mill closure recently. A better explanation of the mill housing condition lies in the ordinal regression of condition with years since a mill closure as well as other variables which influence housing markets in general.

Chapter 7: Piedmont, South Carolina: A Case Study

In 1886, South Carolinian Henry Hammett constructed a mill (Figure 7.1) and village called Piedmont at Garrison Shoals on the Saluda River southwest of Greenville. The mill was fully operational by July 1, 1876, and as many as 7,800 spindles and 112 looms were producing twills and sheeting by the following summer (Pendleton Collection). One hundred homes were built to accommodate the workers who came to Piedmont. Hammett's enterprise was a success, and the mill and town expanded many times in the following decades. By 1894, the mill was running 61,000 spindles and 1,900 looms, and the town's population had grown to 3,800 people (Pendleton Collection). Hammett's early success and benevolent welfare work at Piedmont made the town a model after which many other Carolina mill towns were patterned (Mitchell 1930).

The majority of the first homes built in Piedmont were two-story frame houses with a one-story addition (Figure 7.2). The other homes were modest single-story houses which mimicked the style of the larger houses (Figure 7.3). Later growth at the mill led to expansions of the housing stock that bridged the Saluda River. A second wave of construction occurred in 1890 just after Piedmont Manufacturing Company added Mill 3 on the Anderson County shore of the Saluda (Figure 7.4). This time, 118 single-story frame homes and 94 two-story frame homes were constructed, on both sides of the river.

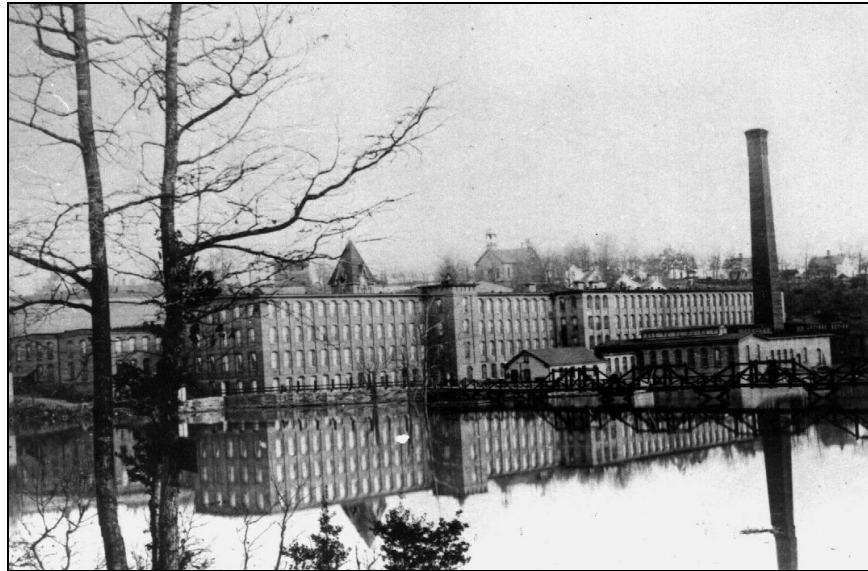


Figure 7.1 Piedmont Manufacturing Company mill and mill pond, 1895.
Source: Pendleton District Commission Collection.



Figure 7.2 Early Two Story House, Piedmont, South Carolina.



Figure 7.3 Early One Story House, Piedmont, South Carolina.

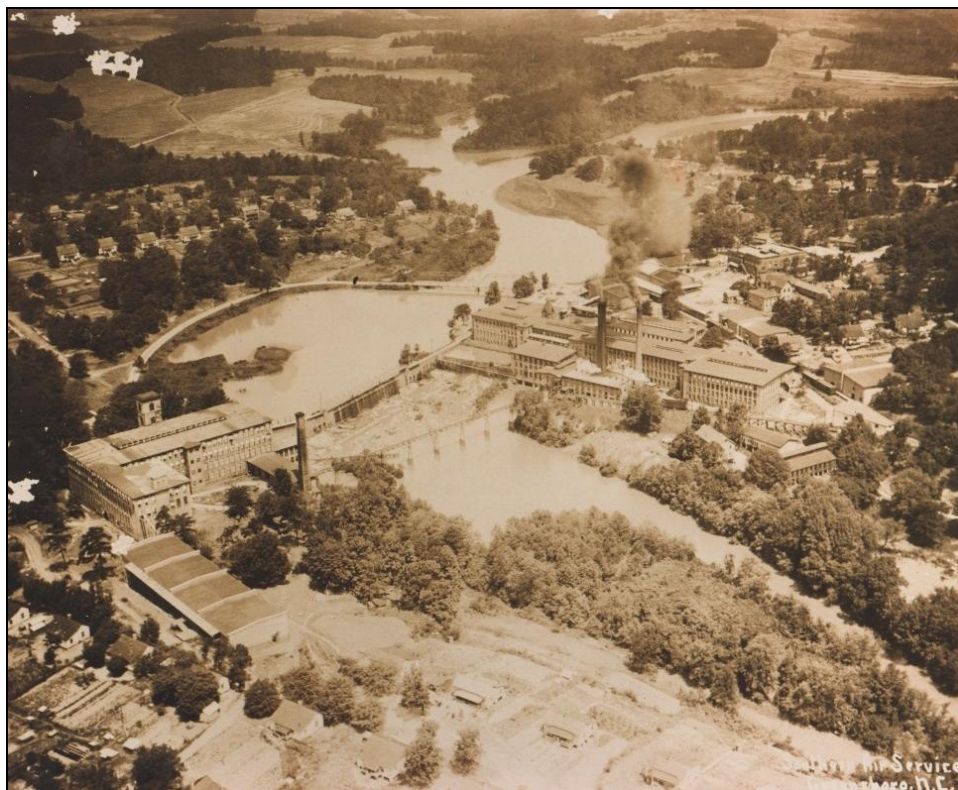


Figure 7.4 Piedmont Manufacturing Company's mills and housing spanned the Saluda River.
Source: Pendleton District Commission Collection

Nineteenth century visitors to textile mill villages often criticized the monotonous housing typical of early mill villages. All homes constructed in the 1874 and 1890 building phases were identical one or two story houses (Figure 7.5). Later phases heeded the advice of textile mill architect, Daniel Tompkins, who suggested varying house styles along streets of 20th century developments. In Piedmont, none of the early style of houses were constructed after 1890. Homes built in 1905 and 1915 were front-gabled cottages (Figure 7.6). Homes built in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s were modest bungalows (Figure 7.7 and 7.8). These additions to the town varied the landscape.

The mill and town at Piedmont was an especially large operation, so the commercial landscape was especially well-developed. In 1887, Piedmont's four large, frame stores dominated the trade of the mill's 420 hands (Figure 7.9). The store buildings housed a post office, a barber shop, drug stores, a large furniture store, two general merchandise stores, a dry goods store, a stable, a meat market, a photographer's studio, and storage. The frame stores on the Greenville side of town were destroyed in a 1903 fire and rebuilt as brick structures which stand today (Figure 7.10) (Pendleton Collection).

The paternalistic nature of Piedmont's management was demonstrated to employees and outside observers through construction as well as deeds. For example, a "magnificent" community building with a 1,000 seat hall and gymnasium provided opportunities for recreation and entertainment like brass-band concerts and basketball games (Figure 7.11). A grandstand accommodated crowds for textile-league baseball games. Other important buildings included a library, a museum, a women's building, a men's lyceum, a theater, and two schools - all built and



Figure 7.5 Identical single story houses, Piedmont, South Carolina.



Figure 7.6 Gabled Cottage, Piedmont, South Carolina.



Figure 7.7 1920s Bungalow, Piedmont, South Carolina.



Figure 7.8 1940s Bungalow, Piedmont, South Carolina.



Figure 7.9 Frame Store Building, Piedmont, Anderson County, South Carolina



Figure 7.10 Stores, Piedmont, Greenville County, South Carolina.



Figure 7.11 Community Building (with Post Office on left), Piedmont, South Carolina

subsidized by the mill for use for use by employees. Churches are probably the most important and enduring landmarks built by the Piedmont Manufacturing Company. At first, the town's Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian congregations shared Union Hall, a four hundred seat church near downtown, but in time, the mill gave each congregation their own church (Pendleton Collection).

In 1946, textile giant J.P. Stevens and Company bought the Piedmont Manufacturing Company and thus the Hammett era in Piedmont ended (Pendleton Collection). A decade later, in 1956, J.P. Stevens opted to sell the village housing at Piedmont. The corporation hired the Alester Furman Company of Greenville to facilitate the sales. The Furman Company surveyed the town, determined size, condition, lot acreage, and value of the village houses. Together with the J.P. Stevens Company, the Furman Company determined prices for the homes which were designed to entice mill employees to buy thereby quickly relieving J.P. Stevens of the burden of the mill village. Because Piedmont was a very large mill village, and the mill was also selling off most commercial property in the town, the completion of these sales took years. The properties sold at an affordable average price of \$2,680.00 (Furman Collection).

The map in Figure 7.12 illustrates the shape and composition of the village constructed by Henry Hammett and the Piedmont Manufacturing Company and the housing therein at the last moment of mill control. The map is based on the survey map created by the Allester Furman Company in 1956 when the Furman Company and J.P. Stevens were determining what property was to be sold. The footprint of each house helps reveal its style and therefore the era in which it was built. The oldest housing is closest to the Mill 1 building. After 1956, Piedmont's housing stock was opened to change, so this map provides a snapshot at the end of mill control.

Much changed in Piedmont in the second half of the twentieth century. In the late summer and fall of 1963, J.P. Stevens began construction of a large, modern textile mill outside of Hammett's Piedmont; production began at what was named the Estes Plant in the following year. The old Greenville county mill was converted into a rug plant which was subsequently shut down three years later and converted into a warehouse. A corduroy cutting unit operated in the old mill's basement through the 1970s. In 1981, J.P. Stevens discontinued all activity in Hammett's mill and sold the building to Aquenergy Systems, Inc. (Roper, Journal). Aquenergy uses old textile mill dams to produce hydroelectric energy for sale to Duke Power (Enel North America; enel.it/northamerica/seUS.asp). The historic mill burnt on October 26, 1983 (Figure 7.13) (National Register web page). The Piedmont Plant in Anderson County was shut down in February of 1985 just before the Estes plant was sold by J.P. Stevens to Delta Woodside Industries (Pendleton Collection). The Anderson County plant closed for good in the late 1990s, and was razed in 2003. Today, all that remains of Hammett's mills are the Anderson County smokestacks (Figure 7.14).

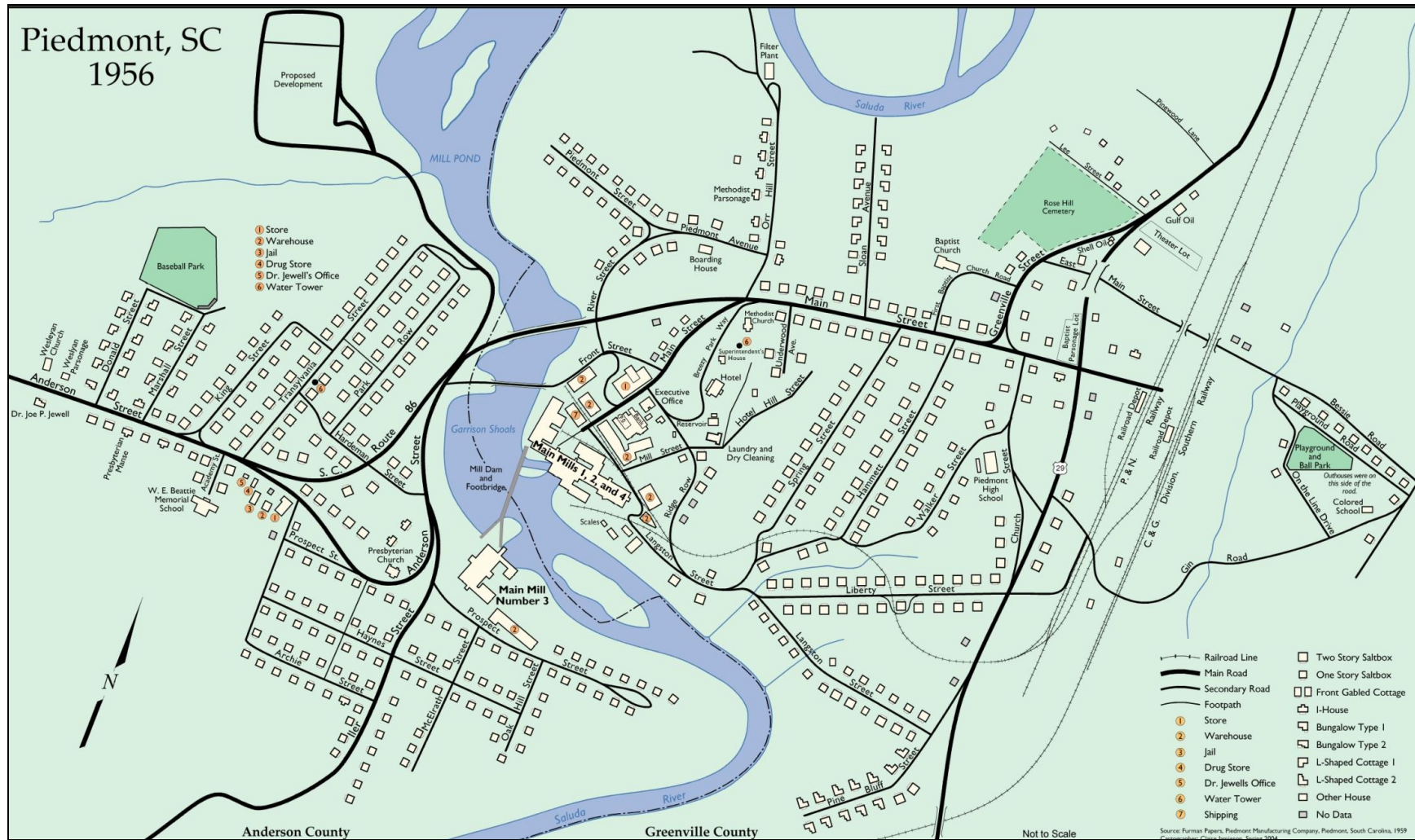


Figure 7.12 Piedmont, SC, 1956



Figure 7.13 Historic Mills 1, 2, and 4 burn. October, 1983.
Source: National Register web page.



Figure 7.14 Smokestack, Piedmont, Anderson County, 2004.

The Estes Plant remained an important employer for Piedmont residents, but the cessation of textile milling within the village built by Hammett forever altered the town's character. Piedmont's identity was once inexorably tied to the mill; that connection was diluted by the sale of the mill village. Now that milling has ceased and the mill buildings themselves have burned or been razed, the community is nagged by a sense that it has lost part of its heritage. Almost twenty years have passed since production ceased in Piedmont, and the Piedmont community has proven resilient. Piedmont's history lends the town an importance or meaning to residents who persist in this place.

Few jobs can be found within the Piedmont community, and those that remain are mostly service jobs at businesses like The Clock Drive In or at the town's tanning salons. The community's health is in large part related to the town's proximity to other textile mills such as the Estes Plant outside Piedmont and the Gerber Plant in Pelzer. Both of these plants and other area mills have closed since 2000, and few Piedmont residents work in the textile industry today (Pendleton Collection). Piedmont's situation between the cities of Anderson, Greenwood, and Greenville and even to Spartanburg goes farther to securing the fate of the village. Residents' access to jobs is complemented by the low cost of housing in Piedmont.

Over 1000 people live in Hammett's Piedmont. The population is 93 percent white. Because South Carolina's population is 67 percent white, Piedmont's whiteness is conspicuous and illustrative of the legacy of the textile industry (2000 Census). Early industry boosters touted the textile industry as a haven for the poor whites who, the boosters claimed, had been disadvantaged by the plantation system. Few non-whites saw employment in the Southern textile industry, and what jobs African Americans did work in the mills tended to be the dirtiest

or most strenuous. Most African Americans in Piedmont still live east of the rail road tracks where they were historically housed by the Piedmont Manufacturing Company.

When mill village housing was sold, industry leaders and town residents feared that outside speculators would buy up as much property as possible for rental to mill operatives thereby turning the villages into slums. After mill closures, alarmed observers often expect the villages to become ghost towns. Ninety-one percent of the homes in Piedmont were owner-occupied in 2000, and 73 percent of the houses were owner occupied. Only 60 percent of Americans owned their home in that same year; so, Piedmont has clearly neither been abandoned nor turned into a slum by landlords (2000 Census).

Furthermore, the housing stock remains in generally good condition. Over 91 percent of the mill built homes in Piedmont are in fair, good, or very good condition as of 2004: illustrated by the light orange, light purple, and dark purple on the map in Figure 7.15. Only two percent of the homes are in poor condition: illustrated by the dark orange. Homes in poor condition need paint, a new roof, have obviously rotting wood, have unkempt and trashy yards, or show many signs of disrepair. Some seven percent of the town's homes have been razed, burnt, or are uninhabitable: indicated by the color white in Figure 7.15. The uninhabitable homes often have missing window panes and other signs of long-term neglect. Razed or burnt homes have, most frequently, been replaced by singlewide trailers which are indicated by asterisks on the map. Piedmont has actually seen some modest growth and development; new construction is illustrated by the pink on the map (Figure 7.15).

The central business district is home to some, low order activity. A local real estate and insurance agency operates out of one store front. Next door, a sparsely stocked

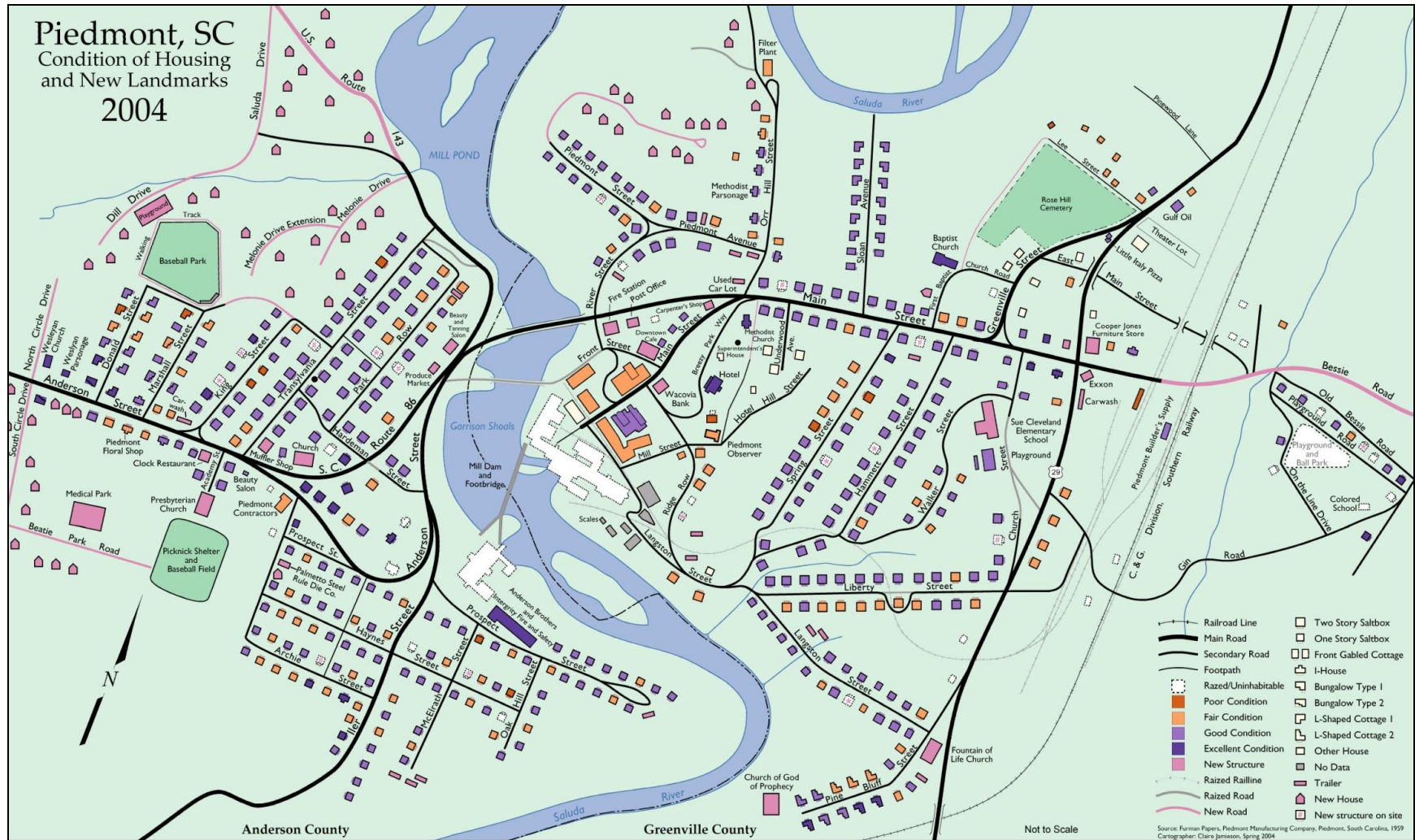


Figure 7.15 Piedmont, SC, 2004

“general store” closed in 2004. A church operates out of a large portion of the block, and a local movie rental store shares a building with a small tanning salon. Across the parking lot is a popular local café. The YMCA of Greenville runs summer day care programs in the gymnasium of the old community building.

While the activities occurring in the downtown area are far more limited now than at the turn of the century, and the homes of Piedmont are not luxurious, Piedmont is alive. It did not become a slum after the sale of the village to mill employees. It did not become a ghost town after the mills closed twenty years ago. Residents appreciate this town’s charm, and they celebrate Piedmont’s textile heritage at the annual Footbridge Festival. The story of Piedmont’s survival gives South Carolinians some comfort as they watch their textile mills close in the wake of NAFTA. Though many doomsayers expected the worst, Piedmont and other villages like it, speak to the mill village’s resiliency and the general health of the Upstate economy.

Multinationals have identified the Greenville-Spartanburg-Anderson MSA as a good place to do business, and many foreign firms have opened plants in those counties. These quaint towns are emerging as affordable bedroom communities for lower middle income families where residents live and worship in Piedmont but commute to work or shop for items unavailable at the grocery store or drug store.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

Textile mill villages were once a prominent feature on South Carolina's landscape. The villages were dominated by a large brick mill, and other common improvements constructed by the textile companies included stores, recreation facilities, offices for management, and housing for employees. The textile companies dominated life in the communities that developed in their shadows through paternalistic management practices. The mill village was a necessary and prominent element of mill operations and the paternalistic management of employees because mills were often isolated; no housing existed *in situ*; cheap rent was used to supplement low wages; and ownership of employees' housing gave mill owners added leverage and control over behavior at work and at home.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the mills offered to sell their housing stocks to their employees. This divestiture was partly an effort to free capital for the modernization of the mills, but it also represented the mill owners' turn away from paternalism. Mill employees were given an opportunity to purchase their homes at affordable prices. The village sales had a lasting effect on the communities. Being fired or laid-off, quitting, or retiring from a job at the mill no longer necessarily meant eviction from one's home. Home owners could sell their properties to any buyer. The mill villages were physically opened to change, deterioration, renovation, and revision. The mill villages became more diverse places with more diverse populations and some introduced variety in the housing stock. Residents no longer necessarily had a tie to the mill.

Today, most mill villages have lost their original *raison d'être*. As the mills close, modern plants open. Their sprawling campuses and high tech processes provide a landscape and working environment entirely different from the historic mills. Simultaneously, the rise of the service sector has created other opportunities for the former textile employees and their children. However, this economic revolution has had less of an impact on textile mill villages than most South Carolinians expected. The changes brought to the mill villages in the 1950s and 1960s by village sales had already integrated village residents into the world beyond the mill village.

Many mourn the “progress” which is sweeping the Upstate. Eller opines, “We have come to believe that progress means technological development, industrial expansion, and growth in material wealth.” (Eller, p xv.) This emphasis on progress does leave jetsam in its wake. Though the federal government tries to mitigate the effects of free trade policies with funding for reeducation, many mill employees are ill-equipped to adapt to high-tech industries. Younger employees may be poised for better, higher paying jobs, but older, undereducated employees are resigned to low-level service jobs or to eke out an existence on pension checks.

Whatever the human ramifications of mill closures, this study reveals that textile mill villages of South Carolina’s Piedmont have not been abandoned. The villages offer affordable housing for working class families that is proximate to many employment opportunities. Retirees from the mills usually already own their homes outright. So though they might have been ousted from the villages under the paternalistic period, mill ownership, they now have little fear of losing their homes. Interestingly, and perhaps ironically, the mill villages still retain their identity (meaning) though the mills (means) have gone. Unless the local economy should suffer a major depression, the mill towns will not suffer from vacancy or neglect.

While most former mill towns will persist physically, some former mill towns are too far from the successful Greenville-Anderson-Spartanburg MSA to benefit from any economic spillover. These findings reveal little about the handful of mill towns that are located in remote mountain locations, and the many mill villages that sit in the South Carolina Midlands far from urban influences. Either location is economically less fortunate. A 2002 visit to isolated Cateechee revealed that condition of housing in this small town near Central, South Carolina, is far worse than most mill towns (see Figures 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3). Though the poor condition of housing may indicate poor craftsmanship, it more likely points to a disadvantageous situation. But, even Cateechee is looking forward to a brighter future. A 2003 Greenville News article about the transition of Pickens County from a rural bedroom community of Greenville to a boom town, quotes a Cateechee resident who indicates that even Cateechee homes were seeing some renovation since many of the town's residents were doing better (Simon 2003, <http://www.greenvilleonline.com/news/specialreport/2003/05/29/200305297305.htm>). Mill towns in the Midlands may have similar experiences. A study of Midlands mill towns would be an interesting companion to this thesis since these places were beyond the scope of this study.

This study cannot predict the eventual fate of mill towns except to say that the towns will likely never become ghost towns like coal and timber towns elsewhere as long as they are located within the commuting shed of Interstate 85 corridor's new industry. The greatest challenge these places face is finding a new identity. New industry and service jobs provide means for a mobile workforce, but the textile mill towns' best chance for survival will also depend the generation of new symbolic meanings to complement historic meanings. Other challenges include the lack of civic leadership. Many of these former mill towns are

unincorporated and struggle with deteriorated and/or insufficient infrastructure. To remain attractive, the towns must update and develop their infrastructure. Also, the villages need to protect their historic assets. Too many mill buildings have already been razed. Too many president's homes, which are often still owned by the textile mills, are vacant and neglected. Too many stores suffer similar fates. Even if uses for these buildings are not immediately apparent, demolition and demolition by neglect preclude any future use. Preservation of historic assets will also preserve a key part of the meaning that has kept these places viable for so long.

Two avenues of future research compel me. I think that the fate of textile mill villages can be put in better context when compared to the fate of other one company towns like coal mining towns and rust belt towns. Also, I think that the story of the mill villages should be revisited at frequent intervals. These visits should result in a photographic record of change. Also, the data about Spartanburg County's mill villages should be analyzed periodically.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Correlation Matrix Relating Aspects of Mill Housing in Spartanburg County, South Carolina.

<i>Correlation Matrix</i>									
	Appraised Value of House	Appraised Value of Land	Price of Last Sale	Square Footage	Age of House	Condition of House	Number of Bathrooms	Number of Bedrooms	Years Since Mill Closed
Appraised Value of House	1	.096(**)	.627(**)	.232(**)	-.047(*)	.689(**)	.093(**)	.133(**)	-.144(**)
Appraised Value of Land	.096(**)	1	.139(**)	.141(**)	.005	-.024	.105(**)	.066(**)	-.026
Price of Last Sale	.627(**)	.139(**)	1	.006(*)	.098(**)	.475(**)	.070(*)	.013	-.108(**)
Square Footage	.232(**)	.141(**)	.066(*)	1	.036	-.121(**)	.367(**)	.441(**)	.119(**)
Age of House	.047(*)	.005	-.098(**)	.036	1	-.057(**)	.062(**)	.041(*)	.055(**)
Condition of House	.689(**)	-.024	.475(**)	.121(**)	.057(**)	1	-.111(**)	-.110(**)	-.240(**)
Number of Bathrooms	.093(**)	.105(**)	.070(*)	.367(**)	.062(**)	.111(**)	1	.285(**)	.068(**)
Number of Bedrooms	.133(**)	.066(**)	.013	.441(**)	.041(*)	-.110(**)	.285(**)	1	.158(**)
Years Since Mill Closed	.144(**)	-.026	-.108(**)	.119(**)	.055(**)	-.240(**)	.068(**)	.158(**)	1

(*) Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(**) Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Values highlighted in red are especially highly correlated (above the 0.5 level) and should not be included in the same model.

Values highlighted in orange are somewhat correlated (above the 0.2 level) as well.

Appendix 2. Regression of Appraised Value and Years Since Mill Closed

<i>Model Summary</i>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.144(a)	0.021	0.02	\$11,898.35

a Predictors: (Constant), wo mill

<i>ANOVA(b)</i>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.57E+09	1	6.57E+09	46.417	.000(a)
	Residual	3.1E+11	2190	1.42E+08		
	Total	3.17E+11	2191			

a Predictors: (Constant), wo mill

b Dependent Variable: buildup

<i>Coefficients(a)</i>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	30268.86	384.351		78.753	0
	wo mill	-134.848	19.793	-0.144	-6.813	0

a Dependent Variable: buildup

Appendix 3. Regression of Appraised Value with Years Since Mill Closed, Value of Land, Square Footage, Age of House, and Number of Bathrooms

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.366(a)	0.134	0.132	\$11,196.37

a Predictors: (Constant), baths, age, landap, wo mill, livesq

ANOVA(b)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.23E+10	5	8.46E+09	67.477	.000(a)
	Residual	2.73E+11	2178	1.25E+08		
	Total	3.15E+11	2183			

a Predictors: (Constant), baths, age, landap, wo mill, livesq

b Dependent Variable: buildap

Coefficients(a)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	16530.72	2071.426		7.98	0
	wo mill	-169.167	19.056	-0.181	-8.878	0
	landap	0.36	0.078	0.093	4.623	0
	livesq	8.493	0.673	0.275	12.625	0
	age	-15.583	21.409	-0.015	-0.728	0.467
	baths	2562.565	696.637	0.079	3.678	0

a Dependent Variable: buildap

Vita

Claire Jamieson was born and raised in Charleston, SC, by Jim and Peggy Jamieson. She and her family lived on an island where she learned to ride a bike, shrimp, crab, and fish. Jamieson spent many summers at YMCA Camp Greenville where she learned to quilt, weave baskets, teach archery, and camp craft. Upon graduating from Bishop England High School in 1997, Jamieson enrolled at Clemson University where she learned that she loved geography. She took every geography course offered at Clemson and much of the rest of her coursework emphasized the history and literature of the American South. She graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts, major in History, minor in Geography, in May of 2001.

In August of 2001, Jamieson moved to Knoxville, TN, and she enrolled in the graduate program at the University of Tennessee. She pursued coursework in rural and urban geography with an emphasis on the American South. Serving as a graduate teaching assistant and graduate teaching associate, Jamieson enjoyed introducing students to a wider world. She also assisted the director of a National Endowment for the Humanities funded “Cultural Diversity of the American South” Institute in the summers of 2002 and 2005; she enjoyed sharing her passion for the geography of the American South with teachers from across the nation. During her time at the University of Tennessee, Jamieson fell in love with the community in the downtown of Knoxville, TN. She bought and restored a home in Knoxville’s historic Parkridge neighborhood. Now, she rides her bike to The Tomato Head where she works as a manager and server. In her free time, Jamieson enjoys embroidery; she has shown her embroidery in several art shows.