

10 Transformations

Final stop for Train No. 50 at the Ellenton, SC, station, April 12, 1952. Atlantic Coastline Conductor J. Bratney and Porter Mon Curry were joined by Du Pont Construction Division's C. L. Watts, Traffic Supervisor and R. J. Snapp, Jr., Traffic Superintendent for this historic view. Passenger train stops were eliminated at points within the plant area and the Jackson, SC, station was used solely for employees and visitors traveling to the Savannah River Plant. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative M-741-1.



The 1952 photograph, “Final Stop for Train No. 50,” taken at Ellenton’s depot, is deeply moving. Men in hardhats and ties, symbolizing the new, stand beside the uniformed Atlantic Coast Line railroad men, who dominate the photograph as icons of the past—Ellenton’s and that of the railroad itself. Despite the vigor of their pose and the drama of the locomotive behind them, the railroad men became part of history.

This transformation was one of many that would occur in the 1950s in the CSRA. Some changes were immediate, others less so, as the area began to expand with newcomers, new schools were constructed to handle the influx of children, neighborhoods and communities were established, and service industries burgeoned. Politics changed as Lester Moody predicted. The “new people” brought different attitudes to the CSRA, and many were involved in establishing the Republican Party in Aiken County and helping to

make political change on the other side of the river. Historian Jim Farmer suggests there was a collision of cultures in the 1950s as the incoming “forces” began to square off with the area residents. While the initial impact of the collision may have been difficult, the newcomers were atomic homesteaders who came with their families and were eager to set down roots. Through extensive public relations work, involvement in community programs and in atomic energy education, the AEC and Du Pont strove to make themselves, the plant, and its employees working members of their new community. Biographical details of the plant’s managers show a keen interest in all aspects of community life, from work with the area’s boards of education to the Knights of Columbus. Individually, plant families joined area churches; embraced community service, golfed, shopped, played Little League, and generally became part of the social

scene. The AEC’s decision not to create a government town was a success story at Savannah River.

A larger transformation also occurred that was inspired by South Carolina’s aspirations toward industrialization and technology, the political astuteness of the state and

region's political leadership, and the positive force of atomic energy development nationally in the 1950s and 1960s, which promoted nuclear energy's peaceful uses. The concentration of engineers and scientists in the CSRA encouraged the establishment of local branches of national professional associations, academic programs at area colleges, and science fairs for high school students. No longer solely known for its textile mills, South Carolina was on the cutting edge of a new industry. The Savannah River Plant was perceived as the vanguard of future atomic energy development for the state and region, and similar projects would follow if a concerted effort by individuals of influence could be launched. Also, solidarity was needed to guard state authority against total Federal control over the developing industry, particularly in the areas of public health and safety. The outcomes of this effort included the Southern Interstate Nuclear Board and a compact among Southern states on the development of the nuclear and space industries within the region.

IMMEDIATE IMPACTS

The decision to rely on local communities and private enterprise for the essential housing and community services for the Savannah River Project was a major step for the AEC. Initially, their hands-off policy seemed a neat solution, allowing them to concentrate on building the production facility rather than dealing with the construction and administration of a government town, and with all the problems in such a town. Its stated policy was to estimate the projected workforce and its character for local community leaders, so that they could plan for housing and for providing services. The AEC would also call for help from sister Federal agencies that specialized in housing and in developing funding for community services in defense areas. The AEC would then provide data from past AEC installation experience, cooperate, and informally expedite the "program."¹

While this policy sounded practical, the "program," without any central authority to orchestrate it, wasn't really a program. The AEC began taking the heat for the housing situation early in 1951. An exasperated AEC staff member wrote, "The hard fact (is) that in the minds of the people of this area, the AEC is responsible for the whole impact of this Project. It is to the AEC that these communities look for action, and it is the AEC that has been, to date, the recipient of the 'gripes' and criticisms that arise. To them, the AEC is the government, so far as this Project and its impact are concerned."² To be successful, the

"Fellows Pouring In From Every State"

Mrs. Mattie Hall, an antique dealer in Aiken, believes that the mere arrival of the construction workers from other parts of the country has had as reassuring effect on the population as the government's carefully worded statements. "At first, everybody wanted to run away," she told me. "Then we saw these fellows pouring in from every state and we changed our minds. We decided that living here couldn't really be so dangerous if all these men were coming in with their families. Maybe they won't stay on when the plant is built and starts to operate, but it doesn't seem likely they'd have brought their families with them unless they planned to stay. By now we've convinced ourselves that the plant's going to be protected all day long by Air Force planes and that we'll all be terribly safe."



Source: Daniel Lang, *The New Yorker*, "Camellias to Bombs," July 7, 1951.

Views of license plates of cars parked in an Augusta store lot, November, 1951. Source: *Business Week*, "New Atomic Bomb Plant Hits Augusta with a Bang," November 10, 1951.

program called for a coalition between Du Pont, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), private builders, and local planning agencies to provide the needed housing and services. Such a coalition was not occurring naturally, so the AEC, trying to move forward, recommended that Du Pont take the lead. The contractor was asked to estimate the project's impact on the plant communities; these estimates were to be based on manpower requirements for building the plant and for later operating the plant.

The Government Hates Government Towns

In an article published in *The New Yorker*, Arthur Tackman, an AEC spokesperson, explained the drawbacks in building and maintaining a government town.

"They had to be built because everything was so secret during the war, but in general the government hates government towns," Tackman said. A government town, he went on, has to start from scratch, and entails the great expense of houses, churches, schools, streets, and police, and fire forces, and there are so many headaches connected with running a town of that sort that the officials in charge are apt to be distracted from their main job of turning out weapons. "You paint somebody's house first and everybody else starts squawking," Tackman said. "Some people want Venetian blinds, others won't stand them. And everybody has the same landlord—the government itself—and the government gets kicked around enough even when



it's not a landlord. Also we don't think it's a good idea for people who work together to have to live together. You might work all day alongside someone you didn't like and then have him as a neighbor at night. And a man who loses his job in a government town loses much more than that. He has to get off the reservation in thirty days, and that means losing his home, his wife loses her social circle, his kids

lose their school. Besides Americans just don't like to live in government towns. It makes them feel deprived of some of their independence, and that's not solely because they don't have any municipal elections to vote in. It's an intangible thing. I don't believe Americans are even keen about living in enormously privately owned housing projects."

Source: Daniel Lang, *The New Yorker*, "Camellias to Bombs," July 7, 1951.

Children playing in front of community housing at Oak Ridge, circa 1944. The AEC's decision not to build government towns in association with their new Cold War expansion facilities was a major departure from previous production facilities built under the Manhattan Project that included government communities. Photographer: E. Westcott. Courtesy of NARA.

All agreed that housing problems for the labor force were twofold. First, housing was needed for the temporary population increase engendered by construction. Du Pont forecasted that 17,000 temporary employees would need housing by August 1951; 24,000 by October 1951; 31,000 by January 1952; 34,500 by April 1952; and 36,000 by June 1952. Second, housing was needed for the operation staff. Thus, the following incremental forecast was made for permanent employees: 250 by January 1952; 3,300 by July 1952; 5,100 by January 1953; 5,600 by January 1954; and 6,000 by July 1954. To better shape the forecast, several other assumptions were made about the incoming forces. Sixty percent would have families; the remainder of the workers would be single. Local labor would supply only one-third of the workforce. One-third of incoming families would be trailer owners. Many of these variables were based on data from other AEC sites.³ With the determination of engineers used to problem-solving, housing estimates were formulated using the best data at hand. Well-reasoned, but incorrect, they simply did not reflect the many possible variables, cultural and economic, that could be involved in how a family or individual picks a home. Du Pont's housing personnel did the best with the resources at

hand, but the overall effort and the coordination among federal agencies needed to provide the needed housing and community services was not in place.

HOUSING PROGRAM

The program was up against difficult odds. A pre-acquisition survey indicated that not only was area housing limited, but that it was also considered substandard. Fifty-three percent of Augusta's 21,000 residential units were considered substandard in a report titled *Consolidated Report on Savannah River Plant*.⁴ Other area communities were similarly evaluated. Given the number and location of bridges over the Savannah, Augusta was the only likely Georgia community to absorb some of the workforce. However, the simultaneous expansion of Camp Gordon, Oliver General Hospital, and the Augusta Arsenal actually put military personnel in competition with the plant personnel for housing. Regulation X, issued by the Federal Reserve System in September 1950, was a critical thorn in the AEC's battle for housing. Underneath that regulation, strict limits were placed on residential real estate credit, thus creating a tight mortgage market and extremely unfavorable lending circumstances for developers or builders. The Federal Housing Administration only insured 58 mortgages in Aiken, Allendale, and Barnwell counties in South Carolina, and Richmond County, Georgia, in 1950.⁵

Augusta and Richmond County had active planning and zoning commissions with funding for full time-staff in place. A city-county zoning plan was under development and city-county subdivision control was in effect shortly after the plant selection announcement. In addition, the city and county had enforced trailer-park ordinances. Augusta and Richmond County were better equipped to handle the change ahead. The South Carolina communities were not. A state act passed quickly after the plant announcement that allowed counties, that had a sudden influx of population, to establish planning commissions with limited zoning powers. Aiken revised its zoning ordinances and adopted trailer-park regulations, with cooperation from a representative of the Trailer Coach Manufacturer's Association.⁶

The ability of local resources to respond to the housing problem was limited. The efforts of the Western Carolina Council were notable. This organization, formed in May 1951, represented the interests of eight of South Carolina's counties within a 50-mile radius of the plant. John A. May was the president of the council.⁷ While the Council was effective as a pressure group lobbying for federal funds, it did not rally local or state resources to help with the approaching housing shortage. An Area Defense Mobilization Committee organized by the Office of Defense Mobilization (ODM) was short-lived and ineffective. While the ODM designated a local official to coordinate the federal programs of housing and

Broad Street Augusta, 1952. This view captures the commercial boom that Augusta enjoyed as a result of Savannah River Plant. Source: *Burroughs Clearing House for Bank and Financial Officers*, "Augusta, Georgia: The H-Bomb Brought a Boom," February 1952.



community services, the position was not backed by congressional authority. Rent-control legislation was enacted and federal programs that would assist with transportation, health, and welfare issues were also invoked. The real problems—housing, community facilities, and local planning—could not be really addressed without federal legislation and appropriations.⁸



"Men's Dormitory" circa 1951. Allendale's Hotel Cleveland offered accommodations with weekly rates for incoming construction men. The first floor was used as a gas station, café, and lobby while the second floor was probably reserved for lodging. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative M-895.

The AEC requested that Du Pont find temporary housing for the incoming force; in response, Du Pont hired a housing specialist. Du Pont's housing personnel, working through newspaper advertisements, room-scouts, and word of mouth, had been successful in finding rooms and houses for the first newcomers, but by mid-July these resources were running dry. Early progress reports for October and December 1951 show that incoming employees for Du Pont were staying at the Bon Air Hotel or in private homes while they waited for available housing or loans to buy a home.⁹ Approximately 80 hotel rooms and 100 homes were leased to Du Pont to handle immediate housing. The AEC's request for the FHA and the Office

of the Housing Expeditor to waive veteran's preferences on 182 existing units had been granted, and Du Pont had reserved these rentals for AEC and Du Pont personnel. However, in order to hold these units, Du Pont was forced to pay rent on those that were unoccupied. The AEC had also requested the Army restrict any further expansion of Camp Gordon.¹⁰ Despite working all of these angles, the shortage of housing units in comparison to the forecast of incoming laborers was grim.

True relief came with the passing of Public Law 139, *The Defense Housing and Community Facilities and Services Act*. Enacted late in 1951 by the 82nd Congress, it authorized the expenditure of \$100 million and later appropriations equaling \$28,625 million for housing and services in critical defense areas across the nation. The benefits of the act, which did not include local planning assistance or field interagency coordination, were available through June 30, 1953; Public Law 94 of the 83rd Congress extended the 1953 deadline. The housing provisions of this act primarily benefited defense workers and, in the CSRA area, it was used to provide housing for the operations staff. The act first called for the designation of a critical defense-housing area. In the project area, the critical defense area was defined as the counties surrounding the plant: Richmond County, Georgia, and Aiken, Barnwell, and Allendale counties in South Carolina. The area was later expanded to cover all of Columbia and McDuffie counties in Georgia; Militia District 9 (Wrens Town) in Jefferson County, Georgia; and Bamberg and Orangeburg counties in South Carolina.

Within the defined area, the act allowed for the relaxation of credit controls on residential construction, provided special FHA mortgage-insurance terms on certain types of new sale and rental housing to be "programmed" by HHFA for the area, and offered spe-

cial FNMA mortgage purchase assistance. With such enticements available, it was hoped that private builders and developers would meet housing needs. If they did not after 90 days, the federal government as a last resort could construct and operate housing. The latter did not occur in the CSRA for housing targeted for the permanent work force. The HHFA administered the housing program funded under the new legislation; approximately \$6 million dollars of aid was spent in the CSRA. A total of 3,225 rental units and 625 sale units were built in the CSRA; 78.9 percent were constructed in Augusta/North Augusta/Aiken and the remaining number were distributed among the other towns.¹¹

New residential housing in the project environs began to appear as the assistance programs provided under Public Law 139 got under way. By 1953, the FHA was insuring mortgages for 3,319 homes; two years earlier that number stood at 58. A University of North Carolina study group estimated the number of new dwellings, programmed and non-programmed, at 8,690.¹² Most incoming personnel moved into rental or programmed housing initially, then bought or built houses when they were able.¹³ A 1953 AEC study showed that there was an overwhelming preference for the Aiken area. Sixty-seven percent of AEC and Du Pont workers who lived in programmed housing settled in Aiken. The distribution of programmed rental housing by town showed Augusta with 1,090 units, Aiken with 875 units, North Augusta with 578 units, Barnwell with 287 units, Williston with 186 units, Blackville with 123 units, and Allendale with 85. In addition, there were 625 housing units constructed for sale.¹⁴

If You Had A Choice, Where Would You Most Want To Live?



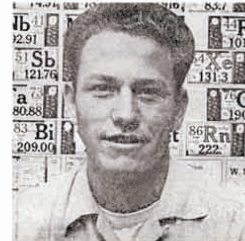
Jim Boswell, K Area Works Technical: The U. S. is my choice of countries. At present, there is no particular state in which I prefer to live. Eventually, however, I plan to return to the Blue Grass region of old Kentucky.



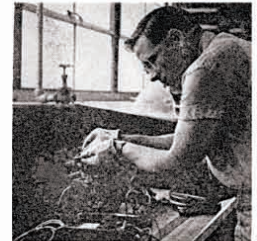
Warren Smith, L Area Patrol: To me, my home town of Springfield, S. C., is the best. Springfield is small and unpretentious, but I love . . . its simple beauty and its people and also the fine SRP folks who have come there to live.



Pat Craig, A Area Accounting: I believe I would just continue to make my home in Williston as I have for the past 21 years. The experience of giving up home, as did the folks in Dunbarton, made home mean more than ever to me.



Willie Norris, F Area Production: South Carolina, because I have lived here all my life except for two years in service. I have never been to any place I like as well. The weather, people and hospitality can't be beat.

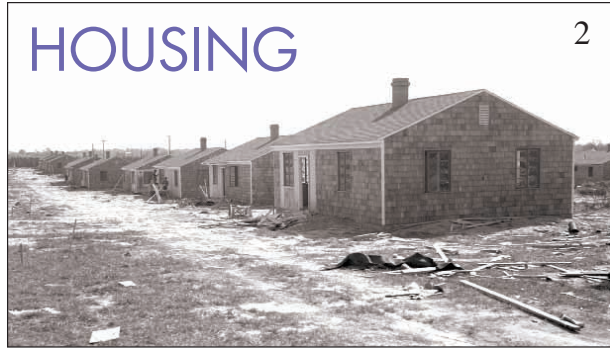


Wilfred Stapleton, C Area Electrical: I like Augusta. My wife and home are close by; I have a good job at SRP. So far as it is left up to me, my home will be Augusta for the rest of my life. My wife thinks the same thing.

Two- and three-bedroom units were preferred, and those who had large families and were in need of four-bedroom homes had difficulty finding the needed space. According to the UNC study, one-bedroom units typically rented for \$60 a month, two-bedroom units for \$65, and three-bedrooms units for \$75. These rents were usually the maximum allowed by HHFA regulations. A Du Pont monthly report to Wilmington for October 1951 states that the "popular demand appears to be a 3-4 bedroom single house renting at \$100 to \$125 per month."¹⁵ This is considerably higher than the monthly rate identified by the UNC study. In some cases, members of the construction force were in a better financial position to pay such rentals than were some of the incoming operations workers. About 73 percent of the incoming construction force interviewed by the University of North Carolina study made \$500 a month or more. Only 38 percent of the operations force interviewed made \$500 a month or above.¹⁶

SRP News and Views' roving reporters from the different operations areas queried employees on their living arrangements. These verbal snapshots provide opinions from native South Carolinians to new transplants. Source: *SRP News and Views*, July, 1955.

HOUSING



Ranch housing set on curving streets and "boxlike" dwellings regimented in a line characterized the majority of the early 1950s housing. Courtesy of SRS Archives.

- 1 - "Buy or Build," Site for Lynnhurst Housing Development, North Augusta, 1951. Negative DPES-F-6962.
- 2 - Operations housing, Williston, 1951. This type of housing was also constructed in neighboring Barnwell. Negative M-700-3.
- 3 - Operations housing, Crosland Park, Aiken, 1951. Negative M-725-3.
- 4 - Housing constructed by Creadick, Aiken. Negative M-639.
- 5 - Savannah Heights, Augusta, 1951. Negative DPES-F-6963.
- 6 - Housing units for African-American employees, Williston. Negative M-1354.
- 7 - Pine View Annex, Knox-Carolina Homes, 1951. Negative 6989-1.

Between November 28, 1950, and January 1953, a total of 5,465 non-programmed houses were also constructed. The FHA financed some, but many were financed through other means. Augusta had the lion's share at 2,700, then Aiken at 1,420. North Augusta, Barnwell, Williston, Allendale, New Ellenton, Blackville, and Jackson had 620, 225, 140, 120, 105, 70, and 65, respectively. In addition, the town of New Ellenton, just established, had 195 homes that had been moved from the plant area. A total of 132 additional homes were moved to Jackson from the plant area. Also the Hollow Creek section on Highway 781, about six miles west of New Ellenton, and a settlement north and west of Ellenton became home to concentrations of African-Americans households. The majority of homes in these new settlements had been moved from the plant area. Barnwell, Williston, and roads that led to the plant were also venues where plant area homes had been relocated.

A summary of plat information for available lots or homes under development in the early 1950s was compiled by the Du Pont Housing Office to apprise new personnel about potential housing.¹⁷ Most of the plats show high-density expectations with average lot sizes of 70 x 125 feet. The SRP plat book provided the basic information on what individual subdivisions, currently under development, had to offer for prospective owners/renters and identifies the developers within the area. Unfortunately, there was no notation within the plat book that indicated which, if any, of the developments were considered programmed housing. However, the UNC study did state that the residential developments in areas other than Aiken and Augusta received more federal help than the two more urbanized areas. The identification of owners/developers shows some firms had multiple residential developments and that at least one firm had multiple programmed housing for sale. Articles from the area newspapers and from the plant newspapers helped flesh out the plat book information.

The plat book cites Richmond Hills, Kendon Park, Forest Hills, Thomas Woods, Glendale, Walker Villa, and the Marion Homes as possible home locations in Augusta for the permanent work force. Eugene Martini built the Marion Homes subdivision off Sand Bar Ferry Road in Augusta. This subdivision contained 120 single-family homes and 40 duplexes on its seven blocks. Martini, an Atlanta-based landscape architect and owner of the Marion Homes Corporation, was associated with the Virginia Acres development in Aiken and also the Glendale subdivision in Augusta. Thomas Woods, located off Deans Bridge Road, contained 123 lots within an eight-block layout. The South Carolina firm of Lyles, Bisset, Carlisle & Wolff and Emory Holyrod Jr. Associates of Columbia were credited with its development. Kendon Park was located near Bungalow Road, Forest Hills near Deans Bridge Road, Richmond Hills near Whiskey Lake, and Walker Villa by Laney Walker Boulevard. Not mentioned in the plat book were Richmond Apartments near Fleming Heights by Knox Homes of Thomson, Myrtle Court by Sherman and Hemstreet, and Golf Court by Blanchard and Calhoun.¹⁸

Only two new North Augusta subdivisions were shown in the SRP plat book: Summerfield by the Knox Corporation and Green Acres by John McDonald. This suggests that both were programmed housing. Lynnhurst, Hammond Hills, Washington Homes, Savannah Terrace, Smithfield, Mayfair, Belvedere Ridge, Fowke Hurst, Mealing Heights, and Lakewood were other North Augusta subdivisions associated with the 1950s housing expansion.



McClain Home Place, Hawthorne, Aiken County, SC. Some of the historic residences, like the McClain home, were transplanted to new surroundings, acquiring new lives and associations.

(Upper View) George F. McClain Homeplace in Hawthorne in its original location, circa 1925. Courtesy of the McClain Family.

(Lower View) The L-shaped cottage with its front bay window was sold out of the family during the acquisition program. The new owners removed a rear ell and moved the house to its present location on Highway 278, north of SRS. Photographed by New South Associates, 2000.

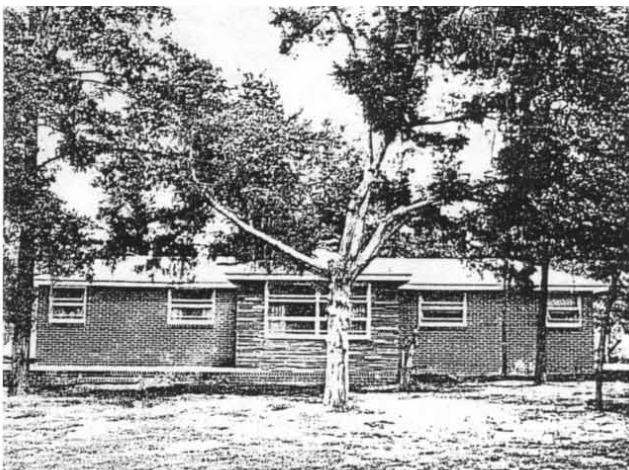
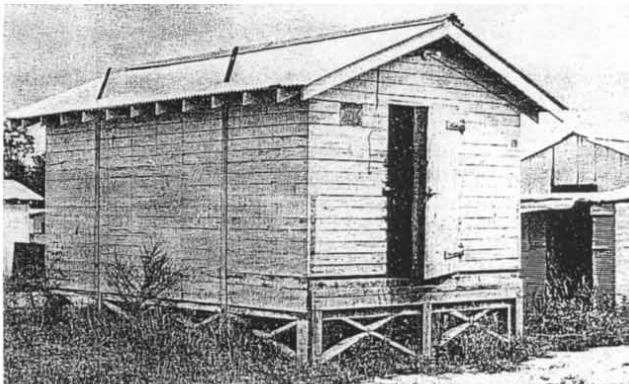
From "An Ice House" To "A Nice House"

Always ready to present articles which will show the resourcefulness, ingenuity and ability of our employes we offer for your inspection the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Brannon which is located in Jackson, S. Carolina, a stone's throw from the outer perimeter of the project.

A few months ago John had an opportunity to purchase three of the excess ice houses used on the project and he had them

hauled to his lot in Jackson. The ice houses were used by the Brannons to form the nucleus of a new home and by dint of hard work they have succeeded in building a 'real beauty'. Personally we think the brick, permastone and frame structure is one of which anyone can be proud.

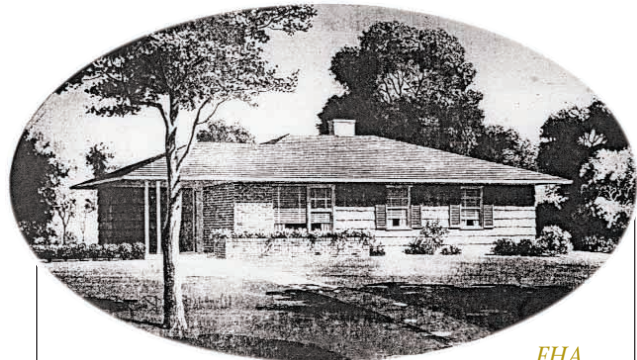
John is employed by the Heavy Equipment Craft in their Lubrication Shop in the Central Shops Area.,



GROSS-MORTON

PROUDLY PRESENTS

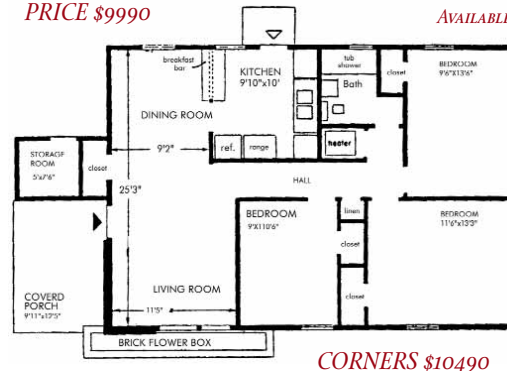
A New Group of 3-Bedroom Homes in Aiken, S.C.



FHA

FINANCING
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PRICE \$9990



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HOMES ARE FOR SALE

TO ANY PERSON PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED OR PERMANENTLY
IN BUSINESS IN THE AREA.

Gross-Morton, whose outstanding building record during 56 years is known throughout the country, now proudly presents a new home community in the South.

They offer you a really large, complete modern home at an exceptionally low price...ideally located only 15 minutes from the new Savannah River Plant and less than five minutes from the center of Aiken.

Come out right now and see the exhibit homes for this great new community- CROSLAND PARK by Gross-Morton!

Source: *Aiken Standard and Review*, Friday, February 22, 1952.

(Left) Some incoming operations personnel chose housing in professionally designed and built subdivisions such as Crosland Park in Aiken while others built their own homes in popular 1950s residential architectural styles for economy or as a personal preference. Articles in the plant newspaper highlighted many of the "do-it yourselfers." The Brannon's home in Jackson, built using three ice houses exsessed from the plant, was a ranch style rendered in brick, frame, and permastone. Others such as the Hensley home in North Augusta on Atomic Road (opposite page) were brick cottages. Source: *SRP News and Views*, September 9, 1955.

Aiken's largest subdivision was Crosland Park. This programmed development was designed by the architectural firm of Lyles, Bisset, Carlisle & Wolff, Emory Holyrod Jr. Associates of Columbia and built by Gross-Morton on an approximately 200-acre tract north of Aiken. A total of 542 homes were constructed, of which 437 were rented at \$75/month to Savannah River Plant employees. The remaining homes were sold to qualified buyers at \$9,990. The setting for Crosland Park was described as a rolling wooded tract on York Street a half mile north of Aiken's business district. The one-story homes were of "modified Colonial design including eleven different elevations and three different floor plans." This subdivision won nationwide recognition when Gross-Morton received an award for outstanding achievement in home design in the Merit Award Program of the National Association of Home Builders. The judges noted that the homes "present a lot of livability in a small area."¹⁹

The same architectural firm was responsible for Virginia Acres, which featured one-story duplexes and single homes located south of Aiken's business district along Highway 19, and also Thomas Woods on Dean's Bridge Road in Augusta, Barnwell Heights in Barnwell, and Williston Woods in Williston. While no documentation was found, it is probable that Virginia Acres also represented a second programmed development. The duplex apartments in Virginia Acres were popular due to their proximity to the plant and their low rental costs per month. Remnants of this subdivision still exist around the H. O. Weeks Recreation Center. Barnwell Heights, designed by the Columbia firm, was a programmed housing development.

Dartmoor Acres located near Aiken's South Boundary Drive had 64 lots with "Lovely Pine and Magnolia Trees Restricted to Homes of 1200 square feet or more. Custom Built to owner's plan or to ours." Aiken Heights, built by E. A. Kunding on a 50-acre tract located south of Old Trolley Line Road, featured "practical" house types "to accommodate a good-sized family and within the price range of the average family." Their model home,



(Above) "Johnny (from Operations) and Beth Gilmore (from Receiving and Stores), work on the fireplace surround in their seven-room brick home they built themselves in the country between North Augusta and Clearwater." *SRP News and Views*, "They Built Their Own Homes in the Country," Friday, March 25, 1955.

(Below) *Savannah River Plant News* highlighted the housebuilding efforts of Roy Hensley and John Lemaire, both in SRP Maintenance in 1955.

EMPLOYEES FIND IT'S PROFITABLE FUN TO.....

DO IT THEMSELVES

ROY HENSLEY, Maintenance, "Did it himself." Roy's home is located in North Augusta, just past Summerfield. Roy is now working on a garage, partly shown above.

Just as homemade ice cream tastes better, so homemade homes "live" better, say SRP's growing number of employees who have built or are building their own homes. The desire to live in homes built by their own hands leads home builders into the very front rank of "Do It Yourself" enthusiasts. SRP's home builders sometimes do all of the work on their homes, enlisting the whole family in the effort. Others leave the difficult parts to professional craftsmen. In some instances, neighbors or friends get together to help each other build a home, pooling their time and their skills. But all agree that the natural pride of home ownership is greatly increased by the feeling that "We Did It Ourselves."

JOHN LEMAIRE, Maintenance, designed and is building his home in the Millbrook section of Aiken. John is shown above working on the fireplace.

“The Jewel,” and others like it could be purchased with FHA or VA financing. Kunderer, a Michigan firm, also built a hotel-type housing unit in Williston and a trailer camp for plant workers.²⁰

Barnwell’s residential building stock swelled with programmed housing, including the Kilkenny Acres development that included 130 single homes, and expansions of Barnwell Heights, Peachtree Gardens, and Hagood Heights. A total of 291 homes were built under federal programs in Barnwell.²¹

Local Subdivisions Associated with SRP Development, 1951–1953

Subdivision	Lots	Date	Location	Architect/Developer
Crosland Park	575	1951	Aiken	Gross-Morton
Silver Bluff	72	nd	Aiken	Not noted
Governor Aiken Park		1951	Aiken	Robert B. Russell, Engineer
Colonial Village	104	1951	Aiken	Survey by Columbia Engineering
Virginia Acres	71	1951	Aiken	Wm. G. Lyles, Bisset, Carlisle & Wolff, A&E, R. Emory Holroyd, Jr Associates, Columbia, Eugene R. Martini, LA, Atlanta, Ga
Forest Heights	356	12/51	Aiken	Plat drawn by W.A. Sanders
Dartmoor Woods	64	10/53	Aiken	Combs-McDonald Construction Co.
Lynnhurst Annex	---	8/51	Aiken Co.	Not noted
Elmwood Park	66	nd	Aiken Co.	Robert E. Penland and Hamilton Dicks
Lawton Acres	77	3/52	Allendale	A.L. Ervin, Florence
Parkwood Terrace	112	1952	Allendale	Parkwood Company
Richmond Hills	135	11/51	Augusta	E. Eugene Tovell, Reg. Engineer
Walker Villa	128	nd	Augusta	Not noted
Kendon Park	111	1/1950	Augusta	Approved by Augusta City Planning Commission
Forest Hills	---	2/52	Augusta	Not noted
Marion Homes	160	1/52	Augusta	Eugene R. Martini, LA, Owner Marion Homes Corporation
Glendale	73	7/52	Richmond Co.	Eugene R. Martini, LA and Surveyor
Thomas Woods	123	6/52	Richmond Co	Wm. G. Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle & Wolff, A&E, R. Emory Holroyd, Jr. Associates, Columbia
Kilkenny Acres	216	nd	Barnwell	Not noted
Peachtree Gardens	46	nd		“Proposed Re-Subdivision-Peachtree Gardens for Barnwell Peanut Co.” Knox Corp, Thomson
Barnwell Heights	---	1951	Barnwell	Wm. G. Lyles, Bissett Carlisle & Wolff, A&E
Blackville Gardens	---	nd	Blackville	Bernard B. Saigal, AIA
Green Acres	---	nd	N. Augusta	John McDonald
Summerfield	---	nd	N. Augusta	Knox Corp, Thomson, Ga
Williston Homes		1/52	Williston	Wm. G. Lyles Bissett Carlisle & Wolff, A&E
Sherwood Acres	184	10/51	Williston	Owners-Craig Roberson Construction Co
Kenland Acres	---	11/51	Williston	Kenneth B. Simmons, ASLA, Columbia, William Stork Jr. AIA, Columbia

Source: Binder Containing Plats of Subdivisions in Aiken, SC; Allendale, SC; and Augusta, Ga, SRP Personnel-Employment Division. Courtesy of SRS Archives.

All of the subdivisions appear to be typical of 1950s subdivisions in their layout with large elongated blocks and curving streets. There were two exceptions, both designed by architects and landscape architects: Kenland Acres in Williston situated on S.C. 39, which was more formal in its design, and Blackville Gardens in Blackville, which was laid out around a central circle and featured cul-de-sacs.

HOUSING THE CONSTRUCTION FORCE

Public Law 139 also had provisions for government-provided temporary housing, but the act's passage in September 1951 came too late. The Atomic Energy Commission had moved ahead to obtain immediate housing for the construction force, authorizing Du Pont to enter into contracts with private firms to supply temporary housing. Two types of housing were offered to construction workers—trailer villages for families and barracks for single men.

H-shaped barracks with homosite siding were built by Lyles & Lang Construction of Columbia, South Carolina, in groups that would accommodate up to 1500 individuals. They were situated in Barnwell, Williston, and Allendale. The original contract also called for barracks at Beech Island, but this location was dropped from Lyles and Lang's scope. For \$8.50 per man or \$16.50 per room a week, each 12 x 12 foot room came with two linen changes and maid service. On March 28, 1952, the Office of Rent Stabilization rolled back the weekly rents to \$6.00 per week per room for a single occupancy or \$10 per week if a room was shared. The rollback was a disaster for the AEC who had fixed the rents in their contract with the builder. The AEC was forced to pay the difference in rent between the contract rental price and the ceilings set by the Office of Rent Stabilization.

To make matters worse, the barracks were unpopular with the construction force. They were Spartan in their accommodations. Individual rooms were furnished with two single beds, two dressers, two mirrors, shelves, a writing desk, two chairs, and a space for hanging clothes. While each barracks area had a canteen, barber shop, and cafeteria, the small number of amenities and their locations in the small towns surrounding the plant worked against them.

It would seem also that the location of the barracks in small towns, two of these towns being more than an hour's drive from a large city, was a factor militating against full occupancy. A small town with already overtaxed recreation facilities would seem to hold little attraction for large groups of single men.

One had only to drive up Green Street, or other downtown residential streets in Augusta, during the late afternoon in the summer or fall of 1952 to see where great numbers of these men lived. Often, there were some 10 to 15 plant workers sitting on one porch, and this scene was true to some extent in Aiken where several old, former winter colony houses were turned into boarding houses, some housing as many as 40 or 50 men.²²



Barracks constructed for single men housing in Barnwell by Lyles & Lang Construction of Columbia, 1951. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative M-422.



Some construction men lived in tents. This view showing two men, wearing hardhats, seated in front of a canvas tent appeared in a period banking magazine. Source: *Burroughs Clearing House for Bank and Financial Officers*, "Augusta, Georgia: The H-Bomb Brought a Boom," February 1952.

Trailer Court Life

"There are nearly 3000 trailer families in the bomb-plant area now, huddled in 100-odd parks and courts around the 315 square miles of the H-bomb reservation.

They are, perhaps, a new breed upon the earth - a growing tribe of willing migrants who by their own choice have arranged their lives so that they will be free to travel where ever there are atomic plants to build, or great dams, or power stations, or pipe lines, or massive factories to construct. In the sense that they call no place home, they are vagabonds, but in their skills they are the aristocrats of the construction trades - the workers on the high steel, the earth movers, the electricians, the insulators, the millwrights and the steam fitters and the boss carpenters. Proud of spirit, tough of body and hungry for money, when there is work to be done they don't care whether the job is in Carolina, Kentucky, or California, Michigan, or Mississippi, so long the road leads to it. Their security is not in the roots they might put down in any particular spot on earth, but in their craftsmanship and mobility.

They don't envy the stay-at-home worker his house and lot and his home-town job. Most of them have had these things and have swapped them for a way of life that to them is far more satisfying. They are, in spirit, gypsies, but they take great pride in the fact that in their rolling caravans they surround themselves with comforts and conveniences that few householders can afford. They are rolling stones, but the moss they gather in a year, the statisticians have learned with some surprise adds up to about \$1000 more per family than the income of a sedentary worker with the same skills as theirs.

They have, they feel, one great advantage over the man who lives out his life in one place. They can go where the money is, carrying with them, as they move, all the comforts of home and all the soft pleasures of a normal family life. Before the days of the trailer coach, the construction man was a rough, red necked hombre with no more home life than a goat. When he went off on a job he left his family, if he had one, and lived in a tent or a barracks or a boardinghouse, and his folks never saw him for months at a time. If he took them with him, they had to live in whatever shabby, high-priced housing was at hand, and half his wages might go for rent. The women didn't like that, and it broke up

families. Now it's different. Where he goes, mamma and the young'uns go. He sleeps in a good bed at night, eats his wife's cooking, and when he comes home in the evening, he reads his paper and smokes his pipe and listens to the radio or watches the television in his own living room, like any settled family man.

"From job to job," one trailer housewife said, "the only thing that changes is the view out the window."

When the family is looking for a place to roost, they are as choosy as any city dweller picking out a suburban lot. They look first for shade and grass, and for neat, well-kept trailers with flower gardens and grass

plots around them - an indication that their neighbors will be settled, quiet folk. They avoid like the pestilence trailer parks in the neighborhood of beer joints or honky-tonks, where the sound of revelry by night might disturb their rest, and they like parks where the trailers in which children live are segregated from the rest.

Once they have come to rest, the process of settling in requires even less time than the routine of getting ready to move. The neighbors rally around to help the newcomers tie on to the water, the sewer, and the electric lines. They jack up the frame end, set

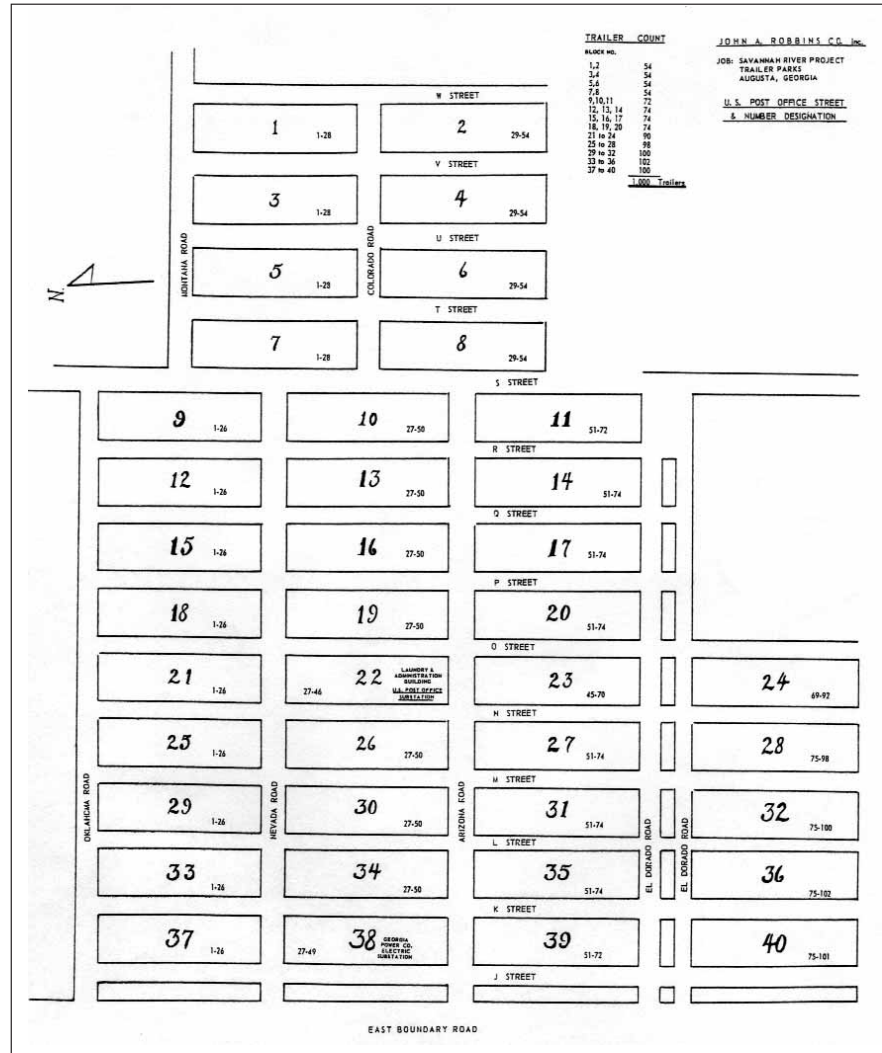
the blocks on which the coach is to rest, while the owner, inside, checks the tilt of the floors with a spirit level. Within an hour they will have the radio going, the potted plants back in the window, the coffee perking on the stove, and the new arrivals will be swapping the latest news of the road with old friends they have not seen since last they parked together a year ago and 1000 miles away.

Once settled, the trailer folk immediately begin to put down their shallow roots. Car pools are organized to take the kids to school. The boys start carrying paper routes, the teen age girls pick up change baby-sitting for the neighbors. The mothers form little clubs that meet, usually in the trailer-court washhouse on Wednesday afternoons, to play cards, knit, gossip and contribute to small funds from which they buy layettes for new babies or fresh flowers for neighbors who fall sick."

Source: Photograph and text from Harold H. Martin, "Don't Call Them Trailer Trash," *The Saturday Evening Post*, August 2, 1952.



At the peak of their occupancy in July 1952, there were only 1,092 men and 3,408 vacancies in the barracks. Given these numbers, the barracks closed down. The Barnwell group was open from January 14, 1952 through January 11, 1953, the Williston and Allendale barracks operated only for an eight-month period in 1952. The barracks debacle would prove costly for the AEC financially and from a public relations standpoint. Lyles & Lang filed suit against Du Pont over differing interpretations of the cancellation clauses. In May 1954, the U.S. District Court found in favor of Lyles & Lang, awarding the firm \$854,614.



Trailer park layout designed by John A. Robbins Company of Philadelphia for 1,000 trailers for park on East Boundary Road, Augusta, Georgia. Courtesy of Duluth Prather.


The fact that the AEC had to make up the difference in terms of barracks rental also found its way to the press, setting off another round of investigations into AEC housing. An article written by local author George McMillan and published in the November 1953 issue of *Harper's Magazine* added to the investigative fervor. The McMillan article charged the project with wasting public funds, brought up the optioning of land by

Barnwell's political and economic leaders prior to the announcement, and stated that the tracts upon which the barracks and trailer cities were located were acquired or leased from men of influence.

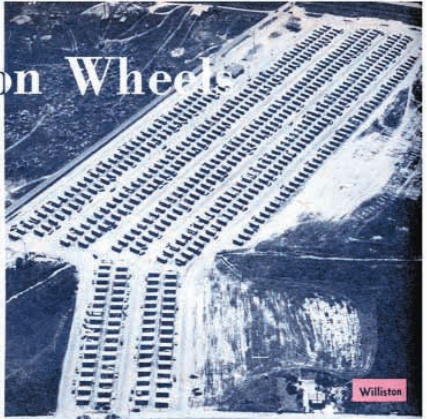
The trailer parks, in contrast to the barracks, were an unmitigated success. Mobile homes were crucial to the success of the construction-era housing problem. The trailer offered construction families the mobility needed for construction work but stability in their family life. They allowed a new era of construction workers and their families to live under one roof, gave them some control over their future housing needs as they moved from one construction site to another, and no furniture-moving was needed.

Trailer parks that allowed for family accommodations were established at four locations, in Augusta, Aiken, Williston, and Barnwell. John A. Robbins Co. of Philadelphia, under contract with Du Pont, supplied a total of 4,000 metal trailers, 1,000 to each "city."

Only Vestiges Remain of
The Four Cities on Wheels




Augusta

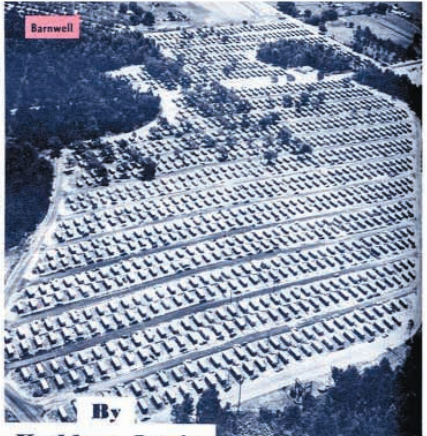


Williston

The four trailer cities at their peak in September 1952 which were located at Aiken, Williston, Barnwell and Augusta, Ga. Of the 17,000 people then living in 4,000 homes on wheels, only several hundred families are left now at Aiken and Augusta.



Aiken




Barnwell

By
Kathleen Lewis

WHAT was once the world's largest trailer camp is now coming to a quiet close, as operations of Robbins Trailer cities of the Atomic Energy's Savannah River plant disappear one by one.

Of the 4,000 units which originally camped at Williston, Barnwell, Aiken and Augusta, Ga., to house working personnel and their families, only a little over 200 trailers remain. Those still around are a handful at Aiken and a little less than 200 at Augusta.

These four cities, built by a private company—the John A. Robbins Co., Inc., of Philadelphia—by contract with



The quiet peacefulness of a trailer camp scene.

Courtesy of *The State Magazine*, 1951.

THE STATE MAGAZINE

Each trailer was about 26 feet long and included a living room, kitchen, bedroom, and bath. A “divan” offered extra sleeping space in the living room. The trailers were successful in sheltering families with two to four family members. The Robbins’ trailer cities were described in *The State Magazine*:

These four cities, built by a private company—the John A. Robbins Co. Inc. of Philadelphia—by contract with E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. were unique in many respects, chief of which was the fact that no where in the world before had anything of a comparable nature been attempted.

To accomplish such a feat of setting up so much housing so quickly for so many people, Robbins borrowed ten million dollars to start with and then poured in nearly an additional two million dollars of his own. That was the early beginning back in January of 1952. As soon as a trailer was moved into position and hooked up, it was occupied. All of the trailer cities were finished completely and 100% occupied within an average length of time of six months.

To a casual passerby, it looked as if over-night that 400 acres of cotton fields had been transformed into four thriving communities, with every comfort provided for human habitation. Postal service, shopping areas, places for worship and recreation, laundry facilities, almost everything a permanent town could boast was to be found in Robbins’ cities.

To make the grounds attractive for those willing to take care of them, the firm furnished, grass seed, tools, and planted ever-greens. Two hundred homemakers in one area alone took part in the planting program, and added additional shrubs and flowers.²³

Occupancy was guaranteed for 90 percent for 52 months from date of availability. The trailer parks were successful and occupancy was 100 percent between 1952 and their closure in 1954. Augusta and Aiken’s trailer cities appear to have been the most popular, given occupancy rates. The Augusta park was located on a lot off Gwinnett Street (now Laney-Walker) at East Boundary.²⁴ The Aiken park was located on Highway 19 north of the plant. Each trailer was initially rented for \$82.50 a month including utilities. After the rollback, the rental rate for trailers was lowered to \$60, and the AEC paid the difference of \$22.50 per month.

Under his contract, Robbins was required to sell each unit after a set date and to credit the proceeds to the government. The Williston Trailer Park closed in July 1953, the Barnwell Park in December. In June 1954, all the Robbins trailers were purchased by the Continental Supply Company of Birmingham, Alabama, which sold each for \$1,000 beginning in June. By November all were sold.²⁵

Private trailer parks played a significant role in construction-era housing. While only a few were in existence prior to the plant, their numbers expanded quickly. About 18,000 persons would be housed in trailers. There were approximately 130 parks on the South Carolina side and 13 on the Georgia side. The heaviest concentrations were located on

Unlimited Hot Water

“The winter resident who has undoubtedly made the happiest adjustment to the presence of construction workers, is Mr. Fitch Gilbert, an extremely affable Whiskey Road man of sixty-eight who owns a large tract of farmland adjoining the government site. Mr. Gilbert has opened a trailer camp on his property that will accommodate four hundred families. ‘My family is horsy, but I’m not,’ he told me. ‘I’ve tried a lot of things on that farm, winters, to keep busy—corn, wood, peanuts, cheese, cotton, cattle, and whatnot—but this trailer camp is the best thing yet. Four hundred families at eight dollars a week—why, that’ll be more money than I’ve made in a long time. Some of my competitors are charging six dollars, but I am not making my customers pay for electricity and I’m letting them have unlimited hot water. A plumber was telling me the other day that the one thing women want in a trailer camp is hot water. I may even throw in a few washing machines. I’ve named my camp Pine-Shade, to get over the idea that it doesn’t sit out in the broiling sun, the way the others do. It’s a grove three hundred yards back from the road and only a mile from an artificial lake. My farmer put me on to the idea. I’m letting him run the camp’s food store. He’s been wanting to get ahead for a long time. Well now he’s getting ahead!’”

Source: Daniel Lang, *The New Yorker*, “Camellias to Bombs,” July 7, 1951.

access roads near the plant and in Jackson and New Ellenton. The privately-owned parks ranged in the amenities they offered. Only about 15 could be considered first-class while many could easily have been characterized as substandard. Many owners of trailers, on hearing of a vacancy at a better park, would move to the better location, and these moves were more frequent as the construction period began to wind down.²⁶

The housing shortage, considered critical in 1952, became less so as the Savannah River Project began to wind down. The construction force's preferences for urban living locations and the popularity of the trailers were part of the AEC and Du Pont's learning curve. Aiken was the focus of much of the new housing, and much of that occurred with private financing rather than government aid. Smaller towns such as Barnwell, Blackville, and Williston needed Federal dollars to make their housing developments work.



(Above) Augusta afternoon scene. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 4254-22.

(Right) Georgia Avenue, North Augusta, circa 1956. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 4254-12.

(Opposite) Kelly Edwards School in Williston, built partly in response to SRP and Governor Jimmy Byrnes' three percent sales tax. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 3389-23.

IMPACT ASSESSED BY 1953

By 1953, the original estimates of "impact" were history. The communities of Augusta, North Augusta, and Aiken received the greatest number of newcomers, and the amount of Federal monies appropriated to handle the impact of the population increases, both short-term and long-term, were divided up accordingly. Under Public Law 139, water works, sewers, sewage, garbage and refuse disposal facilities, water treatment and purification plants, libraries, hospitals, recreational facilities, streets and roads, and daycare centers could be funded. Monies expended in the CSRA included grants for the construction or expansion of water purification and sewage treatment, sewers, water storage and distribution facilities, police and fire protection equipment, and one hospital addition.²⁷

For schools, each affected county school board worked with their state board of education and the U.S. Office of Education to apply for financial assistance based on estimates of incoming workers supplied by the Savannah River Operations Office. The Office of Education under Public Law 815 (School Construction), Public Law 874 (Operations and Maintenance), and a third supplemental appropriation set aside in 1951 had the experience and financial wherewithal to act. Four school boards were affected: Richmond County, which had a consolidated school dis-





tract, Aiken County, Barnwell County, and Allendale County. Each South Carolina county had reorganized its districts, substantially reducing them in number at this date.

The school issue was as fraught with problems as the housing. Foremost, although the job of estimating was imprecise, adequate funding depended on good estimates of how many school-age children would arrive in the CSRA,

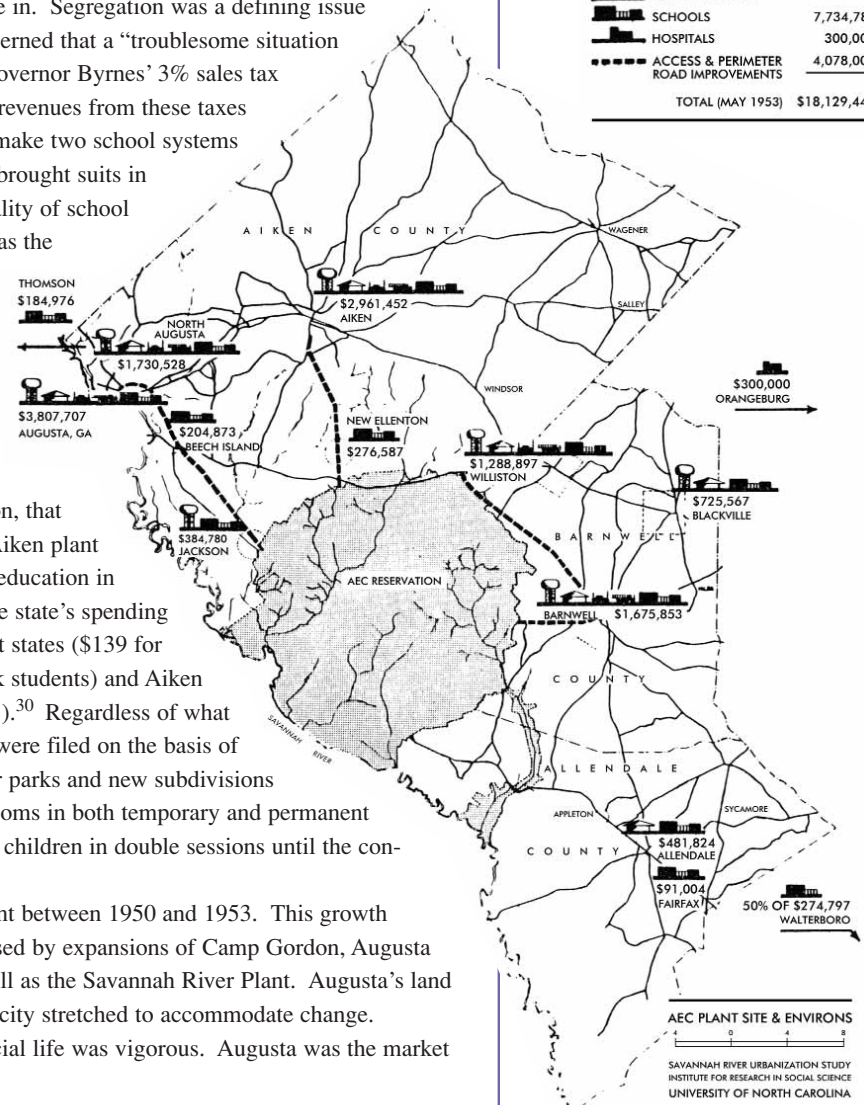
their ages, and what districts they would live in. Segregation was a defining issue for public education, and the AEC was concerned that a “troublesome situation may arise.”²⁸ The project coincided with Governor Byrnes’ 3% sales tax and a similar measure in Georgia, in which revenues from these taxes would be used for school improvements to make two school systems separate but equal. African Americans had brought suits in Federal courts to challenge the constitutionality of school segregation. The AEC was aware that “it was the announced policy of both South Carolina and Georgia to withdraw entirely from the field of public education if a court order against segregation is obtained.”²⁹ As the permanent operations staff was forecasted to be mostly white, the segregation problem was considered negligible. However, if the state were to withdraw from public education, that would greatly affect the desirability of the Aiken plant for a young engineer with a family. Public education in South Carolina was already a concern, as the state’s spending level for public schools was lower than most states (\$139 for each white student per annum, \$77 for black students) and Aiken County’s was lower than that (\$124 and \$61).³⁰ Regardless of what the future held, applications for federal aid were filed on the basis of the AEC estimates, and children from trailer parks and new subdivisions joined the children of area natives in classrooms in both temporary and permanent buildings. Some schools would educate the children in double sessions until the construction era was over.³¹

Augusta’s population grew by 30 percent between 1950 and 1953. This growth stemmed from the population increases caused by expansions of Camp Gordon, Augusta Arsenal, and Oliver General Hospital, as well as the Savannah River Plant. Augusta’s land in urban use also grew by 30 percent as the city stretched to accommodate change. Property values rose and the city’s commercial life was vigorous. Augusta was the market town for the CSRA.³²

Map showing the breakdown and distribution of Federal grants provided to Savannah River Plant communities. Source: Chapin *et. al.*, *In the Shadow of a Defense Plant A Study of Urbanization in Rural South Carolina*. (Chapel Hill, NC: Institute for Research in Social Studies, University of North Carolina, 1954).

LEGEND

FACILITY	TOTAL ALL FED. GRANTS
WATER SYSTEMS	\$2,754,261
SEWERAGE SYSTEMS	2,770,400
POLICE PROTECTION	492,000
FIRE PROTECTION	7,734,786
SCHOOLS	
HOSPITALS	300,000
ACCESS & PERIMETER ROAD IMPROVEMENTS	4,078,000
TOTAL (MAY 1953)	
\$18,129,447	



Fifty new service-related businesses started during the first half of 1951. Houses were hastily erected in new sub-divisions. Richmond Apartments near Fleming Heights by Knox Homes of Thomson, Myrtle Court by Sherman and Hemstreet, Golf Court by Blanchard and Calhoun, Green Acres in North Augusta by John McDonald. Massive federal aid enabled the cities of Augusta and North Augusta to expand sewers, waterworks, streets and housing.³³

Augusta received \$3,807,707 in federal aid. Under Public Law 815, enacted by the 81st Congress, Augusta's schools were expanded by 18 classrooms housed within temporary buildings. A federal grant of \$286,731 covered their purchase or construction. A second grant for \$1,465,815 was also given to cover the construction of 58 permanent classrooms. Under Public Law 139, a total of \$1,613,061 was granted to the city to expand its water and sewage systems. Augusta matched the federal funds with over \$3 million to make the necessary improvements. Additional police and fire protection were also needed, and Augusta was given almost \$250,000 to help bring these services in line with the city's new needs.³⁴

North Augusta in Aiken County, South Carolina, was essentially a bedroom community for Augusta. Its population grew from 3,659 individuals to 8,937 between 1950 and 1953. The Savannah River project was a factor in this growth, but as in Augusta's expansion, Camp Gordon, Oliver General Hospital, the Augusta Arsenal, and the Clarks Hill Dam also affected growth. The schools in this district received grants for permanent and temporary construction totaling \$882,828. North Augusta's schools were increased by 18 temporary classrooms and 34 permanent classrooms.

Over 15 miles of new streets were laid out in North Augusta by 1953. The city annexed the many subdivisions that were newly constructed around it, causing a substantial change in needed municipal services that ranged from water systems to police and fire protection. Federal grants paid for most of the sewer upgrades (\$339,200) and almost half of the water system improvements (\$453,600). Expansion of their fire and police protection was funded by a \$54,900 grant that was matched by \$6,100 in local funds.³⁵

Aiken's population and land area also increased dramatically. Known as a winter colony for wealthy northerners and as an equestrian center, Aiken drew about two-thirds of the scientists, engineers, and managers to its city limits. Of the nearly 4,000 employees at the plant in the spring of 1953, about 1,300 were Aiken residents. This number had surpassed 2,000 by the following November.³⁶ The census listed Aiken's population at 7,083 in 1950; in 1953, its population was 9,100. In land area, Aiken grew 139 percent between 1950 and 1953 through annexation and development as about 21 miles of new streets were added to the city. Thirty-six temporary classrooms and 40 permanent classrooms were added to the city schools. The school population had grown from 13,400 pupils in November 1950 to 15,000 the next school year. Federal grants funded the majority of school expansions. Eighty additional teachers were hired in 1952, and more would be needed the next year.

Approaching North Augusta, circa 1955. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 4254-20.

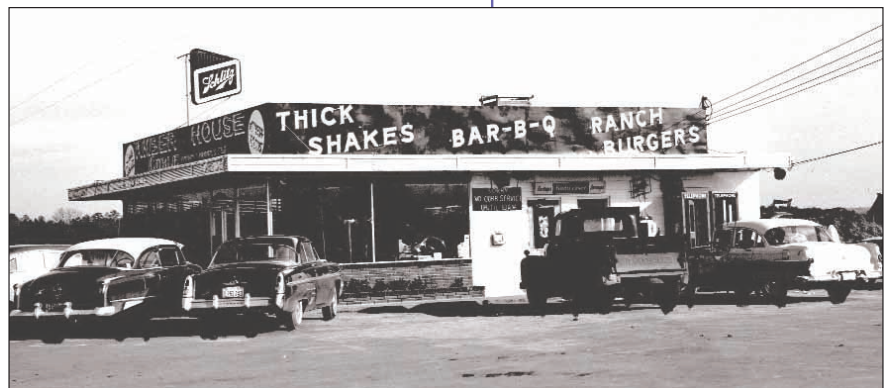


The new housing developments were constructed faster than were community services in Aiken. In May 1953, residents in the northwestern section of the city were experiencing serious water problems that stemmed from inadequate pressure. Some homes were unable to get water during the day. The city received substantial grants to improve water and sewer systems; the grants covered about two-thirds of the cost of each. Aiken sold \$85,000 in water revenue certificates for its local contribution. A new filter system and a 50,000-gallon water storage tank were constructed. The expansion of fire and police protection within the city had to be handled by city funding. The installation of 1,000 parking meters helped with those costs.³⁷



Aiken's commercial or business development was described as conservative, with few new businesses established.³⁸ White's of Augusta, a department store, was the largest new business established between the announcement and September 1952. A shopping center on the south side of Aiken included a supermarket, dry cleaner, drug store, and a 5 & 10. Otherwise, Aiken's historic downtown commercial strip handled the city's businesses, while specialty items could be purchased in Augusta. The UNC study observed, "With North Augusta, Aiken appeared to be the preferred location for many of the in-migrant Du Pont and AEC personnel. The town was receiving a sizable number of well-educated, middle-income new residents who were building and buying housing in the \$10,000 to \$30,000 class, and who exhibited many of the status symbols in behavior and dress which made them accepted associates of local 'society' people."³⁹

(Left) Southside commercial development, Aiken, circa 1955. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 1508-20. (Below) Fast food comes to town, Amber House, Aiken, circa 1955. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 738-5.



Smaller towns experienced growth as well. Williston, located six miles northeast of the plant in Barnwell County, was originally a small rural trade center. The city registered a 76 percent increase in population between 1950 and 1953 and almost doubled its



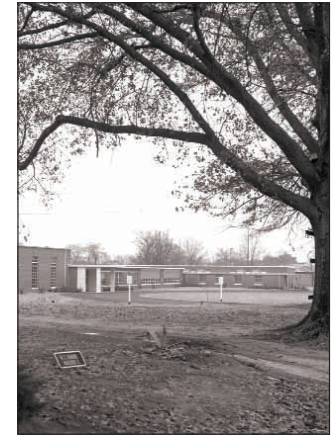
(Above) Williston's railroad depot and business district, 1955. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 3389-1. (Inset) Barnwell School. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 3080-6. (Below) Commercial section, Barnwell, 1950. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 6950-1.



built-up land area, adding over 8 miles of new streets. This overall increase in land area was due in part to the location of trailer parks and the Du Pont trailer city within its limits. School facilities were enlarged by 22 temporary and 16 permanent classrooms. Williston's commercial sector increased 30 percent by 1953, and its water and sewer facilities were improved with federal grants and loans supplemented by local funds. The water system cost in its entirety \$277,500, the sewer system improvements \$500,000. Prior to 1950 the city's sewage had been a long-term problem, most residents were served by individual septic tanks.

Barnwell County's seat, Barnwell, saw similar growth. Located about seven miles east of the plant, the town in 1950 had 2,005 residents. It was a commercial center within a rural county with some light industry. The town's land area increased by 95 percent through annexation, and over 10 miles of new streets were added. After annexation of a large amount of land in 1952, the town's population was estimated at 10,000. Barnwell con-

tained the largest of the Du Pont trailer cities (4,400 persons) and its population change reflects that. To handle the needs of its new residents, the city's commercial base expanded, increasing about 50 percent from its pre-announcement size. The number of classrooms added to handle the new growth was considerable: 30 temporary and 33 permanent. Federal grants underwrote the temporary buildings and the majority of costs involved with the permanent construction. Water and sewer improvements were completed, mostly underwritten by federal grants.



Allendale, nineteen miles from the plant, also saw change that emanated from the plant. Its population increased from 2,474 to 3,400 in late 1952.⁴⁰

New Ellenton on the plant's perimeter on SC Highway 19 was essentially a new town directly attributable to SRP. The site of the town was a series of rolling sandhills on either side of Highway 19 between Aiken and Ellenton. The vicinity, a portion of the Talatha settlement, was acquired and promoted

as a relocation site for Ellenton residents and others who lost their home places and as a place where newcomers could park their trailers. The chief promoters, some of the old business leaders from Ellenton, met with HHFA and AEC officials to plan their efforts.

The site chosen was less than desirable from a water-supply perspective. First forecasts suggested that there was little potential for an adequate water supply for a town and that bringing water in from another source would be an expensive venture.

Nevertheless, the group pushed the development of the town, calling it New Ellenton, probably in the hopes that the name would exert an attracting power for residents of the old town. Some New Ellenton leaders often expressed the feeling that the town was a planned community because the streets had been laid out on a gridiron pattern, the hilly topography notwithstanding. With no experience or no advice on civic design and site planning, the promoters were intent on using a gridiron pattern to simplify deed descriptions in the sale of land parcels. The gridiron pattern was bulldozed into the hills and the street pattern took shape without regard to grades, drainage, soil erosion, or aesthetics.⁴¹

Some homes were moved there and others were built there. Houses moved from the plant area were placed on the East Side of Highway 19. These buildings with no indoor plumbing became rental properties for African Americans displaced from the Federal reservation. New homes intermixed with moved homes were placed on the West Side of the highway, laid out in a similar fashion to the African American neighborhoods. Single trailers and trailer parks were also part of New Ellenton's residential building stock. Drainage problems were profound on both sides of the highway.

In response to the many cars that filed through the new town site on their way to the plant, stores, filling stations, trailer parks, trailer sales lots and other service-related properties began to line Highway 19 within the new city. In December 1951, there were 25 businesses, 52 in June 1952, and 79 in February of 1953. Some of the businesses and homes that were placed along the highway were lost when Highway 19 was widened in 1952. With the incorporation of New Ellenton in mid-1952, the problems worsened. There was no funding available for municipal services, let alone to solve the water supply problem. The latter would finally be solved when a special congressional authorization in 1953 brought relief.

The UNC study states that the town was home to 583 African Americans housed in permanent houses, 499 whites in permanent houses, 1,722 whites in trailers in parks, and 962 whites in temporary houses and single trailers. The total estimated population was estimated at 3,777 in 1952.⁴² A census taken in January 1953 counted 4,011 individuals, half of whom were temporary residents associated with plant construction. The housing inventory included 161 homes occupied by African Americans, of which 140 to 150 had been moved to the new town. A total of 254 homes were occupied by whites, of which 50 to 60 had been moved. In addition, 205 single trailers, 550 to 600 trailers in parks, 12 tents, 14 expandable trailer units, and 35 hotels or barracks were inventoried. Of all of these only nine houses predated "New Ellenton," and these were individual farmsteads. None



This farmstead was located in what would become the New Ellenton town-site. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 2713-10.

New Ellenton Water Tower and Buildings. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 2722-12.



of the programmed subdivisions were located at New Ellenton. This may have been due to the lack of a central water system that made the town vulnerable to fire and made banks reluctant to lend money for homes or other capital improvements there. The city's first tax assessment was underway in 1953.



(Above) City of Jackson depot, 1950. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 2837-23. (Right) City of Jackson Fire Hall and Chief of Police, 1950. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 2837-3.

were either built or under way. The Mack Foreman supermarket with a new soda shop was a source of community pride, and a theater was under consideration to replace a makeshift movie outlet housed in a tent.⁴³

One hundred and thirty-two homes were moved to Jackson from the plant area, 60 new homes were built, and almost 400 trailers were located within the city. Only 15 temporary classrooms were added, all

funded by Federal grants. The town had a sprawling layout through which new development was scattered. Jackson also received grants and loans in the amount of \$235,000 for a water system to handle the needs of its new population.⁴⁴



The federal acquisition program also created two small communities or settlements. The Hollow Creek section on Highway 781, about six miles west of New Ellenton, and Zion's Fair, a settlement north and west of New Ellenton, became home to concentrations of African-Americans households.⁴⁵

The majority of homes in these new settlements had been moved from the plant area. The Zion's Fair community included the church of that name described as an "old church on new foundations" that had been moved to the area along White Pond Road off Highway 19.⁴⁶ No Federal funding was mentioned in conjunction with these communities.

Finally, health services were considered insufficient to handle the influx of newcomers. There were so few doctors that patients waited from two to four hours for medical

treatment at office calls. Barnwell County had no hospitals, causing patients to travel to Orangeburg's 134-bed facility where overcrowding was an issue. Allendale had a 28-bed facility, and Bamberg County opened a 33-bed facility in 1952. Aiken's hospital had 115 beds, but was not as well staffed as Orangeburg's hospital and the patient care was found



Jonas Floyd in front of homes moved from plant area to the new African-American community called "Zion's Fair" on White Pond Road, north of SRS, 1952. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 1319003.

wanting. Serious cases were referred to Augusta's 479-bed University Hospital, which was a teaching facility for the Medical College of Georgia. The opening of St. Joseph's Hospital in 1952 provided some relief. However, the dependence of South Carolina's population on the Georgia health facilities continually caused overcrowding. Three federal grants helped area hospitals. Orangeburg Regional received a \$300,000 grant under Public Law 139 to fund an additional 33 beds. Barnwell County received a \$416,000 grant to establish a 40-bed hospital; the entire project would cost \$650,000. And Augusta's University Hospital received \$898,000 toward its \$1,300,000 renovation program. The Barnwell County and Augusta grants were made under the Hill-Burton Act.

With the newcomers and the many expansions came the concomitant problems of sanitation and refuse disposal. Barnwell continued to have serious problems through the summer of 1952, and Aiken had not adopted modern landfill disposal plans by the spring of 1953. The UNC study notes that Aiken's open dumps and rat population were well publicized and that progress was slow in changing the situation. New Ellenton had similar problems through 1953 as it struggled to get its municipal services moving.⁴⁷

NEON SIGNS ON BROAD STREET

SRP construction workers' preference for Augusta as a place to live was discussed above. Between the thousands of SRP construction workers and the military personnel stationed at Camp Gordon, Augusta had not only a vigorous commercial life but a lively nightlife as well. When Albert Howell, an editor of the *Aiken Standard & Review*, was interviewed on the impact of construction workers on his hometown, he predicted confidently, "They'll go to Augusta, This town's too dull for them. No night clubs, no road-houses. You can get liquor in South Carolina only between sunrise and sunset, and you have to buy it by the bottle and drink it in somebody's home. No bars. Their big Saturday

Reaction from the Winter Colony

Terence Preece, one of the country's best polo players said of the construction men. "Those I've seen so far are rabid polo fans. We have sold more dollar admissions this year than ever before."

Gracefields, a seven thousand-acre hunting preserve near Ellenton that was formerly leased by Mrs. W.R. Grace, of the shipping family, for shooting parties, has been acquired by the government as part of its site. "Oh, well, there's no point on crying," Mrs. Grace assured me philosophically. "I've had a good time. The hydrogen bomb hasn't been the only surprise. This past winter, we had one of the coldest snaps and the camellias went. And, of course, in New York, the Ritz-Carlton's coming down. I lived there for eight years."

The feeling along Whiskey Road is that the hibernating grounds of the winter people will be left alone. "Or take it from a New York angle: Does anyone at the Racquet Club care what happens on the West Side?"

night would be dismal. All they could do would be sit in a restaurant and drink beer until midnight when the blue laws take over. But Augusta is wide open."⁴⁸ The data presented by the UNC study suggests that Howell was correct, as many construction men preferred living in an urban environment that had cultural amenities as well as a nightlife.

Historian Edward Cashin observed that sometimes an outsider can draw a more accurate picture of a place than one who is its familiar.⁴⁹ This was the case with an article written by Dorothy Kilgallen, a newspaper columnist and television personality, about Augusta. Kilgallen drew a portrait of the city's nightlife that captured how wide open Augusta was, and described a city that was a curious mix of the past and the future.

It has white mansions and magnolias, honky-tonks and the H-bomb. It swarms with casual G.I.s from Camp Gordon, and it shelters proud D.A.R.s from the best families. It is beautiful with gambrel roofs and lacy ironwork, creeping vines and colonial porticoes; it is brash with jazz brasses and roulette wheels and chuck-a-luck and slot machines and strip-teasers and a sweet talkin' disregard for laws that people don't like. It is a town named for a princess, but early in 1951, in a swift, almost transvestite, metamorphosis, it became a virile, booming young giant.... the [Savannah River] project brought with it - the hordes of strangers, the new little saloons with their neon signs on Broad Street, the flashy floor shows, the new money, the new tempo allegro.⁵⁰

Kilgallen was treated to a taste of Augusta's nightlife that began at the sedate Bon Air, moved to the Colonial Club, then a lobster dinner at the Town Tavern, followed by the Zoom Club on Broad Street that featured a singer like Sarah Vaughan, drove by Jack Dempsey's bar, then into "The Terry." The Territory was the African-American part of town. Charlie's Paramount in the Terry featured a jazz band, the Club Rio a society-dance band, and the Sand Bar put on a "rather standard strip act." Then Kilgallen accompanied by Louis Harris, the managing editor for the *Augusta Chronicle*, crossed the Savannah to visit the Club Royal in Hamburg, South Carolina. At three in the morning, Kilgallen and Harris returned to the Bon Air, but as she pointed out, they left quite a few Augustans behind who gave no indications of being ready to go to bed. She reported that despite the law that liquor could be purchased only at package stores, there were between 40 and 50 places where mixed drinks were served in Augusta, and that number did not include the many clubs where drinking and gambling were tolerated. Kilgallen's portrait was not appreciated in Augusta after it was published, but she had left a lasting impression of a city in change: "Since the H-bomb, more citizens are making history than recalling it."⁵¹

CONTINUED GROWTH

The economic impact of the plant continued after the construction period. The base construction, land acquisition, improvements to the facilities, and purchased equipment alone was figured at \$1,546,435,000. Between 1951 and 1973, salaries and wages earned by Savannah River Plant employees in Construction, Operations, and the AEC reached

\$1,652,307,000, an average of close to 72 million dollars annually. By 1970, the plant's annual operating budget averaged 117 million per year. The 1972 payroll, which reached \$77.5 million (\$74.3 for Du Pont including construction, and \$3.2 million for the AEC), was the largest single payroll in the State of South Carolina. The total work force at the plant was counted at 5,902 with 5,265 or 89 percent in Du Pont Operations, 472 or 8 percent in Du Pont Construction, and 165 or three percent in the AEC. These figures on federal expenditures at Savannah River were prepared by the Savannah River Operations Office for use in compiling the President's proposed 1975 budget.⁵² Appendix E contains the plant's annual operating budgets from 1950 - 1994. Census figures show the changes in occupational profiles that occurred between 1940 and 1960 in the plant area, particularly in the South Carolina counties adjacent to the plant. Emphasis has been placed on the South Carolina counties rather than the Augusta-Richmond County area. While Augusta, as the major economic hub and cosmopolitan center of the CSRA, reaped the economic benefits of the wages and salaries discussed above, its growth was shaped by a number of factors that included the military presence of Ft. Gordon and ancillary facilities. Its cosmopolitan character was already established and its workforce varied given its industrial history and its age. Given this, occupational statistics from the 1950 and 1960 Federal census were consulted for Aiken, Allendale, and Barnwell counties to better identify occupational change that could be attributed to the establishment of Savannah River.⁵³

Comparison between statistics for Aiken, Allendale, and Barnwell counties show that Aiken showed the most change, then Barnwell. Professional and technical workers for Aiken, Allendale, and Barnwell counties were enumerated in 1950 respectively at 991, 202, and 283. A decade later, the same category of employment almost tripled in Aiken County (2,976) and showed healthy increases in Allendale (306) and Barnwell (482) counties. Notably, "Engineers Technical" first occurs as an employment category in the 1960 census tables that show occupations of county residents. 584 engineers were counted as Aiken County residents; 8 in Allendale County and 41 in Barnwell County in 1960. Growth occurred in other occupational groups related to SRP. Aiken County's clerical work force grew from 1,120 in 1950 to 2,845 in 1960. Barnwell's clerical workers grew to 494 from the 1950 number of 156. The number of clerical workers in Allendale doubled, increasing from 141 to 276 within ten years. The number of craftsmen and foremen also grew from 2,243 in 1950 to 4,213 in 1960 in Aiken County.

In 1950 agriculture and textile manufacturing were the principal industries in Aiken County. By 1960, the number of men and women employed in non-agricultural industries swelled to 26,230 or 93 percent of the county's total work force. The establishment of the plant played a role in this change as well as a regional decline in farming. The textile industry, however, held its own; approximately 6,367 "operatives" were employed in Aiken County. While agriculture was the main industry for Allendale and Barnwell counties, non-agricultural industries took the lead in 1960 for both counties. Again, such changes were probably the result of larger regional changes in economic pattern, but the coming of the Savannah River Plant may also have been a factor. Occupational census figures also show changes in the number of women in the workforce and the types of occupation they were engaged in. Again, Aiken County statistics show a different pattern than Allendale and

More Reactions:

"I think the heads of departments would make interesting additions," she said. "There's a beautiful forty-four acre section of my property on which I'm ready to let twenty-five of them build houses, provided the character of the property is preserved." — Mrs. C. Oliver Iselin (She was in exuberant spirits, her trainer having just phoned her from the Jamaican track that one of her horses had won a race)."

Source: Daniel Lang, *The New Yorker*, "Camellias to Bombs," July 7, 1951.



Women at SRP. A view of the plant's employment waiting room in 1956 shows that women were well represented among prospective applicants. Jobs were available in clerical positions, food preparation, and maintenance for the majority of the first generation of Savannah River women. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 2150.

“Different Kind of Growth”

Growth occurred in more abstract ways as well. Ken Kilbourne, executive secretary of the Aiken Chamber of Commerce in 1957, said that Aiken noted the population and economic growth, but also saw “a very worthwhile broadening of our cultural advantages. . . . Our schools and recreational facilities have been improved and enlarged. So have our civic and professional organizations. And here’s something that seems significant to me: just the other day the *Encyclopedia Britannica* folks told me that they received more inquiries per family from Aiken than any other city in the country”

Source: *SRP News and Views*, February 15, 1957, “Towns Surrounding Plant Grew With Us,” V(1):7.

Barnwell counties. In 1950, 5,837 Aiken County women were employed. Thirty-four percent were operatives, 19 percent were private household workers, 12 percent were clerical workers, eight percent were considered professionals, .09 percent were laborers (non-agricultural and agricultural), .05 percent were service workers, and .05 percent were in sales. The remainder worked as farm managers (96) and managers (175). In 1960, a total of 9,299 women were employed in Aiken County, an increase of 62 percent since 1950. The breakdown of occupations listed in 1960 also show shifting trends in employment as clerical workers increased in number, as did the number of professional women. The number of operatives and private household workers decreased. The majority of Aiken County women were operatives (22 percent), clerical workers (21 percent), and private household workers (16 percent) and professional women (medical personnel, teachers, and other professional) counted for 12 percent of the workforce, .07 percent were involved with retail sales and .03 percent were managers. Other occupations represented were: laborers, craftsmen, and foremen service workers. The shift to clerical occupations and professional jobs probably shows the impact of SRP on the female workforce and the beginnings of the movement toward two income families.

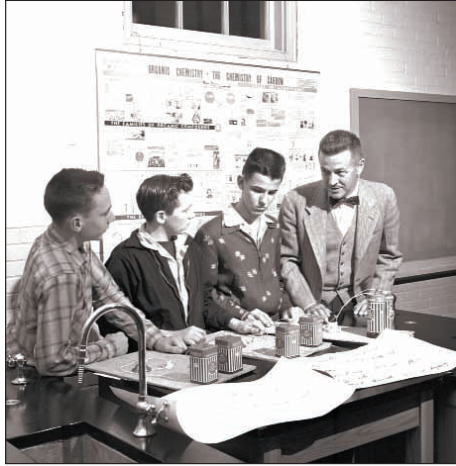
In comparison to Aiken County, employment for women in Allendale and Barnwell counties remained fairly static. Agricultural jobs, domestic work, and service work remained strong occupations for Allendale women in 1950 and 1960. The female Allendale workforce grew slightly, occupations for 1,309 women were given in 1950, and occupations were given for 1,680 in 1960. The census reported 1,886 women were employed in Barnwell County in 1950, 2,129 in 1960. Unlike Allendale County, private household workers were in the majority in Barnwell County in 1960 (20 percent), followed by operatives (18 percent), clerical (15 percent), professional women (10 percent), and farm laborers and foremen (10 percent). Farm managers, service workers, and non-farm laborers were also represented.

Occupational statistics for the closest South Carolina counties to the SRP indicate that Aiken County appears to have been the most affected in terms of the increase in jobholders between 1950 and 1960. Shifts appear to have occurred in occupational categories as agriculture becomes less important to all three county economies between 1950 and 1960 and as non-agricultural industries become a part of the CSRA scene on the South Carolina side. SRP was a pivotal factor in Aiken County’s growing diversification and although textile manufacturing remained a fundamental part of the Aiken economy, technological professional jobholders begin to encroach on that dominance. The movement of women into the job market is also apparent as women in clerical and professional positions were recruited for work at the plant. The economies of Allendale and Barnwell counties share in the regional decrease in importance of agriculture, but show less impact in terms of occupations for both men and women. Aiken County was the preferred place to reside and the occupational statistics reflect this preference.

SETTING DOWN ROOTS

SRP brought to the CSRA a plant involved in not only production, but also in research and development in one of the most advanced technologies of the day, nuclear physics. These were times when the general public viewed atomic weaponry more as a promise of

peace than a threat, and associated developments in nuclear physics and atomic energy with a promise of at least cheap energy, if not of an entirely new age of civilization. The



CSRA had been chosen as a one of the main points where that new civilization would begin. The influx of thousands of people to build the new plant and to conduct the research there made a great impact on the residents, both the new arrivals and those that had known the region before the change. Even children, or perhaps especially children, were infected with the excitement of the new endeavor in the CSRA region. In 1954, Heavy Water Technology employee Mac Latimer heard a child digging in the sand tell another, “Don’t tear it down. That’s my research project!”⁵⁴

Relationships with local and regional universities were cemented early in 1951 when the AEC entered into five-year contracts with The University of Georgia and the University of South Carolina to perform ecological studies at the plant. The University of South Carolina was asked to perform a taxonomic study of the plant area’s plants and animals. The University of Georgia was to look at the larger picture and chart ecological change within the preserve.⁵⁵ The Georgia group had more staying power. Their efforts moved beyond inventory and they eventually established a program on the plant under Dr. Eugene Odum.

The University of South Carolina, however, developed another supporting role to the plant. In 1952, it began extension classes in Aiken at the high school in distillation in chemical engineering, pre-stressed concrete in civil engineering, and nuclear physics for graduate credit. Undergraduate credits were offered for courses in radiation physics, advanced calculus, and industrial organization and management.⁵⁶ The need for these classes and community growth spurred the establishment of the future USC–Aiken in 1961. In Columbia, USC further offered Saturday morning classes in nuclear physics and instrumental methods of analysis for graduate credit.⁵⁷ Augusta’s higher education system would also grow. An August 1952 article in the *SRP News and Views* advertised for registration for night classes at the Richmond Academy and the Junior College of Augusta for credit toward college degrees and vocational training under the University of Georgia’s extension classes program.⁵⁸ UGA’s extension program later focused its efforts at Camp Gordon where it offered 45 courses. Tuition was \$4.00 per credit hour for each quarter.⁵⁹ Finally, 21 students were enrolled in a field course in CPA Review given by USC at the plant, also as an extension course.⁶⁰ Aiken Chamber of Commerce secretary Ken Kilbourne commented in 1957,

SRP scientist and Graniteville students work on laboratory experiment. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 4296-5.

Tour of SRP laboratory by African American high school students, 1956. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative 4998-6.



"Even the curriculum of our schools have been affected as both children of Plant employees and others have taken on a great interest in scientific and technical courses. At the present time a movement, which I am convinced will eventually be successful, is under way to establish a four-year college in Augusta. Much of the strength of this movement can be traced directly to the influence of the Savannah River Plant and its highly trained employees."⁶¹

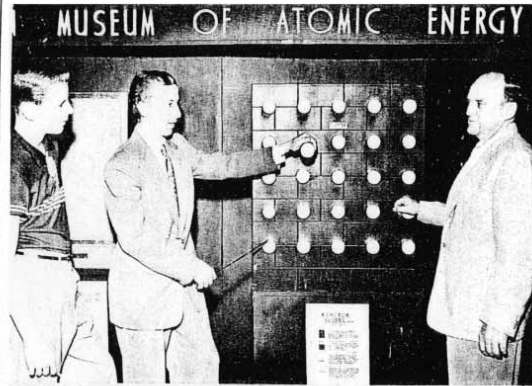
When Oak Ridge's American Museum of Atomic Energy traveling exhibit was installed at Aiken High School's new gymnasium in 1955, all of Aiken turned out. The Van de Graff electrostatic generator and an exhibit "reactor" that irradiated exhibit goers' dimes were the main draws. Children of plant employees helped to interpret the exhibits, holding forth on nuclear fission, isotopes, and "other subjects to the amazement of their elders." Source: *SRP News and Views*, 1955.

High Schoolers Explain Atomic Energy to Elders

No long-haired physicists but youthful students from Aiken High School, among them children of Savannah River Project employes, had the job of explaining atomic energy to the 8,000 persons who visited the American Museum of Atomic Energy exhibit when it set up shop, appropriately, at the city's futuristic new high school building. Carefully trained for their jobs, the student demonstrators reeled off information on nuclear fission, isotopes and other subjects to the amazement of their elders.

Explaining a reactor model to Curtis A. Nelson, right, top photo, the Atomic Energy Commission's manager for the Savannah River Plant, came easy for Jimmy Payne, left, son of Dunn Electric Line Foreman Leonard F. Payne of 200-H, and Jimmy Miller, son of B.F. Shaw Steamfitter Foreman Edward R. Miller, 100-K. Both boys are 10th grade students at Aiken High School.

Sally Herrmann, holding Geiger counter, tells how atomic energy combats disease to a group of visitors that includes her dad, Roy W. Herrmann, general superintendent, Carpentry and Paint, and his six-months-old grandson, Peter Roy Herrmann. (Photos by Salter)



FPM's Safety Achievement Award

Area	Craft
Week Ending March 9	
Miscellaneous Area Construction -- E. A. Rachal, division engineer.	Labor and Masonry -- Joe Kirkpatrick, general superintendent.
Week Ending March 16	
Miscellaneous Area Construction--J. F. Eppes, assistant field superintendent.	Labor and Masonry -- Joe Kirkpatrick, general superintendent.

Informal lectures were also held to benefit the general public. The YWCA sponsored a set of six lectures on atomic energy by SRP's Joseph Finke that ranged in subject material from the nature of matter to SRP's reactors.⁶² An all-day seminar held for 620 of the CSRA's teachers, who wanted to learn more about atomic energy and how to include it and its development in their curriculum, was a success. The seminar, held at Aiken's Schofield High School, brought two AEC officials from Washington, one a specialist in education and the second, a classification expert. John Gray, Winston Davis, and Arthur Tackman represented the plant. A reporter observed at the close of the seminar, "the inter-

est of the teachers in learning more about atomic energy was apparent by the large turn out and the attentiveness of the group during the lectures.”⁶³

The interest by area educators was further expressed a year later when an exhibit put together by Oak Ridge’s American Museum of Atomic Energy came to Aiken’s new high school gymnasium in March. The main draw for the mobile exhibit was the Van De Graff electrostatic generator that was invented by Dr. Robert J. Van De Graff at MIT and also the exhibit “reactor” that could irradiate exhibit goers’ dimes. Teaser articles were published on the important role atomic energy promised for future medicine. More than 830,000 individuals had seen the exhibit before it came to Aiken, and these numbers so impressed the Chamber of Commerce that they made the securing of an “Atomic Museum” a goal for the city in 1955.⁶⁴

Regional chapters of national professional organizations were newly created as the plant’s technical staff sought to establish regional networks and to maintain ties with the national communities. The Savannah River Chapter of the South Carolina Society of Engineers was created in 1952 and promptly claimed as members one-third of the project’s engineers, with membership expected to reach 500.⁶⁵ The Savannah River Chapter of the American Society for Metals, chartered in 1954, began to hold meetings and invite speakers with national reputations to the plant area. Presentations at venues such as the Old Heidelberg Inn were well-publicized and the CSRA public was invited to attend. The Savannah River Chemical Engineers Club of Aiken and Augusta, organized in 1953, was equally energetic, inviting members of the government’s national laboratories’ staff to town for presentations.⁶⁶

Social clubs were formed such as Du Pont’s Supervisory Club, which had a membership of 230 supervisors from across the plant. No shop talk was allowed; the idea was to foster friendship among the new staff and to acquaint them with their new home community. Accordingly, a meeting, held at Kaps’ Plantation Room, brought together the new Du Ponters with Captain Gaylard, Aiken’s polo referee and riding master, and Kenneth Dresner, an authority on polo and ponies.⁶⁷ The Atomic Energy Club was open to AEC personnel.⁶⁸ Social clubs were established for women that catered to the working woman as well as the homemaker. The Newcomers Career Club in Augusta invited all career women new to the Savannah River Area into its folds.⁶⁹

Community ties developed as plant families volunteered and performed community service. As examples, in 1954 two employees were elected as presidents of the Aiken Estates Civic Association and the Dunbarton Oaks Association.⁷⁰ A swimming pool was completed in 1956 in Williston, built by volunteers, many of whom were SRP employees. SRP employees also organized and staffed the Richmond County Suburban Fire Department.⁷¹ Frank Adams, general superintendent of General Services arrived to work at SRP in 1951. By the time he had been



(Above) New chapters of national professional organizations were established. In this view, the Savannah River Chapter of the Engineering Association hold a meeting at the plant. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative M-479b.

(Below) An explosion and fire in downtown Aiken on January 27, 1953 claimed 10 lives. Personnel and equipment from the Savannah River Site’s Fire, Patrol and Medical assisted at the scene for 20 hours and recovered the bodies. Courtesy of SRS Archives, negative DPESF 463-6.



in the area ten years, he had served as president of the Augusta-North Augusta United Fund, had served as chairman of the Augusta chapter of the American Red Cross, and became president of the Augusta Rotary Club.⁷² Kris Gimmy, who worked in Reactor Technology, conducted the Aiken Concert Band, which included a number of SRP

employees.⁷³ Inside the plant fence, the Community Chest Program was chosen by the plant management as a way for workers to show their community support. Each year, money was energetically collected in support of this program, and contributors would indicate which community should receive their donation. In 1952, \$50,908 was contributed; a year later, the total soared to \$74,015. Local leadership for the area communities posed with plant management as the checks were presented.

The newcomers contributed to larger social and political change as Augusta's Lester Moody had predicted. The AEC and Du Pont joined forces in putting pressure on the FCC to allow television broadcasting in Augusta because it would be of "inestimable value as a source of recreation" for project employees. Augusta was assigned channels six and twelve.⁷⁴

In race relations, the plant's presence brought slow but steady change as the distance between Federal law and South Carolina law and custom narrowed over time. Notably, Clemson University would reject a sizable AEC grant in 1957 to fund a nuclear program because the grant contract stipulated that the program would have to be open for enrollment by all students. While such a nuclear program was considered highly desirable—"almost essential"—by Edgar Brown, it would come at too high a cost. Clemson refused the grant while Georgia Tech and the University of North Carolina went forward with their plans with the AEC funding.⁷⁵

Plant employees played an instrumental role in establishing the Republican Party in Aiken County and surrounds. Traditionally, there had been only one party in South Carolina, the Democratic Party. Historian Walter Edgar quotes Governor Olin D. Johnston who in 1936, provided Democrats with a depiction of how his fellow statesmen would regard a Republican: "There are some grown children down in my state who have never seen a Republican in their lives, and would perhaps run from one if such a strange being wandered too close to their homes."⁷⁶

The growth of industry in the state brought different viewpoints into the state's political arena and the inclusion of a strong civil rights agenda within the Democratic Party platform dissatisfied some South Carolinians. Those dissatisfied formed the Dixiecrats or States Rights Party and nominated Governor Strom Thurmond for president. Governor Thurmond successfully carried his home state and gar-



(Above) Presentation of check by the officials of the Savannah River Plant to Aiken County Community Chest on November 24, 1952. (Left to Right) Curtis Nelson, Manager, Strom Thurmond, Chairman of Aiken County Community Chest, Don A. Miller, Manager of Operations, and R.K. Mason, Field Project Manager. and Bob Mason watch. Strom Thurmond Collection, photograph 1034. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.

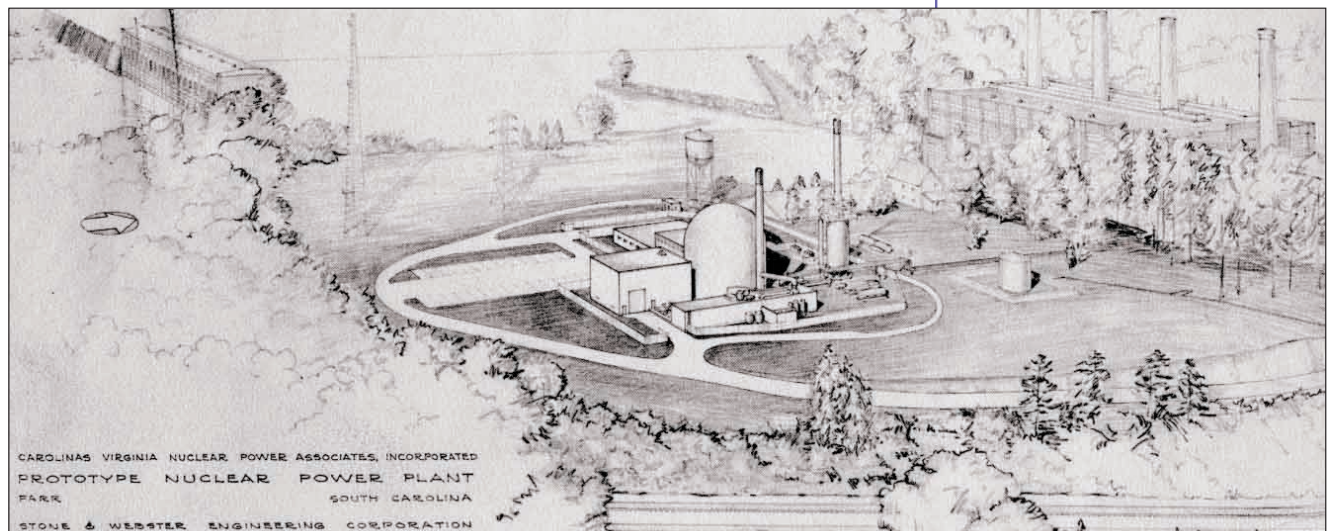
(Right) Eisenhower inauguration, 1953. Former President Harry S. Truman, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Vice President Richard M. Nixon and former President Herbert Hoover. Strom Thurmond Collection, photograph 10380. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.



nered more than a million popular votes, but the party disappeared after the election. The formation of the Dixiecrats marked the beginning of South Carolina's two party politics however. In 1952, Governor James F. Byrnes, an opponent of Truman, formed "Democrats for Eisenhower" and campaigned for Eisenhower across the state, garnering more dissatisfied Democrats. Increasing dissatisfaction with the Democratic platform triggered many to change their affiliation, and the young Republican Party in South Carolina was strengthened when Senator Thurmond switched parties in 1964 to begin campaigning for Barry Goldwater, who carried South Carolina in the presidential election. Historian Walter Edgar notes that the success of the state Republican politicians was not fully realized until the election of 1966 when statewide offices were carried by Republican party members.⁷⁷

Many of SRP's operations staff who were Republicans prior to their move to Aiken wished to vote accordingly and joined forces with others to establish the Republican Party in South Carolina and in their local communities. Aiken was a case in point. A slate of three site employees, Tallie Crocker, Gene England, and Ed Sampson ran repeatedly for Aiken City Council on the Republican ticket in the late 1950s. By 1964, the local Republicans captured three seats.⁷⁸ Efforts to organize the party on the county level occurred in the early 1960s. SRP employee Walt Joseph remembers the first convention. "The law required political conventions to be held in public buildings so the group reserved the courthouse for the designated evening. When the small band of party faithful arrived for the convention, they discovered the courthouse dark and locked. Repeated

Southeast's First Atomic Power Plant, Parr Shoals, SC. Conceptual drawing of Carolinas Virginia Nuclear Power Plant to be built at Parr Shoals. Drawing by Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation. Source: Cover Illustration on brochure, "Carolinas Virginia Nuclear Power Associates," not dated. Stetson Collection, SRS History Project.



ARTIST'S CONCEPTION of the Southeast's first atomic electric power plant now under construction at Parr, South Carolina.

CAROLINAS VIRGINIA NUCLEAR POWER ASSOCIATES

Formed in 1956 by four privately owned utilities.

Carolina Power & Light Company
South Carolina Electric & Gas Company

Duke Power Company
Virginia Electric and Power Company

attempts to phone the building custodian and other political figures were unsuccessful. Finally, in desperation, but within the letter of the law, the convention was held in the courthouse parking lot. Aiken County Republicans held the first countywide primary in the state of South Carolina in 1967. In some isolated precincts, parked cars with American flags served as makeshift polling places.” Change was also imminent in Georgia when the Crackers on the Georgia side of the Savannah, who had held onto the reins of Augusta’s city government, were brought up short by a wave of change that the newcomers helped to realize in the 1950s.



Conference on Atomic Energy held in Aiken, June 14, 1956. (Left to Right) R. M. Cooper, State Development Board, South Carolina Governor George Bell Timmerman, and Strom Thurmond, U.S. Senate Nominee from South Carolina. Strom Thurmond Collection, photograph 1255. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.

The creation of the Savannah River Plant was watched closely by the political leadership who saw nuclear energy as a path to regional economic growth. As new members of the growing nuclear community, Senator Edgar Brown and Governor Timmerman were invited to attend the tests at the Nevada Proving Grounds in April 1955. Another new member of the nuclear community, J. Strom Thurmond, would join with his colleagues in watching how the AEC spent monies in the future to make sure that South Carolina got its fair share. A proposal by South Carolina Electric & Gas for a test reactor at Parr, South Carolina, in 1955 was eagerly endorsed. Rumors that the AEC was going to build more reactors in early 1956 was watched closely by Thurmond, who would prefer them to be located at Savannah River rather than Hanford.⁷⁹ From new reactors to NASA installations, South Carolina was now a player with experience, and the fact that Senator Strom Thurmond was a native son didn’t hurt. Edgar Brown was also a staunch supporter. The papers of Senators Thurmond and Brown show they both maintained an acute interest in the plant and the development of atomic energy for their home state, and both let decision-makers know what South Carolina had to offer.

While many of the first overtures at garnering additional nuclear projects were not successful, a proposal by the Carolinas-Virginia Nuclear Power Associates for the AEC’s Power Demonstration Reactor Program in 1958 was successful. The Carolinas-Virginia Nuclear Power Associates was a collaboration of four utilities, Duke Power Company, Carolina Power and Light Company, South Carolina Electric and Gas Company, and Virginia Electric and Power Company. Stone and Webster Engineering Corporation and Westinghouse Electric Corporation built the \$17 million reactor complex at Parr Shoals, South Carolina. The 17,000-kilowatt nuclear power plant at Parr Shoals featured a pressure-tube reactor, heavy-water-cooled and heavy-water-moderated, fueled with slightly enriched uranium. It is notable that it used heavy-water technology, as did the Savannah River Plant reactors.

While South Carolina’s political leadership and Aiken’s planning board were vigilant in protecting the plant and its future, other Southern states also watched the progress of the plant and its impact. The Southern Governor’s Conference in 1955 took note and recommended that an exploratory study of the nuclear field and its applications be initiated within a southern context. In 1956, representatives of the Southern Governor’s Association met for a “Work Conference on Atomic Energy” in Aiken to survey nuclear energy development in relationship to industry, agriculture, medicine, public health, manpower, and education. Between 75 and 100 delegates attended the Aiken conference led by the Southern Regional Education Board.⁸⁰ A tour of the plant was included for attendees.

The Regional Advisory Council on Nuclear Energy was formed in 1957, and a program was adopted to implement recommendations for state and regional actions in atomic energy. Foremost, the council began a study on the advisability of a nuclear energy compact among the 16 southern states “for the development and regulation of the atom.” From the 1956 work sessions came several recommendations that would be the basis for the Council’s program: to establish a central clearinghouse for public information on atomic developments on the south; to expand training programs in the South for technicians and skilled manpower; to encourage nuclear education at Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies; to hold regional conferences and seminars and expand regional facilities that dealt with agricultural research and radiation; to assist universities to study nuclear research and educational programs; and to provide information on nuclear medical developments.

This far-reaching agenda involved the Savannah River Plant on two objectives. First an agreement was reached with the Southern Regional Education Board, and the AEC for the use of plant facilities to train students from southern universities and colleges. By

1958, students from the University of Florida, Georgia Institute of Technology, Alabama Polytechnic Institute, University of Georgia, University of Tennessee, and the University of Miami were in the program. No South Carolina universities were participants due to the funding proviso that enrollment should be open to all students. The plant was also considered for agricultural research, particularly, the use of radiation for forest research.⁸¹

The work sessions of 1956, which produced the Regional Advisory Council on Nuclear Energy and the ambitious program outlined above, were aimed at jolting the South into a leadership position in exploiting the benign uses of the atom. The Council was subsumed under the Southern Interstate Nuclear Board (SINB) in 1961.⁸² The jolt worked. Within a six-year period, all seventeen possible states signed the Southern Interstate Nuclear Compact, which was described as a nationally recognized nonfederal, public-supported program developed for services in nuclear energy, space, and related technologies. The compact was a model of interstate cooperation. The South may have lost out on the nineteenth-century industrial revolution, but Southern leaders had no intention of not being in the forefront of the revolution atomic energy had the potential to bring in the twentieth century.

Cover illustration for *Pattern For Atomic Progress in the South*. This pamphlet was prepared by the Regional Advisory Council on Nuclear Energy for the Southern Governor’s Conference held in Lexington, Kentucky on September 22, 1958. Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss 100, Subject Correspondence, “Atomic Energy,” 1958. Courtesy of Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina.

