

6 Boomers, Boosters, and Economic Statesmen

Choosing a site for the new reactor facility was a complex task. Although President Truman advised AEC Chairman Gordon Dean to choose the new location solely on its merits, other forces would play into the selection process.¹ While AEC and Du Pont records scrupulously describe the steps, based on strategic, operational, and tactical concerns, which led the survey team southward, forces within the Central Savannah River Area were already at work to entice federal dollars into the area. A carefully fabricated welcome mat for industrial development, over a hundred years in the making, was waiting by the river.

BRIDGING THE RIVER - INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE, REGIONAL COMPETITION

What was Augusta's role in the South's destiny? Simply put, it was to lessen the South's dependence upon New England by becoming a manufacturing center.²

The first decades of the nineteenth century in Augusta were punctuated by a series of highs and lows as the meaning of the city shifted from entrepot, to the western frontier, to the great piedmont tobacco port, to the urban focus of a region whose population had largely migrated westward. With this western expansion, Augusta's riverine commerce took on less importance. However, the advent of the railroad secured Augusta's prominence as a regional transshipment point throughout the century. The role the railroad would play in Augusta's future was well demonstrated in 1834 when the Charleston and Hamburg line, the world's longest railroad when established, "annihilated time and space." By leaving Charleston at 6:00 a.m. and arriving at Hamburg, South Carolina, at 3:30 p.m., the "Edgefield" steam car won over Augusta's business community, and the organization of the Georgia Railroad followed quickly.³ Cotton overtook tobacco as the major cash crop, and the Georgia and South Carolina piedmont east and west of Augusta served as the heart of short-staple cotton agriculture from the 1820s onward. By the 1850s, the Mississippi delta and the black belt of Alabama assumed that role.

The South was an agrarian region in 1840, with the exception of a slice of land that traced the fall line in the Savannah River Valley in both Georgia and South Carolina. Within this slice of land, the perception of the agrarian South was changing. William

Gregg's call for an industrial South and the success of his industrial ventures on the South Carolina side of the Savannah at Graniteville during the late 1830s influenced the thinking of Augusta's and South Carolina's capitalists and politicians. Gregg, and other local proponents of the New South, argued that industrial manufacturing would lessen the South's dependence on the North, and further strengthen the southern economy by converting southern raw materials (primarily cotton) into finished goods. His call was taken up by the Augusta press, which published Gregg's "Essays on Domestic Industry" as a tool to push industrialization in Augusta. South Carolina's newspaper editors were also supportive of Gregg's crusade.⁴

The plan worked. In 1844, an ambitious plan to build a canal along the Savannah was launched to fuel industrial development in Augusta. The Augusta Canal was completed in 1846. It provided the motive power for the city's premiere textile manufactory, the Augusta Factory, as well as flour mills and other manufacturing firms that quickly became the foundation of the city's pre-Civil War economy. Some 25,000 bales of cotton were shipped into the city annually along the canal, while Augusta's products were exported to

"Giant Signboard erected by the Savannah Valley Booster's Assn., on Atlanta-Augusta-Columbia highway outside of Elberton, Ga., provided by Valley's civic minded business men and state leaders." Source: *The Anderson Daily Mail*, February 20, 1952.

"Individuals below sign are: Gradus T. Christian, publisher, *Elberton Star*; Georgia State Senator Peyton T. Hawes; Z. W. Meeks, and H. G. Anderson, representing the Anderson, S.C. Chamber of Commerce, Louie L. Morris, member of the *Hartwell Sun* and owner of radio station WKLY which carries Savannah Valley Booster progress reports; Tom Wigginsworth of the Southeast Power Administration; Mayor W. C. Johnston, Anderson and brother of United States Senator Olin D. Johnston from South Carolina; T. O. Tabor, prominent Augusta civic leader and past president of the Augusta Merchant's Assn.; Lester D. Moody, veteran of 25 years in Savannah Valley progress, secretary of the Augusta Chamber of Commerce, and Georgia Chairman of the Savannah Valley Booster's Assn.; T. S. Mason, REA leader, from Hartwell, Ga.; Hubert Dyar, Jr. publisher, *Royston Record*; Burton J. Bell, public relations officer for the U.S. Corps of Engineers, Atlanta; the Hon. Clark Gaines, Secretary of Commerce for the State of Georgia; Clifford D. Davenport, Executive Secretary, Savannah Chamber of Commerce; I. V. Hulme, Reese Hart, representing the South Carolina Research, Planning and Development Board; Wilton E. Hall, publisher of the *Anderson Independent and Daily Mail*, owner of radio stations WAIM-WCAC, former chairman of the Hartwell Dam Steering Committee and former United States Senator, and South Carolina Chairman of the Savannah Valley Booster's Assn.; Barton Stephens, representing the Elberton Granite Association; Wilbur H. Hoover, president of the Elberton Chamber of Commerce and others."



regional and international markets via an established network of rail lines and steamboats that connected Europe to the Mississippi Valley.⁵

Historian Edward Cashin notes that the canal and its tandem industries contributed to a larger picture in which Augusta was perceived as a player in the South's search for economic independence from the North. It became a manufacturing center despite critical scrutiny from its agricultural neighbors who still clung to plantation ideals. The city newspaper lauded the efforts of its mid-century industrialists in 1849:

“Augusta mechanics who are turning out beautiful Steam Engines, locomotives, carriages, and a thousand other articles are doing more for the South than all its sectional politicians put together.” The newspaper went on to challenge those who saw industry as a threat to the social order, arguing that slaves should be employed in factories and that Augusta's varied industrial experience and river-port heritage had already shown that black workers were skilled at a variety of trades. Augusta's cosmopolitan mindset, focused on industrial and commercial growth, had room and opportunity for both whites and blacks, free or enslaved.⁶

South Carolina's counties along the Savannah River were mostly rural, dotted with small towns. Agriculture drove the economy with some notable exceptions. The chief competition to Augusta's commercial dominance on the river was the town of Hamburg. Located across the river on the South Carolina side of the bridge, Hamburg was laid out as a rival port to Augusta by Henry Shultz, an early nineteenth-century German entrepreneur and developer. Shultz and his business partners built the Augusta Bridge, the city's first wharf, and incorporated the Georgia Steamboat Company. In 1819, after tremendous financial success, Shultz pulled out, selling his interests prior to his planned return to Germany. His leave-taking was thwarted by his partner's bad business dealings that resulted in the Bank of the State of Georgia owning “his” bridge. He spent the rest of his life trying to recover control of the bridge through legal means. For spite, he created a rival to Augusta across the river, igniting interstate competition over the very structure, the Augusta Bridge, which joined the two states.

In 1822, Shultz's city had approximately 135 residences, a wharf, market, warehouses, and a brickyard. He was a master developer and a commercial genius. Shultz was the first to conceive of direct commercial trade with Europe; he formed a company that brought goods from Hamburg, Germany to Hamburg, South Carolina. Augusta merchants followed his lead. While Hamburg would eventually lose its commercial vigor over disputes for rights to the bridge, the levying of tolls, and flooding, it was a phenomenon in its early challenge to Augusta. It also gave South Carolina a taste of the potential commercial benefits a developed port on the Savannah River could garner.

If Hamburg was Augusta's commercial competition, William Gregg's Graniteville Mill near Aiken was the Augusta Factory's industrial counterpart. Gregg's mill, which he operated from 1846 to 1867, was a model for New South industrialists. Gregg initially earned his livelihood as a jeweler and silversmith, but after a brush with cotton manufacturing at a family mill in Madison, Georgia, he purchased stock in the Vaucluse Mill located in South Carolina's Horse Creek Valley in 1837. His establishment was ambitious: the

two-story granite mill housed 9,245 spindles and 500 looms, and an equally impressive mill village was laid out around the factory building.⁷

As noted above, Gregg was an ardent writer, “the region’s best known industrial publicist.”⁸ After touring New England’s mills, he earnestly advocated other southerners to follow his example by placing factories in southern fields. The strength of his advocacy and his operation of the mill gave him the reputation of “the father” of the southern textile industry. His writings advocated mill placement in isolated, rural settings where a work force of poor white families, self-contained in a mill village, would be “uplifted” by factory life. He was antiurban; according to one source he refused to invest in Augusta mills that were contemporaries of his Graniteville operation. Cashin suggests otherwise, stating that Gregg was hopeful of operating Augusta’s first textile mill along the new canal, but sufficient roadblocks were placed in his way that he chose a site in South Carolina. In Cashin’s words, “There is little doubt that restrictions were placed in his way. The canal was built by Augustans and Augustans wanted to be the first to profit from it.”⁹

The economic rivalry between Augusta and South Carolina’s Hamburg reached the status of a war when the South Carolina Railroad requested a permit to cross into the city. James Gadsden, president of the South Carolina line, made an offer of \$100,000 for the right to cross into the city.

The offer was refused as it was not considered sufficient compensation for the loss of projected revenue from tolls. Gadsden characterized the Augusta response as blackmail and threatened to build his road to Tennessee through Rabun Gap in northeast Georgia. Heightening the tension, Hamburg residents erected a new tollgate on their side of the bridge, resurrecting the Shultz claim to the bridge as their mandate. The Augusta City Council slapped a toll increase on their end of the bridge in response to the Hamburg insult. The battle was on.

After much negotiation and flat-out refusals, the South Carolina line gained access to the city. The ante went up \$50,000, but Gadsen’s line was permitted to cross the river. The South Carolina firm was also permitted to construct a passenger depot and a freight terminal in the downtown area, albeit at separate locations. This requisite allowed Augusta to remain in control of the hauling trade that would emanate from the new line. The change in Augusta’s position was most likely a product of the times as well as the additional concessions that were added to sweeten the deal. Rail lines built with private funds, by big businesses, and or by state governments were girding the South, and their connection had momentous consequences for the region. Forward-thinking Augusta would have wanted in on this reshaping, and it is possible that the economic impact of Gadsen’s threat to bypass the city may have sunk in. Once the decision was made, the economic rivalry between Hamburg and Augusta subsided, with only one more revival of toll warfare. The rail line achieved sufficient importance in the town fathers’ eyes that, when the piles were driven for the railroad’s bridge in 1858, the need to incorporate a draw to allow steamboat traffic to pass was ignored. Instead, the lack of definition of a channel and the costs



Graniteville, located in South Carolina’s Horse Creek Valley, was a model for New South industrialists. The two-story textile mill building shown in this postcard housed 9,245 spindles and 500 looms.

Postcard, “Monument to Wm. Gregg Founder of Graniteville, S.C.”
Courtesy of J. Walter Joseph.



Historic view of Sand Bar Ferry with railroad bridge in background.

Postcard, "Sand Bar Ferry near Augusta, Ga." Courtesy of J. Walter Joseph.

involved with the construction of a city drawbridge forced the city to limit steamboat traffic to the docks below Fifth Street, thus avoiding the problem.¹⁰

While the admission of the South Carolina line to Augusta brought limits for river traffic, it was a significant step toward forging a regional identity. Antebellum Augusta was truly unlike many other southern cities. Its economy was strong and based on industry and commerce, its population was culturally and economically diverse, and its city government was lively and progressive. These factors empowered Augustans to move toward their destiny, lessening the South's economic dependence on the North. While the South Carolina counties on the Savannah River remained mostly agricultural, an appetite for commerce and industry—whetted by the Hamburg experience and fueled by industrialists such as William Gregg—was a catalyst for change. The infighting between Augusta and Hamburg over the shared bridge and river that had characterized the antebellum period had been

a detriment to development. The economic potential of a transcontinental railroad and the creation of regional rail networks changed all the stakes. Differences were shrugged off as the South acquired a "sense of empire," and by the 1850s communities such as Augusta and Hamburg took stock of the larger picture that was taking shape across the region.

It was this unified region that went to war in 1860 and survived the Reconstruction Period. Lessons learned from both this age of empire and the Civil War and its aftermath would come into play as the Central Savannah River Area emerged as an economic force in the twentieth century, but the genesis of that entity perhaps begins with Shultz's bridge over the river.

"PROGRAM OF AMBITIONS"

The 1880s witnessed exponential growth and expansion in a variety of areas from industry to tourism to education to sports. Industry prevailed after the Civil War, and canal improvements were at the heart of the invigorated economy that spread over to South Carolina.

By enlarging the canal, Charles Estes permitted the dream of Henry H. Cumming, the Father of the Canal, to come true. An explosion of industrial growth took place. The old Augusta Factory quadrupled its looms and spindles. In addition to the Enterprise, Sibley, and King Mills, three other factories began operations: Algernon, Sterling and Warwick cotton mills, Arctic Ice Factory, Cotton Seed Oil Company, Lombard Iron Foundry, Georgia Chemical Works, Sutherland Manufacturing Company and the Augusta Lumber Company. These large industries spawned the growth of over sixty other subsidiary operations, railroad shops, boiler repair shops, lumber mills, compresses, brickwork and the like. The Horse Creek Valley across the Savannah River shared in the boom as Augustans invested in the Langley Manufacturing Company at Warrentown and the Clearwater Bleachery and Manufacturing Company at Clearwater.¹¹

Unfortunately, this growth dissipated by the turn of the century. Changing race relations, unhappy farmers, different land tenure patterns, changing politics, and hard times were ahead. Augustans were no longer in financial control of their transportation systems or their factories. Northern capital had infused much of the expansion and the business leadership reflected that fact. Moreover, the cast of Augusta's industry changed as tourism began making inroads into the city's economy. The city that considered itself the "Lowell of the South" was in the process of transforming itself into the "Saratoga of the South."¹² The Exposition of 1889 and the new Bon Air Hotel were products of this movement, spurring similar enterprises.

By 1910, Augusta's civic leaders were pounding the streets searching for ways to invigorate the economy. This period of self-promotion, which continued through the 1930s in the Augusta area, occurred across the country. In some regards, Augusta was successful in bringing new faces to the area. Extolling its assets, it tried to sell itself as the "City with the Golden Future." Advertisements were circulated to lure aviation schools, luxury hotels, National Guard encampments, and any industry that would pump money into the city's economy. Georgia was selected for two National Guard camps, Camp Wheeler in Macon and Camp Hancock in Augusta.¹³ The city had placed a successful bid with the Army, and a special Chamber of Commerce committee was authorized to oversee Augusta's part of the contract with the military—namely, to supply water and housing within a two-month time frame. While the camp was never fully extended to the proposed 90,000 troops, the numbers of soldiers sent to the installation taxed Augusta's reserves, making it difficult to live up to its contractual agreement.¹⁴ The city bought the camp in 1927, and renamed it Daniel Field.

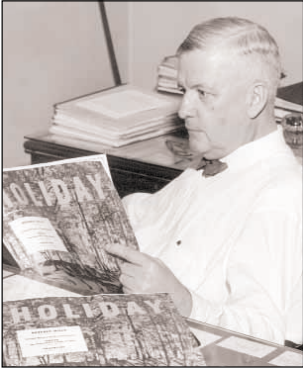
1927 brought a recommendation from the Army Corps of Engineers that a lock and dam be built below Augusta to provide a steady depth of water at Augusta's wharves, and the dredging of a river channel was also proposed. A monster flood occurred in 1929, breaching the levee that had protected the city since 1913. The levee built under the direction of City Engineer Nisbet Wingfield and sponsored by a Flood Commission had saved the city from previous inundations. There was debris on Greene Street and the city was so devastated by the flood that, in Cashin's words, "it made the stock market crash look like small news."¹⁵ What was left of Hamburg was washed out.

Flood control was now a critical issue for Savannah River Valley residents; Augustans who had thought the levee made them invincible from flood damage were particularly affected. Flood control was a critical issue nationwide according to Congress, which tasked the Army Corps of Engineers with undertaking studies of the nation's rivers to identify solutions on a national scale. While the central study was of the Mississippi and its tributaries, other river systems were similarly studied. Scores of reports were generated for over 200 of the nation's rivers, showing how they might be managed to serve multiple purposes—flood control, navigation, irrigation, and power generation. Congress accepted



The Bon Air Hotel, located in Summerville on Augusta's hill, opened for business in 1892. Linked to the Bon Air Golf Club organized in 1897 and later the Country Club of Augusta, the Bon Air became a tourist destination for the Georgia city attracting visitors as well as golf enthusiasts. During construction of SRS when housing was at a premium, some of the construction personnel were housed at this Augusta landmark.

Postcard, "The Bon Air - Vanderbilt Hotel, Augusta, GA." Courtesy of J. Walter Joseph.



(Above) Portrait of Lester Moody, Secretary of Augusta's Chamber of Commerce, at his desk in 1977. Courtesy of Fitz-Symms Studio, Augusta, Georgia.

"It is the binding duty of the leaders of every community to teach their fellow citizens, by precept and example, to think unselfishly and to think together for the common good; to teach them that the joy of community work is also an opportunity for greater service; that what they do for each other and their own community they are doing directly for their country. In this way, and only in this way, can we maintain a good state, a good nation, and a good world."

– L. S. Moody

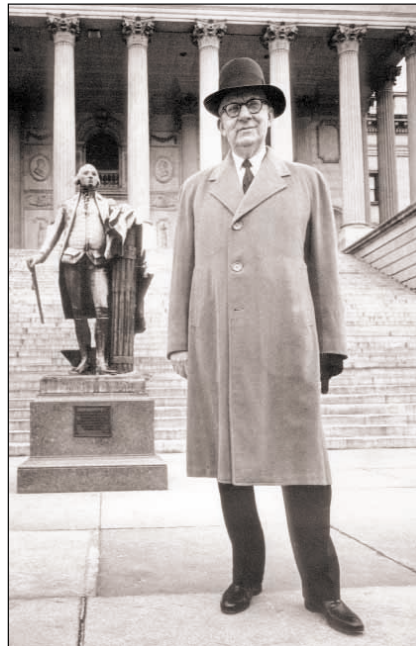
Source: *Building Augusta and the Central Savannah River Area*, Vol. 1, September 1951.

(Inset) Senator Edgar Brown strikes a pose on State House steps in Columbia, South Carolina. Edgar A. Brown Collection, Mss 91. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.

responsibility for flood control and, in a series of laws that culminated in the Flood Act of 1936, defined flood control as a "proper activity of the federal government." Over 2,000 projects in a variety of states were approved.¹⁶

Two men who passionately believed in the economic potential of the Savannah River Valley were hard at work planning the future of the river and its communities. Augusta's Lester Moody and South Carolina's Edgar Brown, premier economic statesmen, saw opportunity in the federal government's proposed program for flood control. Development of navigation on the Savannah River between Augusta and Savannah was their objective, and the Clarks Hill Project was necessary to the achievement of their goal. As Lester Moody stated later, "We made the Savannah River the keystone in the program of ambitions for Augusta. We were looking for a foundation on which to build economic power and that foundation was the river."¹⁷ The Clarks Hill Project, conceived as a multipurpose project that would afford flood control, better river navigation, power generation, and recreation, was a gift from the federal government that would take all of Moody's energies and that of his South Carolina counterpart, Edgar Brown, to pull off.

Lester Moody signed on as Secretary of Augusta's Chamber of Commerce in 1926 and, as historian Edward Cashin notes, no single individual would contribute so much to Augusta's progress over the next three decades.¹⁸ Moody's years of work promoting the Augusta area and the development of the Savannah River earned him the title the "Father of the Savannah."

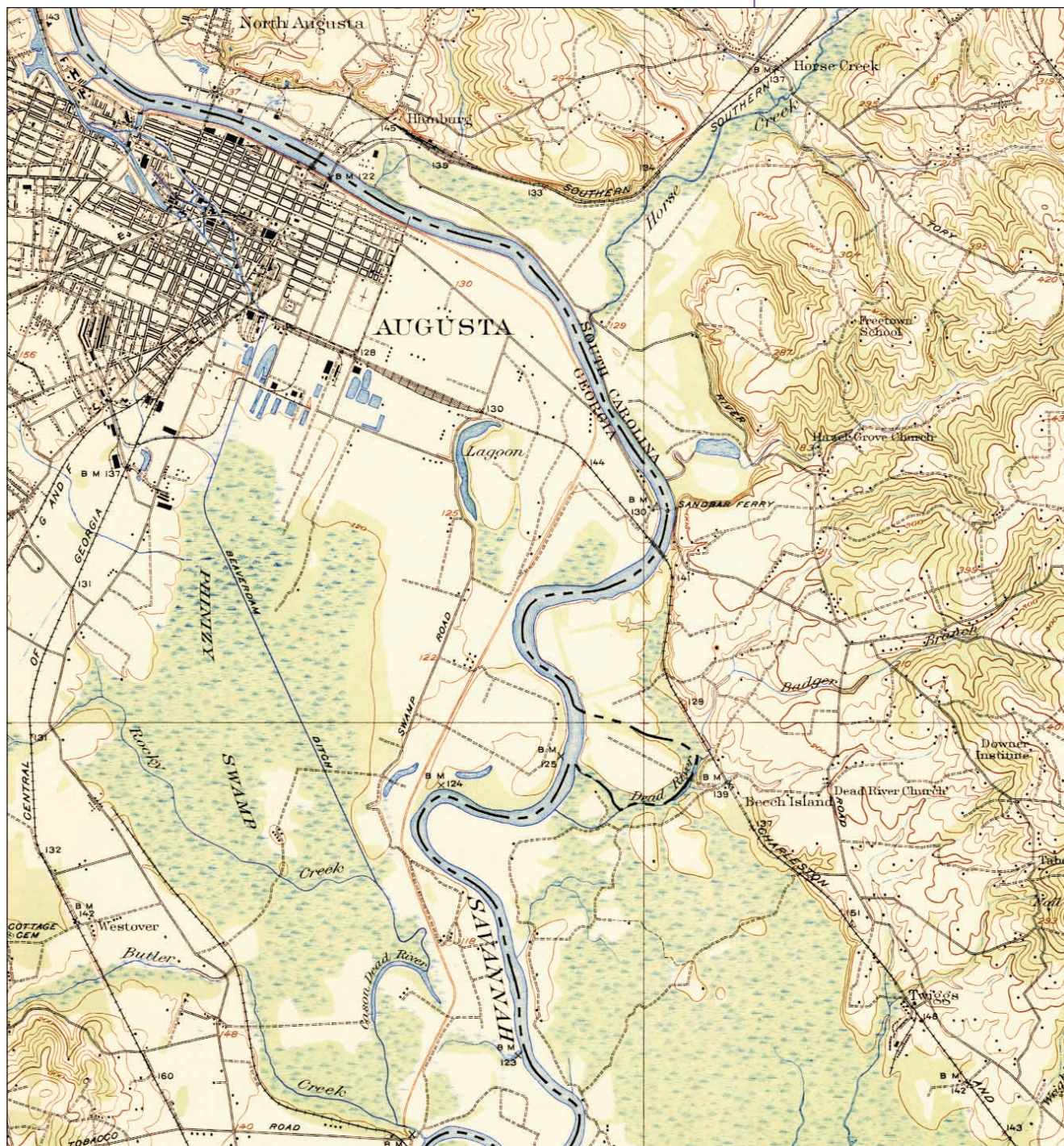


Edgar Brown of Barnwell, who had served in the South Carolina State Senate since 1929 and was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee from 1942 to 1971, championed South Carolina's interests in the development of the Savannah. Working hand-in-hand with Lester Moody to complete the Clarks Hill Project, Brown would become a consummate booster for river development, later involving Governor Strom Thurmond in the endeavor. Brown, who also strongly encouraged economic development in his home county of Barnwell, was known by a number of nicknames such as "Mr. Big," "That Man Brown," and the "Bishop of Barnwell." From the efforts of these two men and others like them, a chain of federal projects came to the Savannah River Valley. The Clarks Hill project was the first in that chain.

CLARKS HILL PROJECT

Lester Moody's acceptance of the job at the Chamber of Commerce in 1926 coincided with the application of the Savannah River Electric Power Company to the Federal Power

Detail from 1921 USGS Topographic Quadrangle showing most of Augusta and the undeveloped area on the city's eastern perimeter. North Augusta, Hamburg, and Horse Creek Valley are shown on the South Carolina side of the river. Below Augusta, only the Sand Bar Ferry and the Charleston and Western Railroad Bridge north of Beech Island crossed the Savannah River. Source: USGS Topographic Quadrangle, Augusta, GA., 1921. Courtesy of New South Associates, Stone Mountain, Georgia.



Commission for the right to construct a dam and power plant at Clarks Hill, South Carolina. The Federal Power Commission issued a permit to the Savannah River Electric Company in 1928 for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a hydroelectric project at the Clarks Hill site. However, the company surrendered its license in 1932; the project did not appear feasible due to unfavorable economic conditions. The South, like the rest of the country, was in the throes of the depression, and the local firm forecast a decrease rather than an increase in the demand for power.

The power company's decision had larger ramifications. Developing navigation on the Savannah River between Augusta and Savannah was a shared goal between the City of Augusta, its Chamber of Commerce, and the State of South Carolina. If Augusta could become an inland port, South Carolina's Hamburg, a colonial port town no longer in existence, could be resurrected to share in the benefits of freight rates and shipping interests. Clearly the basin areas on both sides of the river had an interest in the economic benefits a navigable Savannah River represented. While Congress had authorized a number of projects, none to date had corrected the low water depths that the river experienced seasonally. To create a year-round channel on the lower Savannah River, upstream storage capacity was needed to discharge into the lower river when needed. The Clarks Hill project would have created this storage capacity as well as produced power.

The surrender of the Savannah River Electric Company's permit in 1932 spelled trouble for the river developers, who had counted on benefiting from the power company's project. After ascertaining that the local company had no future designs on the site, Moody and Brown began their drive to involve the federal government in the construction of Clarks Hill in the interest of navigation, power, flood control, and recreation for the region.¹⁹

In August, Lester Moody announced that the Clarks Hill Project had earned the attention of President Roosevelt and that a commission had been appointed to study its feasibility and impact. By March 1936, the vote was in and the commission endorsed the construction of the Clarks Hill Dam. The Flood Control Act of 1944 approved the construction of the Clarks Hill project, as the first in a series of eleven dams.

It is clear from a 1946 brief co-authored by Lester Moody and Edgar Brown on the project that men on both sides of the river were involved in this important drive:

Historic aerial view of Clarks Hill Dam, circa 1950. The construction of Clarks Hill Dam was a major factor in the selection of the Savannah River Site. Courtesy of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District.



The people of the Savannah River Basin, both in South Carolina and Georgia, are intensely interested in the complete development of the area. The Savannah River is a great potential asset to all of the South Atlantic States. Here is a river with abundant water supply and ample power sites, centrally located in a region blessed with raw materials and labor. If developed, this river cannot help but be instrumental in increasing the prosperity of the people. To best accomplish such a development, water transportation, protection from floods and ample power must be available.²⁰

Lester Moody—"Father of the Savannah"

Between 1926 and 1964, Lester S. Moody served his community as Secretary of Augusta's Chamber of Commerce. In historic photographs of local booster clubs or groups of Augusta notables, he is typically in the second row or background, suggesting that he was not interested in the limelight. However, the twentieth-century history of the region and the City of Augusta shows him to be a pivotal figure in the area's development. A native of Jacksonville, Florida, Moody was a master at forging alliances with those in political power to further the city and region's goals.

When he drove to Augusta from North Carolina to accept his new position in 1926, no paved roads lead to Augusta. "It took nearly three hours to drive from Aiken to Augusta. I was so impressed that I made highway paving my very first ambition, and Chamber members enthusiastically backed me up." Road improvements were followed by other campaigns to improve the city. After a severe flood in 1929, he led a campaign for the construction of new bridges at Fifth Street, Thirteenth Street, and Sand Bar Ferry. The latter bridge was named in his honor in 1968, and his name was etched onto the westbound bridge's abutment. He would later play a role in the construction of Fureys Bridge located about 15 miles north of Augusta. The location of Camp Gordon, Bush and Daniel Fields, and the Savannah River plant in the CSRA were the results of his labor to bring industry to the area. Other campaigns spearheaded by Lester Moody included his promotion of the city's resort industry in the 1930s, road improvements, and the development of a poultry industry. He served on the Committee of 100, the Savannah Valley Boosters Association, and other organizations that sought to encourage business and industry in the CSRA.

His work in the development of the Savannah River's potential was his greatest accomplishment, spanning four decades.

He provided leadership for the region, not just the CSRA, in finding congressional support for river improvements. The lock and dam project below Augusta, built to guarantee Augusta access to a deep-water port was a result of his efforts.

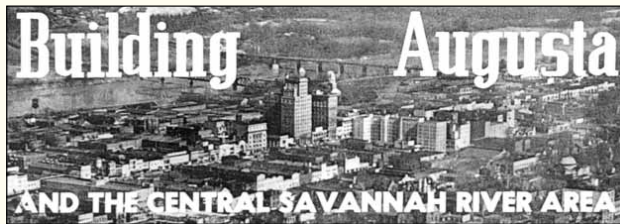
He was instrumental in the construction of the Clarks Hill and Hartwell dams. The Clarks Hill Dam project was a strong factor in the selection of the South Carolina site for the Savannah River Plant.

He was also a champion of a nine-foot channel on the Savannah River. This navigation channel was dredged between Augusta and the deep-water port at Savannah, with the intent of

linking Augusta by inland waterway with ports all around the North Atlantic seaboard to the Mexican border at Brownsville, Texas. A cross-Florida canal, which was never built, was needed to make the plan work.

Moody was a director of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, acted as chairman of the Bureau of Water Resources of the congress, and was a member of the U.S. Study Commission, Southeast River basin, a group dedicated to long range development of land and water resources in the Southeast. He retired from the Augusta Chamber in 1964, having the honor of receiving the U.S. Army's highest award for civilians, the Decoration for Outstanding Civilian Service. He was the first individual from the Southeast to receive that award. In 1966, the Willard J. Breidenthal Medal, a national award for water conservation, was awarded to Lester Moody. The citation for the medal honored him as the "Father of the Great Savannah River."

Source: Paul Garber, "City Booster's Influence Felt In Many Areas," *Augusta Chronicle*, www.augustachronicle.com/history/moody. (Inset) Source: *Building Augusta and the Central Savannah River Area*, Vol. 1, September, 1951.



The Clarks Hill Project was completed in 1954 despite setbacks stemming from legal suits over the earlier license. It was the first Corps of Engineers Flood Control Project in the Savannah River Basin. The dam, renamed after South Carolina's J. Strom Thurmond in 1988, spans 5,860 feet and measures 200 feet in height. Built at a cost of \$79 million, the dam impounds a lake that stretches 40 miles up the Savannah River and 26 miles up the Little River.²¹ Its power output was estimated at 53,000 kilowatts. Hartwell, the second Corps of Engineers Flood Control Project in the Savannah River Basin, followed Clarks Hill. Hartwell's dam, completed in 1963, spans 18,000 feet and impounds a lake that stretches 49 miles up the Tugaloo River and 45 miles up the Seneca River. It was hoped that these projects would finally do what the new Savannah locks and dam, completed in 1937, had not done, allow Augusta to become an inland port. Lester Moody enthusiastically predicted Augusta's future as an inland port would finally occur with the completion of Clarks Hill.²²

Lester Moody, Edgar Brown, and the other local politicians who supported the Clarks Hill Project derived invaluable experience from brokering the deal. Their cooperation was an admission of regional goals. A sense of regional identity was displayed, a glimmer of what would be later recognized as the Central Savannah River Area. It was also an astute recognition of how their states and constituencies could garner federal support. With the federal government's statement of responsibility for flood control that was encapsulated in the Flood Act of 1936, they were able to get the Clarks Hill Project onto the federal gov-

Edgar A. Brown

Edgar Brown of Barnwell, was actually a native of adjacent Aiken County. Born in 1888 to Augustus Abraham Brown and Elizabeth Howard, he grew up on a small Aiken County farm. At about the age of 12, he got a job in Graniteville as a textile worker and saved enough money to pay his expenses at Graniteville Academy. Later he traveled to business school in Augusta to learn shorthand, a skill necessary for a stenographer. Brown first worked as a stenographer in the law offices of Colonel Daniel S. Henderson where he began to read the law under Henderson's tutelage. At 20, Edgar Brown succeeded Jimmy Byrnes as court stenographer of the 2nd Judicial Circuit; Judge Robert Aldrich of Barnwell appointed him to the position. Byrnes had just been elected solicitor and Brown moved to Barnwell as a consequence.

Brown's career of public service was marked by a number of achievements. He served in the South Carolina State House between 1921-1929, acting as Speaker of the House from 1925-1926. He began his long career as a State Senator in 1929, serving as President Pro Tempore in 1942 until his retirement at the end of the 99th General Assembly. He was also Chairman of the Senate Finance



Committee. "Considered by many to be the most powerful man in South Carolina politics," Brown worked hard toward the industrialization and modernization of his home state and was a major force in shaping state government. State road improvement was an early coup for him and his fellow supporting senators. A later achievement was his work on the Clarks Hill Authority and the bringing of the Savannah River Plant to his home county of Barnwell and neighboring Aiken. James Long, would later refer to Brown in 1962 as the one who started it all, as he and other South Carolina politicians bartered for future projects with the Atomic Energy Commission building on the foundation that Brown had made. Edgar Brown and Sol Blatt, the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee during World War II and his political cohort also from Barnwell, were such a strong political team that they were referred to locally as the "Barnwell Ring."

Source: Edgar A. Brown Collection, Mss 91, Finding Aid. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina. (Inset) Edgar A. Brown Collection, Mss 91. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.

ernment's drawing board. Their actions placed both men and their home states on the national scene where large federal projects were unfolding. They and their fellow economic statesmen learned the ropes of how to attain economic power, lessons they would hone in the decade to come.

THE PHOENIX EFFECT

The New South programs of the 1880s and 1920s were eclipsed by the amount of industrial change that World War II brought to the South. The military-industrial complex developed to win World War II would amount to a “virtual affirmative action program” for the American South.²³ The federal government spent about seven billion dollars on military bases and industrial plants in the South during the war; another billion dollars of new business was generated in the private sector. Southerners left their rural homes in the millions to take advantage of the job market now open to them, and began to rub elbows with the over six million non-Southerners who came south as part of the military influx or in search of jobs.²⁴ Statistics show that between 1939 and 1972 the number of southern factories rose 160 percent and that the number of workers in them increased 200 percent. The per capita income reflected this industrial expansion, rising 500 percent between 1955 and 1975.²⁵

The boomers and boosters who espoused the New South in the earlier periods would have been proud of the next generation of industrial “statesmen” who created World War II success stories and built upon them. Newspapermen, chambers of commerce officials, and state development boards offered financial enticements to bring industry below the Mason-Dixon line. These enticements ran the gamut from tax reductions or exemptions, to offers of public funding for construction costs, to start-up programs for new industry.

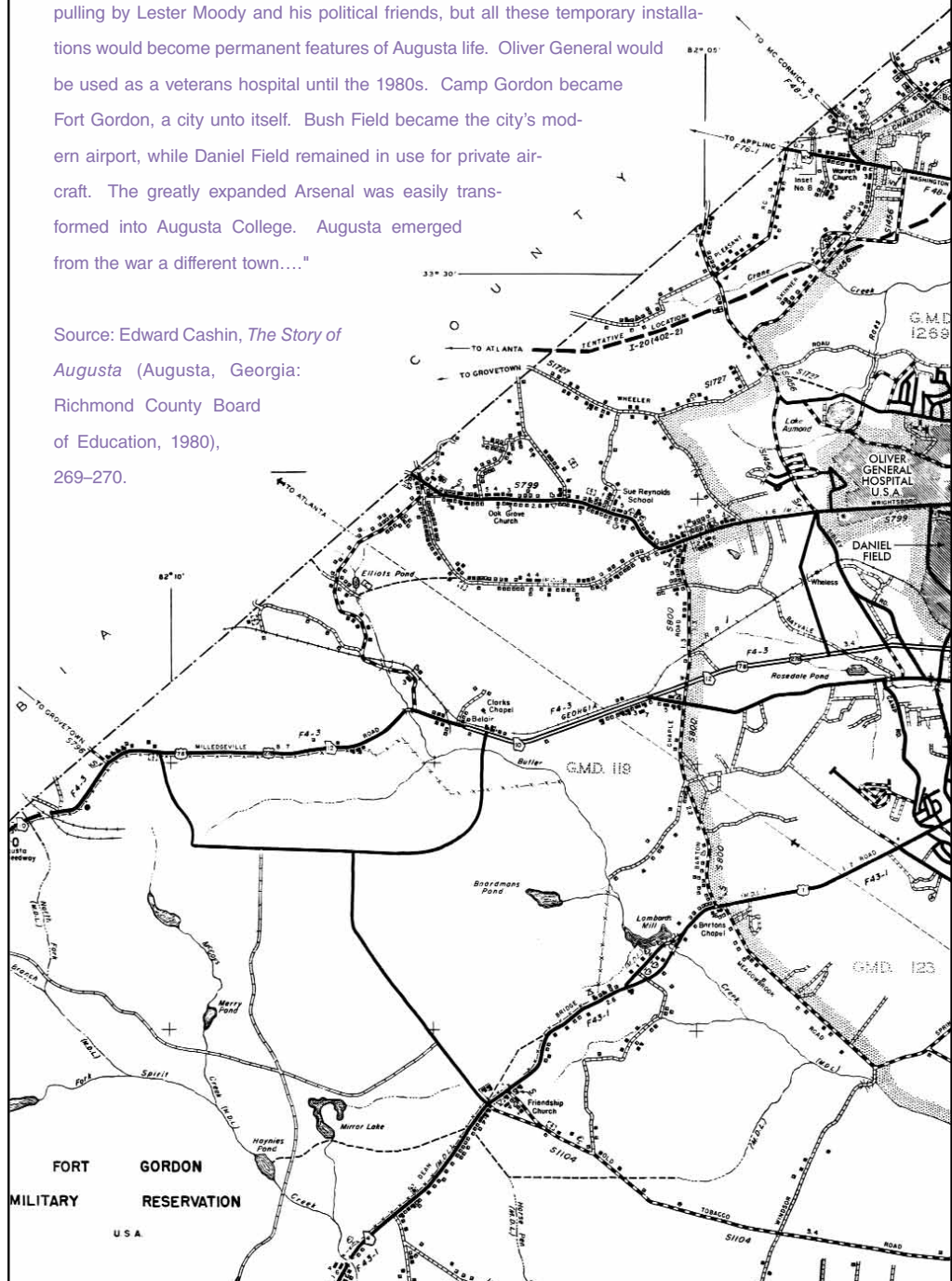
On the Senate floor, Senator Burnet B. Maybank of Charleston attributed the South's incredible industrial expansion to the economic statesmanship of the its industrialists. Maybank, in a response to Senator John F. Kennedy's statements on the decline of industry in New England, told other regions to learn from the South's example:

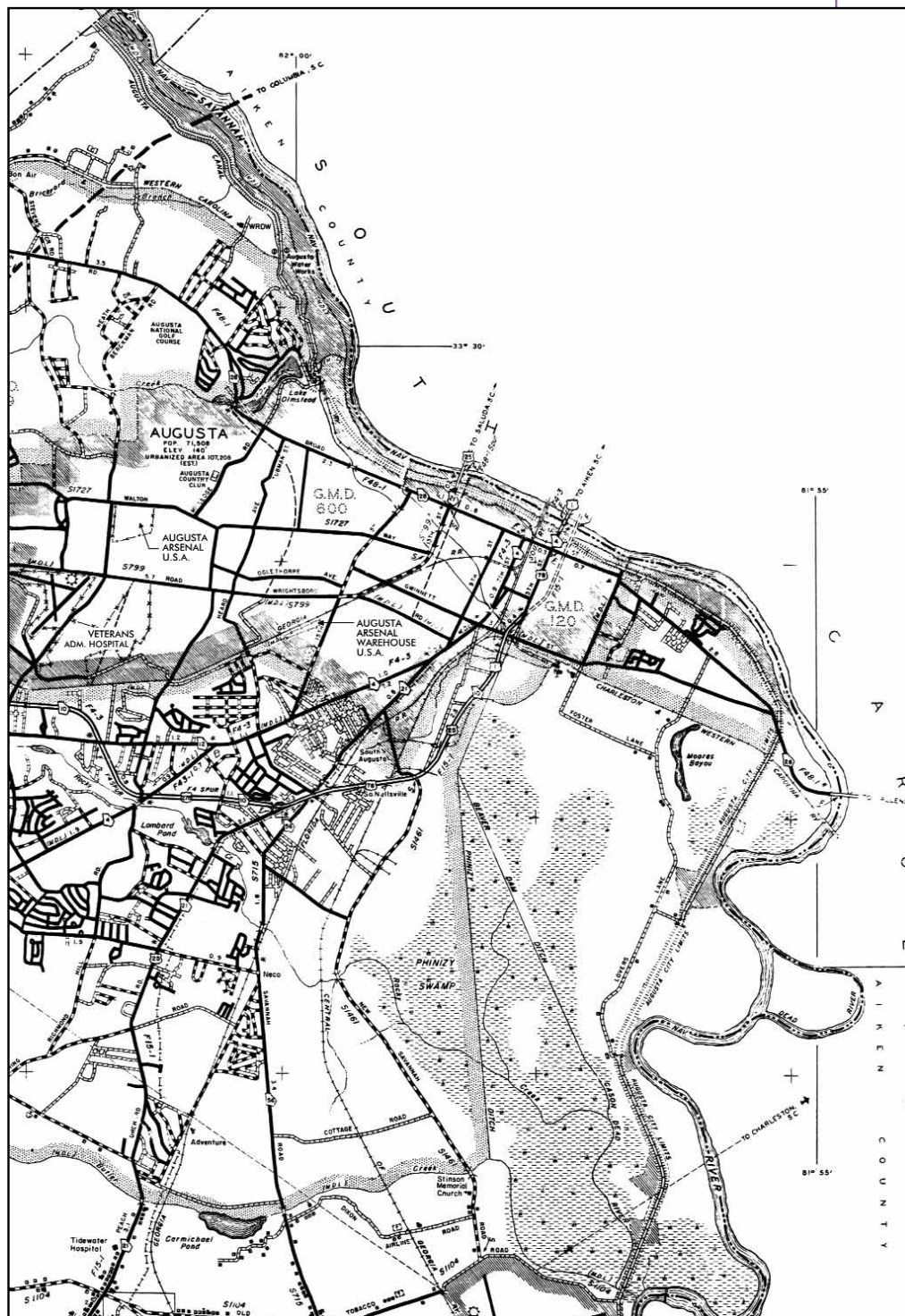
Can it be that such regions are paying the penalty of failure or inability to translate their scientific progress into lower prices for the buyers of their products? Is it perhaps possible in their zeal to promote expensive social welfare schemes, they have stifled industrial initiative by running up the costs of doing business? If so, it is hardly fair for them to point a finger of scorn, and to shout “unfair” at those regions where business foresight has permitted technological progress to be passed on in good measure to the consumer in the form of lower and competitive prices for products?²⁶



Burnet R. Maybank, a Byrnes protégé, New Dealer and Santee Cooper Project backer, moved from the mayor's office in Charleston to the governor's house in 1938 then later represented South Carolina in the Senate. The photograph is signed “Best wishes to my good friend Ed Brown a real fellow and outstanding democrat.” Edgar A. Brown Collection, Mss 91. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.

Source: Edward Cashin, *The Story of Augusta* (Augusta, Georgia: Richmond County Board of Education, 1980), 269–270.





Detail from 1950 Richmond County Highway Map showing post-World War II Augusta and the physical impact of the War. The northern section of Fort Gordon is shown as well as Oliver General Hospital, the Augusta Arsenal, the Augusta Arsenal Warehouse, and Daniel Field. Bush Field is not shown. Source: General Highway Map Richmond County Georgia. Prepared by the State Highway Department of Georgia, Division of Highway Planning, in cooperation with U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Public Roads, 1957. Courtesy of the Map Collection, Science Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

Maybank's speech affirmed his home state's success. The South was in the process of being reborn, while New England was reaching old age. The catalyst for this rebirth was World War II.

The drive for American rearmament began in 1940 after Hitler's invasion of Belgium, the Netherlands, and then France. Substantial military appropriations were made to cover the cost of increasing the Regular Army, remodeling the nation's arsenals, developing new munitions plants, purchasing equipment, and constructing airfields, service schools, tactical stations, storage facilities, and seacoast defenses. The dollar figure for the mobilization program was as unprecedented as the events happening in Europe, and the Army Corps of Engineers found themselves at the heart of the storm. The big permanent camps such as Fort Bragg in North Carolina, Fort Benning in Georgia, Fort Lewis in Washington, and Fort Knox in Kentucky were to be expanded to accommodate the Regular Army divisions. Smaller installations such as Fort Jackson in South Carolina, Fort Riley in Kansas, and Fort Ord in California were also a focus of expansion. New camps for the National Guard troops and for unit and replacement centers, new airfields for the Air Corps, and new munitions plants were needed within a year to eighteen months. In the words of Army historians Fine and Remington, it was a construction man's nightmare.²⁷

The criteria used to select sites for the new camps and airfields were fairly similar, with weather conditions playing a large role within the selection process. From a military perspective, training camps were needed in a variety of climates, to ready the soldiers for whatever might be ahead. This mandated camps in both the North and South. However, the South's weather, plus vast acreage available for continuous training and maneuvers, made it a prime location. In addition, Army Corps of Engineer planners were given a budget for camp construction that allowed only \$400 per man. This figure was based on the assumption that all training camps would be located in the South where tents could be used for housing.²⁸ The newly selected ground force's sites stretched over thirty states, but the majority of training camps did end up in the South. The Air Corps, which had priority for new sites, was also in need of training facilities in locales with favorable weather that permitted flying throughout the year. Again, the South would benefit.²⁹

The geography of the new camps and airfields reflected these strategic and operational concerns as well as political and social agendas. The proposed construction program presented an avenue for the Roosevelt administration to provide economic relief to areas in need, influencing some of the site choices. Many municipalities took matters in their own hands and came to Washington to bid on the proposed defense projects. State senators and representatives lent their voices in support of projects for their constituencies. And the red carpet would be laid out for War Department site boards when they visited to collect data on proposed sites. Typically, cities that wanted civil airfields proposed leasing city land to the government for a dollar a year and promised to extend power and water lines to the site. Many municipal airports were selected, saving the Army some construction costs.

For the developing munition plants, more defensive concerns guided site selection. Twenty-nine new sites were needed. The staff of the War College, Division of the General, provided a general military principle in 1915 that the World War II committee charged with site selection followed. "No supply depot, arsenal, or manufacturing plant of any considerable size... should be established or maintained east of the Appalachian Mountains, west of the Cascade or Sierra Nevada Mountains, nor within 200 miles of our Canadian or Mexican borders."³⁰ Beyond that, production and transportation concerns

were the leading criteria involved with the selection of munitions plant sites. The result was an integrated network of factories in the Midwest's agricultural and manufacturing region. Problems with land acquisition rather than construction would haunt this group of sites and, due to quick action on the part of the site selection committee, the defined area for the production facilities was not influenced by political or social concerns. The President's Advisory Commission had advocated a decentralized munitions industry that would encourage industry in traditionally non-industrial areas such as the South and West. The War Department's alacrity won out.³¹

Corps area commanders rather than the staff from Construction Division of the Quartermaster Corps were chosen for the individual site surveys for the ground-services sites. As a result, when the men responsible for construction got on site, they were presented with a plethora of problems. Poor topography, swampland, lack of transportation links, and other myriad problems had to be faced prior to construction. While only one proposed site for a camp was not built out, the need to improve and remediate conditions could have been avoided through more thorough site investigations. And construction officers pointed this out. It is notable that Colonel Leslie Groves, then a Captain and a construction engineer, raised objections to the process of site selection in which he and his cohorts were embroiled. In 1940, he had no idea what was ahead for him. During the Manhattan Project, he made site selection a streamlined operation based on thorough data collection. While the secrecy of that time contributed to his methodology, it is not unlikely that his experience with site selection in 1940 helped shape how the selection process later evolved with the atomic energy facilities.³²

While the Savannah River Valley did not suit the criteria for a munitions plant, Augusta was a large enough urban entity to bid on a chunk of the mobilization program. Lester Moody was dispatched to Washington to place a bid for an army camp. Ever diligent, he came home with a promise for an air base and a National Guard installation. Moody, probably listening to the debate over the construction of new airfields versus the reuse of municipal fields in Washington, saw further opportunity for his home city. Camp Hancock's air field, a survivor of the Great War that was acquired by the city in 1927 and renamed Daniel Field, was offered and accepted as a candidate for a short-runway training base. Late in 1940, the old field became the operating base for 2,000 men and 100 planes. Air Force General H. H. "Hap" Arnold was the inspector of the facilities when completed. It was like old home week to the general, who recalled flying over the Hill in his "motorized glider," dropping notes to his lady friends thirty years earlier.³³

Augusta's bid for an army camp was still under advisement, as the site selection committee was also looking at a competitive bid from Spartanburg. Both communities vied for the military nod, welcoming military personnel on their evaluation tours. Each host community gave their best offer for potential services to be rendered to sharpen their competitive edge. For Augusta, this included assuming the cost of laying water and sewer mains to the camp. Both cities actually had winning proposals. Augusta was chosen as the site for an army cantonment while 20,000 acres near Spartanburg were reserved for a replacement center. In 1942, Camp Gordon, established on Tobacco Road, became home to the "Rolling Fourth" division until they were shipped overseas to France. They would be one of the last divisions to arrive at Normandy.³⁴ In addition to Camp Gordon, a small airfield, named after an instructor, Donald C. Bush, who died in a training crash, was also built for training army pilots.

Other World War II improvements included the following: a new hospital and an upgraded and expanded Arsenal complex. The Army requisitioned the Forrest-Ricker Hotel for use as a hospital in 1943. The new hospital was named in honor of Dr. Robert T. Oliver. The Augusta Arsenal was greatly expanded during World War II with large warehouse facilities, new shop buildings, and a guardhouse.

It was this massive infusion of military spending that changed Augusta. The long depression was over and there was a hustle and bustle as in the best days of the Age of Enterprise or of the New South. And the face of the whole region changed. It would take some string pulling by Lester Moody and his political friends, but all these temporary installations would become permanent features of Augusta life. Oliver General would be used as a veterans hospital until the 1980s. Camp Gordon became Fort Gordon, a city unto itself. Bush Field became the city's modern airport, while Daniel Field remained in use for private aircraft. The greatly expanded Arsenal was easily transformed into Augusta College. Augusta emerged from the war a different town from the depression-bound thirties.³⁵

World War II also vastly changed South Carolina. Historian Walter B. Edgar notes that the War did what the New Deal could not do, it brought full employment to the

state.³⁶ Defense industries played a significant role in this change. While some would have less impact after the War, they provided an industrial education, a taste of what the manufacturing sector had to offer.

Prior to the war, the state's industrial sector was devoted to textiles, primarily to the processing of cotton. Agriculture anchored the state's economy, and three out of four Carolinians still resided in the country as late as 1940. This began to change after the war as mechanization and federal programs decreased the need for farm labor. Families who had earned their livelihood from sharecropping moved to the cities in search of work. The war had expanded South Carolina's industrial horizons, and in the 1950s industrial expansion became a state objective. In Governor-elect Jimmy Byrnes' words,

South Carolina's government is basically sound and it is friendly towards industry. Our government, our communities, and our people want industry and want to see that it is prosperous and happy. No state and no people can offer more.³⁷

Not all South Carolinians thought well of industrialization but South Carolina communities that wanted industry after the war were dependent on their own resources to

Annual Luncheon of the South Carolina State Chamber of Commerce held on November 21, 1957. Pictured in the photograph are Harold Butt of Charleston and President-elect of the Chamber that year, W. B. Camp of Bakersfield, California, Eleazer of the State, and Lt. Governor Ernest I. Hollings (Left to right front row). Senator Thurmond, John Linton, President of the Chamber, and Honorable Mendel Rivers, member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1st Congressional District of South Carolina. Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss 100, Photograph 1444. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.



attract it. The intensity of a community's program was dependent on available funding, the size of the community, etc. Charleston, for example, had a development board with five full-time employees. In most cases, a town's chamber of commerce would lead the search using publications and recruiting trips to attract prospective businesses. Smaller communities simply relied on brochures, advertising, and the help of the state's Research, Planning and Development Board, the predecessor agency to the State Development Board, to drum up industrial prospects.

The State Development Board was created in 1954 to better help South Carolina communities find suitable industrial matches with the resources they had to offer. The creation of the board underscores the importance of industrial expansion to South Carolina's leadership. Edgar notes that Governor Strom Thurmond was the first to open the Governor's Mansion doors to industrialists, using the first family's residence as a venue to drum up industrial prospects. Jimmy Byrnes, Thurmond's successor and the state's "New Deal man," was surprised to find that he was expected to follow in Thurmond's footsteps in this regard. Later governors would automatically follow suit.³⁸

Aiken and Barnwell counties, the western South Carolina counties that bordered the Savannah River across from Augusta, were not home to any new defense industries or Army camps during or immediately after the war. On the state level, Fort Jackson in the Columbia area, Camp Croft in Spartanburg, and the coastal area benefited the most from military dollars. Due to their location, the war-related regional activity that most impacted South Carolinas within the central Savannah River basin was centered in Augusta.

Moreover the booster organizations that had grown after the war, that promoted regional partnership based on improving the river, had spawned a regional business community.



COMMITTEE

OF

100

The coalition of businessmen, called the Savannah River Valley Boosters, may have grown out of the Clark Hill

Project and associated flood control projects. Other organizations, such as the "Committee of 100 for the Development of the Augusta Area," helped forge a new regional identity. In recognition of this identity, *The Augusta Chronicle* sponsored a contest in June 1950 for a name that would better describe the greater Augusta area. "Central Savannah River Area," the winning submission selected from 2500 entries, was penned by C. C. McCollum of Wrens.³⁹

While high-level booster programs successfully enticed industry to the river basin, brochures written by small communities to describe their assets could also produce dramatic results. Word reached South Carolina in 1948 that Du Pont was searching for a new commercial site in the state to locate a plant that would produce a mystery product. It would be the company's first plant in the Palmetto State. The State Research, Planning, and Development Board was probably involved in preparing profiles of possible plant sites. The Ellenton community was one of the candidate sites, and the city of Ellenton prepared such a brochure.

Logo on letterhead for the "Committee of 100" that shows the extent of the organizations area of influence in fostering economic development of what would become the Central Savannah River Area. Edgar Brown Collection, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Mss 91. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.

THE ELLENTON COMMUNITY



(Above) View of Laurens Street in downtown Aiken, Aiken County's seat. Courtesy of J. Walter Joseph.

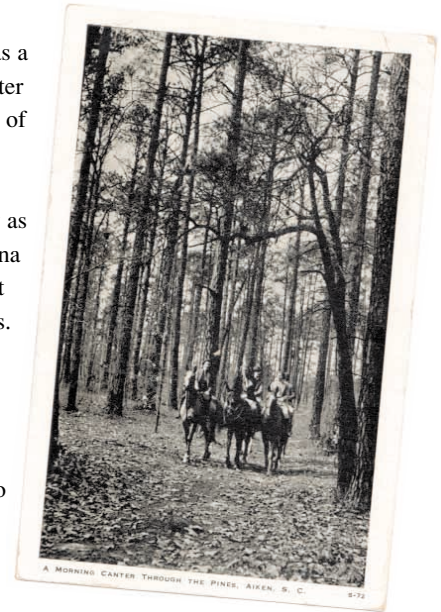
(Inset) Aiken's Winter Colony, "A Morning Canter through the Pines, Aiken, S.C.". Postmarked February 9, 1942. Courtesy of J. Walter Joseph.



Interior view of unidentified textile warehouse in Horse Creek Valley, Aiken County, 1955. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 3301-14.

Ellenton, South Carolina, was a railroad town and rural trade center located about 25 miles southeast of Augusta, Georgia, in southwest Aiken County. Historian Jim Farmer describes Aiken County as distinctive among South Carolina counties of this period in that it contained a mixture of cultures. Farming families, both white and black, populated the eastern and southern reaches of

the county. In contrast, a fifteen-mile belt of textile mills ran along the Horse Creek Valley to the Savannah River west of Aiken, the county seat. William Gregg's sermons and example had been well received in Horse Creek Valley where mill workers were called "lint heads" by non-industrial folk. The kaolin industry was the county's other industrial enterprise. The mines and operating facilities for this industry were located north and west of Aiken. The county seat also contained diverse groups:



Here lived some 7,000 people, white and black, most descended from refugees from the Lowcountry's hot and unhealthy climate, who began arriving in the 1830s on what was briefly the world's longest railroad. Some fifty years later they were joined, for half the year at least, by a winter colony of wealthy, sports-minded families from the northeast. Joined is perhaps not the best word, however, for the winter colonists, whose local *raison d'être* was the horse and activities associated with it, kept largely to themselves. Still, old Aikenites were glad to have them for the regal tone they brought, the homes they built, and the money they spent on the necessities of the good life.⁴⁰

Ellenton, located in the southern reaches of the county near the county line, was homogenous in comparison to Aiken. It had a 1950 population of 746, the majority of whom were white; only 27 percent of Ellenton's residents were black. Commerce contributed to the success of the community within the mile-square incorporated town. "The citizens of the community, planning for a future as stable as their past, had built a new brick school, paved some streets, cared for their old mansions and erected some new homes. These characteristics stood out against a background of modest old homes, Negro schools, and sandy, rutted side streets which made up the familiar setting for the bulk of the population."⁴¹ A sociological study conducted in the early 1950s described Ellenton life as a weave of kinship-economic-governmental rela-

tionships that tied white Ellenton families together and in turn threaded its support through the town's African American community. Stability in one network created stability in the second.⁴²

With its 56 merchants, a telephone company, and solid residential neighborhoods, Ellenton would have a lot to offer a new business interested in a South Carolina location.⁴³ The Charleston and Western Railroad, originally the Port Royal-Augusta Railroad, was the town's backbone, with most of the town extending to the east of the tracks. And the river was only two miles to the west. It was also close enough to larger cities such as Aiken and Augusta to allow easy access to services not available in the small town.

Aerial of Ellenton, circa 1950.
Courtesy of the Savannah River
Archaeological Research Program,
J02768.02ai.



Despite its rural setting, Ellenton was also used to industry. The Leigh Banana Crate Company, located south of Ellenton in Barnwell County, provided industrial employment for area residents from the late 1920s onward. This firm produced veneer of cypress, gum, and pine and manufactured hampers for fruit and vegetable storage and shipping. Its holdings included a factory, a mill, a 14-mile railroad that connected the main rail line with its facility at the Savannah River (two-thirds of which was supported by trestles constructed of native cypress), two locomotives, and a narrow-gauge battery-operated industrial railroad at the factory.⁴⁴ The industrial village named Leigh, after the company's president, was home to the factory's workers and families; one oral history source estimates the Leigh population at 150 to 300 persons. Homes in the industrial community had electricity, running water, and public buildings such as a church, hotel, and general store.⁴⁵

While the rolling sandhills of Aiken and Barnwell counties did not support great lumber operations like those in the Lowcountry, the swamps of the Savannah River and its tributaries in Barnwell County were logged. Acquisition records for the Savannah River

Aerial showing the Leigh Banana Company located south of Ellenton in Barnwell County circa 1950. This factory operation, which produced veneer of cypress, gum, and pine and manufactured hampers for fruit and vegetable storage and shipping, was extensive. The company town of Leigh (possibly the area in the upper left of the photograph) was also part of the company's holdings. Courtesy of SRS.



Plant indicate that timber companies such as International Paper and West Virginia Pulp and Paper held rights and owned land in Aiken and Barnwell counties, but the actual extent of their operations there is unknown.

The population figures noted above reflect the town proper; not the larger community of farming families that surrounded the town. Many of these families would be considered part of the Ellenton community. In 1950, average farm size in Aiken County was 124 acres while Barnwell County farms were slightly larger at 139 acres. Cotton, peanuts, corn, other vegetables, and cereal crops were grown.⁴⁶ Truck farming increased in importance in the area's economy by 1950, and peaches provided income for many area farmers.⁴⁷ The farms that surrounded Ellenton were in the throes of change. Tenancy, once the hallmark of turn-of-the-century southern agriculture, decreased in favor of fewer owner-operated farms that grew more diversified crops. Tenant farmers had composed 70

percent of Aiken and Barnwell counties' farmers in 1925. Only 49 percent of all county farmers were tenants twenty-five years later. Many left the farm in search of work at some of the new factories and commercial enterprises that World War II had spawned.

The brochures that were developed to attract the Du Pont firm would have emphasized Ellenton's size and location along the railroad and river, the availability of labor and land, and the town's well-established commerce. Despite Ellenton's assets, Du Pont chose a site in Kershaw County. Ground was broken in February 1949 for the May Plant, which was to be located in Lugoff near Camden, South Carolina.⁴⁸ Strom Thurmond officiated at the opening for the plant that would manufacture Du Pont's new product, "Orlon," which had been in development for years.

Despite their failure to garner the Orlon plant, the Ellenton-area boosters hopefully redistributed the prepared brochures to other prospective firms interested in selecting a South Carolina venue for their future plants. The Du Pont firm placed the Ellenton community brochures on file, in case of further plant expansion into South Carolina. They would be pulled out in the summer of 1950 and reviewed for an entirely different purpose. They were thought "of considerable help in the final selection of an atomic energy plant, despite the fact that the planning board had no idea they were being put to that use."⁴⁹



Frank Smith Home and farm located in what is now New Ellenton in 1955. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 2713-9.