

SMELLS LIKE MONEY: THE RISE AND FALL OF A PAPER DREAM IN DIXIE, 1920-  
1975.

by

LESLEY-ANNE STAFFORD REED

(Under the Direction of STEPHEN BERRY)

### ABSTRACT

The American Pulp and Paper Industry's move to production in the Southeastern United States constituted one of the most important restructurings of the American landscape in the post-Civil War era. In place of governmental regulation and conservation, private industry took hold of these duties and acquired what would eventually become the world's biggest tree plantation. In 1935, Union Bag and Paper (later Union-Camp) Corporation began negotiations with the City of Savannah, Georgia, to construct the world's largest paper mill along the banks of the Savannah River. This became a “perfect marriage” for the South's ailing forestlands—primarily its pines—and Union Bag's decreasing profits in the face of Canadian competition and a previous failure to adhere to chemical innovations in the paper-making process. The combined efforts of foresters, scientists, and community boosters turned the South into the modern era's tree farm, starting first with Savannah and its hinterlands. But in the 1960s and 1970s, escalating water pollution brought the paper industry to bear fault in the eyes of a major environmental movement. This dissertation examines all of these processes as well as reveals the psychological strategies of the modern paper industry to corral both southerners and their trees

INDEX WORDS: Pulp and paper industry, Savannah, Georgia, pines, Union-Camp Corporation, pollution, American environmental movement, U.S. South

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BA, Louisiana Tech University, 2006

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2012

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## DEDICATION

For my mother, who always knew I'd have "Dr." in front of my name one day, and for my father,  
who has been there every step of the way.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I was sitting on the patio of a suburban Starbucks in Austin, Texas, in the Spring of 2011 when the reality of this project sunk in deeper than it ever had before. I sat across the table from my father, who is not just one, but two, gaping generations removed from me. He is from hearty stock. His ancestors journeyed slow like molasses over the last couple of centuries, starting in North Carolina and eventually packing it in along the piney woods corridor of North Louisiana—where oil (and later, paper) replaced cotton as King in the early twentieth century. He won't listen to my reasoning, but I remain convinced that so many of his relatives have lived into their nineties because the Reed family patriarchs taught their offspring to eat only food raw and fresh from the earth. To this day, my father bites into a red onion as if it were the juiciest of green apples.

A visitor in a modernized and progressive city, he sat in Austin on that day in April quite frustrated with his daughter's penchant for writing what he deems the “boring” (and “liberal”) history. He is a much-trying and true conservative old-timer in a technologically-driven and youthful world, a baby-boomer whose parents ate shredded cabbage during the Great Depression. I remain forever frustrated by his stubborn inability to see the historical and cultural connections between then and now. Why he cannot understand that his family represented the very demographic that government- and industry-funded programs helped from the doldrums in the 1930s South, that baffles me. But something he said that afternoon struck me as surprisingly astute. After asking how “my paper” (i.e. my dissertation) was coming along, he shook his head with a smile when I replied with forthright ease, “Well. Right now I'm writing about the actual

paper-making process and the workers in the mills in Georgia starting in the 1930s.” Then he laughed. I huffed and puffed, of course, and demanded to know why that was so funny.

“You write about poor people, not interesting people.”

There. There it was. The hitch that breaks off for all of us historians trying to make a name for ourselves with students and with a reading public that always wants the sensational over the quietly triumphant. “How is poverty boring?” I replied, and the passion in my voice sounded like shattered glass falling after a quick earthquake. “How is the era of the Great Depression possibly boring?”

I was shocked at the blunt nature of his final reply.

“The Great Depression is not boring. But in the South it...was. In the South it was. If I read about the Great Depression, I want to read about Wall Street stock brokers jumping out of windows in New York City.” What he was looking for was the tragic romance in it. His own mother's roughened hands, which even I could remember from what I knew of her much later on, or the image of his grandfather chain-smoking on an old tractor, neither of these fit into the romantic notions his mind filtered through as he aged. So, instead, on his shelves were biographies of presidents (though not FDR's, notably) and memoirs of old movie stars. Because Clark Gable wouldn't have ever taken any interest in southern rural poverty, even though he starred in what is arguably the most influential film about the South. And why would anyone really care if he had?

My father had lost touch with his roots somehow, even though he was still eating them. What he was saying to me is that there is very little obvious romance to be found in smokestacks. Or filthy lumber yards. Or a court house. Americans have long preferred their histories regal, romantic, and old--and particularly their southern ones. One of the reasons the South as a region



becomes perpetually labeled as backward is because it is its older and more violent history that nobody can get enough of. Some historians would argue that the South is not distinct culturally from the rest of the country at all anymore. Yet, somehow, synonymous with “the South” are visions of the great fallen cities—the ones where plantation tours cost fifty dollars now and guides gloss over the brutalities of slavery.

My father's doubts made me more resolved than ever to write the modern South as a place of intrigue—a place where the changes in the landscape and the movements of those people, struggling to re-make a world, would mean something to readers. So, I must thank him for that and the thousand other small ways in which his raising of me and communicating to me have strengthened my humanity despite the differences in our opinions. It has been his fervent dedication to my higher education (and a hope that I would “make it” further than he had) that opened all of life's doors for me. Well, that, and his fried chicken recipe.

Ours is a family hodge-podged together by chance. My mother was raised by a southern belle but broke that mold and spoke her mind—sometimes too much. It is her legacy that pushes me to write the world I see so that her wit and unfulfilled dreams are not in vain. And it is my sister Joan, because we both share that hunger, who is my closest connection to another human (and to humanity) on this earth. This manuscript would not exist without phone calls at two in the morning, endless cups of coffee, warm hugs, and the way that she cares me for unconditionally and without restraint.

Since this is foremost a professional work, I think it appropriate to end with the list of people who entered my life during graduate school and helped me tirelessly to mold this topic into reality. Christopher Lawton has been with my ideas of Savannah almost as long as I have. I do not think I will ever be able to repay this deep debt of friendship and advice, but I will always

try nonetheless. Derek and Chelsea Bentley sat on many porches with me over the years, helping me shape my ideas about my project as well as about myself. And to Tore Olsson, Barton Myers, Timothy Johnson, Albert Way, Darren Grem, Chris Huff, Tom Okie, Meg Brearley, Kathryn Tucker, Julia Long, and Brian Benoit: thank you not only for believing in the importance of the work I do but also for allowing me to learn from the revelations your lives and research have brought to you. Professors Jim Cobb, Shane Hamilton, Allan Kulikoff, Pamela Voekel, Paul Sutter, John Inscoe, and William Steuck met with me countless times over six years to shape this project, to breathe their superior wisdom and knowledge onto the sails of a very nascent academic ship, so to speak. The history department at the University of Georgia bred an environment of camaraderie that I perceive to be quite rare. I am forever thankful that it allowed me into its gates.

And lastly, but the farthest from least, thank you Stephen Berry for taking a chance on a jovial but naïve young twentieth-century historian. I am, and this is best put simply, proud to be your student. Your words take us all back into the richest and most haunting moments of the American story. If I can achieve just a glimpse of that in my own career, I will count myself successful. And a special added thanks to you and Frances Berry for opening your home and your fridge to an impoverished graduate student who needed a second family in the midst of academic stressors. The Doctors Berry, you are and always will be an important part of my life.

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## INTRODUCTION: A SOUTH ROMANTIC, A SOUTH INDUSTRIAL

*Like a beautiful woman once doomed by the vagaries of fate to obscurity, Savannah's face has finally emerged, and hundreds of journalists and artists and craftsmen are paying tribute to her charm, while industrialists from all over the country are courting her, impressed...by the harbor tours at sunset.*

(Betsy Fancher, from *Savannah: Renaissance of the Heart*, 1976)<sup>1</sup>

*There's nothing in South Georgia, people will tell you, except straight, lonely roads, one-horse towns, sprawling farms, and tracts of planted pines. It's flat, monotonous, used-up, hotter than hell in the summer and cold enough in the winter that orange trees won't grow. The rivers are muddy, wide and flat, like somebody's feet...Unless you look close, there's little majesty. It wasn't always this way.*

(Janisse Ray, from *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 1999)<sup>2</sup>

Jim Fallows hopped down from a bus platform in the “Mother City” of Georgia on an unassuming afternoon in mid-June, 1970. Unfamiliar humidity pressed the twenty-one-year-old down into the sidewalk, but onward he marched with two large duffel bags stretched across his shoulders. He had been hand-picked by consumer activist Ralph Nader to lead eleven other young researchers into Savannah to investigate the effects of industrial land-use, pollution, and corporate power on a southern town via the increasingly obvious and deleterious effects of Union-Camp Corporation's thirty-five year reign as the world's largest paper mill on the banks of the Savannah River. Fallows would later gain notoriety as President Jimmy Carter's speech-writer, and as a print and radio journalist he is still relevant and writing today in the pages of *Atlantic Monthly*. But in the summer of 1970 he had no major credentials save for spunk and a recent Harvard degree. Local observers that afternoon called him “scraggly” and thought he

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<sup>1</sup> Betsy Fancher, *Savannah: Renaissance of the Heart* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 153.

<sup>2</sup> Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* (Milkweed Editions, 1999), 13.

had an obvious but indescribable “northern” demeanor.<sup>1</sup> Suddenly an alleged carpetbagger, Fallows represented a larger cadre of political helpmates that Nader—dubbed the “unofficial inspector general of the United States” by the *New York Times* the following year—employed that summer for case studies across the country.<sup>2</sup> Nader called companies like Union “outlaws.”<sup>3</sup> He believed firmly that he was sending Fallows and a team in to investigate a series of corporate environmental crimes—not the least of which was the victimization of Georgians by business *and* their local government. The American paper industry liked to say that they were the helpmate of simple tree farmers, scaled up, and that pulp and paper had brought the South into a truly modern, and truly global, age. Regardless of the real truth behind such claims, Nader wanted to expose the long-term repercussions of industrial growth.

Fallows set up shop that June ahead of the others in two tiny row houses on Price Street in downtown Savannah (a rather “dicey” section of town, as he recalls), effectively establishing a control base for the project.<sup>4</sup> By the time Fallows finished gathering his crew, he had recruited even a local high school student whose father did not much approve of his daughter’s summer activities. Southerners know that every cliché about their summers is true. Being young and enthusiastic helped their cause, but with that many people in such small quarters, things quickly became a sweltering, mosquito-filled mess. Far cooler was the welcome the group received in town. If Nader had anticipated Southern hospitality, he had seriously miscounted. John Berendt’s *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* had not yet cast its haunting literary light on

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<sup>1</sup> The “scraggly” reference was pulled from a nostalgic piece that ran in the *Savannah Morning News* in August of 2003; one interviewee in the piece recalled thinking of Fallows and his team in this manner the first time he encountered them. Many locals viewed them mostly as the kids from “up North,” according to many of the sources I encountered.

<sup>2</sup> Quote regarding Nader taken from New York Times reporter Leonard Ross in “The Chemical Feast,” *New York Times*, Aug. 8, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> James Fallows (with foreword by Ralph Nader), *The Water Lords: Ralph Nader's Study Group Report on Industry and Environmental Crisis in Savannah, Georgia* (Grossman Publishers, original printing 1971), x.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

the place, but Savannah had long been known as a southern hothouse of sorts—seductive, noble, but a little dirty, a place where the myths and the moonlight of the Old South were dying the hardest. Writer Sherwood Anderson had called it the land of sunsets.<sup>5</sup> An editor of *Atlanta Magazine* in the '60s called Savannah “not so much a city as a region of the heart, a quality of grace,” with its “spires, and its fretted grillwork in the twilight.”<sup>6</sup> Romantic at its surface, literary, yes, but also the home of deeply-embedded traditions and presumptions that had become increasingly questionable in a South settling into a post-Civil Rights era and simultaneously joining in on a burgeoning environmental movement.

Dirk Schenkkan, another student in residence that summer, also remembers being called an “outsider,” a “carpetbagger,” and—perhaps worst of all—a “treehugger,” in the place that had become an epicenter for industrial tree farming in the South.<sup>7</sup> Because the mill still employed 5,000 residents directly—and many more indirectly in the woods of its periphery—speaking out against “the paper men” was largely taboo. Union Camp had officials on every major council and board in the city. Somehow no one pointed out the obvious irony: that Fallows and company were insulted for a “northern-ness” they shared with the goliath Union—originally a northern company—that the city had long allowed into their metaphorical bed.

Some residents were bolder, however and invited the researchers in for dinner and out to bars; casual conversation often turned more serious. Some of Savannah’s older families invited them perhaps out of noblesse oblige, or more likely a mix of curiosity and defensiveness. As John Berendt would go on to point out two decades later, it was the symbolic power in Savannah that lay in the hands of Savannah's older, pedigreed families—the ones whose ancestors had

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<sup>5</sup> From Sherwood Anderson, “Adrift in Georgia: Savannah” (1930).

<sup>6</sup> Betsy Fancher, *Savannah: Renaissance of the Heart*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Phone Interview with Dirk Schenkkan, conducted by Lesley-Anne Reed, 25 February 2007, notes in possession of the author.

owned the nearby plantations or managed the cotton and turpentine shipments leaving the port. But clearly the real economic power lay with the men Fallows, Schenckan, and the others weren't meeting—the industrial parvenus, the nouveau riche and their boosters who had not yet completely bound old and new money Savannah together, financially or culturally.

Fallows and his team discovered that while the tourism industry spent its time touting one Savannah from the city's center—the sugared and slow-moving version--the city's economic engine lay in the nearby woods, where pine barons had replaced pine barrens in the region's understanding of itself. Savannah had invested its economic livelihood in the growth of the paper industry thirty-five years prior, fed by the glut of second-growth pine harvested in its hinterlands. The region had been involved in a climactic moment in 1935—when the problems of southern deforestation and mismanagement seemed all but solved upon the arrival of a paper salesman from New York. Union-Bag President Alexander Calder would pose for whiskey ads in his spare time, but as a businessman drove a hard game; under his wing, the company (later Union Camp after a merger in 1956) took the keys to the piney woods kingdom. The company played a crucial role in the erection of a paper-making “complex” across the South; some called it a new “empire in Dixie.” Many southerners—including workers and residents in and around Savannah--became genuinely convinced that a “forest of tomorrow” would usher in an era of modernity previously desired but seemingly unimaginable.

Coastal Georgia, like much of the piney woods South, became an industrial center built on top of the ashes of an old plantation empire, run by a brand new class of businessmen advised by a cohort of scientific foresters. But the aims of private business grew bigger, and their reach wider, than the locals ever imagined they would. By the early 1960s, Union's mill was worth four million dollars. They leased thousands and thousands of acres throughout Georgia, the

Carolinas, and into Virginia; they took control of so large a percentage of timberland that the pines became a veritable plantation, stretching out in thick lines like veins. Because of this exponential growth, Fallows has since reasoned, when they arrived, the research group found in many of Savannah's average residents "tangible signs that southerners were no longer willing to invite in [industry] with no questions asked."<sup>8</sup>

The paper men came to the South in the 1920s and 1930s, and in Georgia they all made their obligatory paeans to founder General James Oglethorpe and his original visions for the state. But as Chapter One points out, through its survey of early settlement and lumbering in Georgia, Oglethorpe had seen trees as primarily an *obstacle* to agriculture when he founded the colony of Georgia in 1732. And he was directly responsible for the initial slow growth of the forest industry because he considered wood products "burthens," not suitable commodities on which to base trade.<sup>9</sup> Oglethorpe could never have imagined an empire built around trees. Still, these modern boosters bespoke of the colonial founder as an ecological peacemaker of sorts—a man with a communitarian vision for forest, farm, and politics alike.<sup>10</sup> What actually happened is that rice and cotton moved down from South Carolina, bringing with them heavy axes and, of course, slave labor.

Chapter One will also explore the early history of the Georgia pine barrens. Oglethorpe's original plan for an egalitarian community free of slave labor was abandoned quickly. New settlers commodified the Georgia coast, and then its interior, without pause. Savannah quickly turned into a functioning city with the same class divisions as any other colonial or antebellum metropolis in America—the wealthy elite occupied its center, and on the struggling periphery

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<sup>8</sup> Quote from Fallows, *The Water Lords*, xiv.

<sup>9</sup> Thaddeus Mason Harris, *Biographical Memorials of James Oglethorpe: founder of the colony of Georgia in North America* (Boston, printed for the author 1841), digitized from New York Public Library (Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations).

<sup>10</sup> G. Melvin Herndon, "Forest Products of Colonial Georgia," *Journal of Forest History* 23 (1979), 130-135.



slaves and poor whites eked out the livings they could off the scraps of a plantation-based economy. Out in the woods, though, burgeoning lumber and naval stores industries did turn a wandering class of men and their families into the South's first lumber “men.” Still, no one yet even remotely considered the possibility that one day men wouldn’t carve farms out of the forest but would farm the forests themselves.

The era after the Civil War—the subject of Chapter Two—was merely an intensification of earlier lumber practices, one that treated the forests as a resource to be exhausted as quickly as possible. Timber land in the South, to a large degree, fell under the hands of Northern and Midwestern speculators, and the Southern lumber industry entered what many historians have called a “cut and run” period in which turpentiners, saw mills, and random burning devastated the state's native longleaf.<sup>11</sup> Only gradually did a close-knit and vociferous group of foresters and scientists in Georgia begin to advocate for the permanency and renewability of pine farms, particularly those that could serve a burgeoning paper industry.<sup>12</sup> Though some of them ornery, they all agreed on one thing, best summed up by a pulp and paper engineer named R. W. Fannon

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<sup>11</sup> This dissertation will engage historiography pertaining to the creation of a “New South” in the post-Civil War era. Scholars have long debated the temporal framework of a New South order that boosters like Henry Grady touted to fix a physically, emotionally, and economically scarred South in the postwar era. Godfather of modern southern history, C. Vann Woodward, suggested that the rhetoric of the New South was palatable to whites primarily because it allowed them to dissolve racial conflict, the recantations of their racist actions, and economic changes into a veritable syrup of romance (*Origins of the New South*). This traditional narrative of the New South dictates that the collapse of the planter class and subsequent rise of the southern businessmen created a new social polity to serve them; the rise of the southern cotton mill has been used to symbolize the ascendance of a new polity, but many don’t find the explanation adequate. Edward Ayers pulled the narrative away from Reconstruction and toward agrarian revolt (Farmer's Alliance and People's Party); for Ayers, the railroad played the role that Redeemers played for Woodward (*Promise of the New South*). And Gavin Wright then painted the “newer” period as a post-1940 labor market (*Old South, New South*). The economy of the post-Civil War South remained largely regional until World War II, and there also existed a persistent continuation of “old planter” opposition to education. The turning point, Wright proposed, might have actually been the *break-up* of the antiquated mill village system. An isolated labor market, a repressive agricultural system, and lack of external investment had staved off a new South until the 1930s. Longleaf: A general overview: The longleaf population in the tidewater region of the Carolinas was largely destroyed by 1850; many Carolinians then moved on to Georgia. When those were also exhausted, during the 1880s, the turpentine industry migrated to northern Florida, Alabama, and westward, in search of fresh pine. Farmers often replaced the forest industrialists when they left areas behind, but sandy, acidic soils worked against them.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Earl Porter, conducted by Elwood Maunder and Joe Miller of the Forest History Society, October 1963, 29.

in 1926: because of the large investment necessary in the production of paper mills, they would not be able to follow, as saw mills, turpentine, and lumber-cutting had, that “retreating fringe of virgin forest.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1936, all of those efforts “paid off,” when Savannah succeeded in luring Union Bag to the South. The transition from a rural to a more urban and industrial South, however, was far from linear, and Union Bag did not end up in Savannah by chance.<sup>14</sup> As Chapter Three seeks to show, push and pull factors gradually made Union’s relocation its only viable option. In 1861 Union Bag Machine Company had formed from several smaller outfits, for the distinct purposes of acquiring four patents in the paper bag making field and for the manufacture and sale of bag making machinery under license. By 1899, six paper bag organizations had merged under the name Union Bag and Paper Company and began expanding operations through acquisition of pulp and paper mills, woodland properties, and lumber mills in Quebec. And in 1916 the company became incorporated, jumping forward in production on the backs of several profitable years.<sup>15</sup> By the 1920s, Union owned pulp and paper mills from New York to Washington State.

The twenties and early thirties were hard times for Union, as they were for so many industries in the immediate era of the Depression.<sup>16</sup> Hard times had taught them, though, that cutting corners with cheaper labor and accessible resources never hurt the profit margins. Under the direction of Calder, so full of wit, charm, and stern business acumen that he perhaps deserves

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<sup>13</sup>R.W. Fannon, “Growth of the Pulp and Paper Industry in the South,” from the *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Southern Forestry Congress*, held in Richmond, Virginia, January 6-7, 1926, 96.

<sup>14</sup> See: Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960*. Kirby's catalog of work on the rural South has been instrumental in helping to form this project. I was fortunate enough to consult on several occasions with Kirby before his death in 2009. Here, I point most to *Rural Worlds Lost*, but Kirby's larger repertoire highlights the temporal debate of the New South as well as the connections between the rural and the urban in the twentieth century. Before his recent death, Kirby had turned to writing (at least peripherally) of the southern pulp and paper complex.

<sup>15</sup>Chapter Three will provide detailed information regarding Union's evolving finances and business-related history.

<sup>16</sup> Donald T. Hardenbrook, “Union Bag-Camp Looks at the Coming Age of Paper and Wood,” *Analysts Journal* Vol. 13 No. 3, Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, National Federation of Financial Analysts Societies, May 1957.

his own book-length study, Union entered a phase of rebirth in the 1930s. Like a perfect partnership in the timing, local boosters in the 1930s convinced both northern investors and local residents alike that the Southern paper industry would open up the area to commerce in ways previously unimaginable.<sup>17</sup> This was not “cut and run.” This was responsible, renewable, modern, managed, industrial farming. And under those auspices, Union quickly realized its “paper dream in Dixie.” Boosters, politicians and industrial foresters—all of them self-professed “paper men” and “men of industry”—re-employed the already half-century-old rhetoric of a “New South” to promote jobs, forestry, the leasing of timber lands, and a general conviviality with the rapidly growing paper industry.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, even Union itself was staggered not only by the speed at which Georgia slash pines could be harvested, cut, and processed (and then regrown), but also the breadth of the country’s—and the world’s—ever-growing appetite for paper.

By the 1950s, Georgia produced eleven percent of the nation’s pulpwood and paper; the South as a whole produced fifty-eight percent.<sup>19</sup> All of this rang in a new era for coalitions between Southern boosters and Northern interests, the subject of Chapter Four. Federal, state, and even local officials began to rewrite the South’s history to accommodate their vision of a new “forest economy” in which the “South of song and story” would no longer be a land of cotton, corn, tobacco and cane but instead a modern, working forest that represented an almost impossibly efficient equilibrium between humans and nature. This is how Georgia's trees

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<sup>17</sup> This short composite sketch of early industry compiled from many and varied readings, but most directly from: G. Melvin Herndon, “Forest Products of Colonial Georgia,” 130-135.

<sup>18</sup> The term “paper men” will be employed throughout the dissertation to serve two main purposes. One is largely practical. The boosters, foresters, politicians—and, later in the work, tree farmers and mill workers—that I will study are an overtly male group. This isn’t to say that I won’t address gender in the work but to suggest that the processes of making southern paper and industry was a largely male affair and had much to do, I may find, with concepts of southern masculinity. Also, I should note that many historians have argued that elite males in the South—boosters—have traditionally wielded much more power in their respective communities than elite Northern businessmen or corporate official have in theirs.

<sup>19</sup> These basic stats are pulled from a plethora of sources, but the percentages here come directly from: Merle Prunty Jr., “Recent Expansions in the Southern Pulp-Paper Industries,” *Economic Geography* Vol. 32, No. 1, 51-57. In 1956, according to Prunty’s report, Union held 900,000 acres of timberland and remained the largest pulp and paper production unit on one site (nationally).

became at once *industrial and natural*, and public relations specialists worked overtime to deliver a new gospel of the trees. That proved increasingly harder as Union expanded, becoming a vertically-integrated goliath no one had imagined.

By 1970, the myth of the industry as the perfectly “natural” savior of the South was fraying at the seams. It wasn’t merely that tree-farming and pulp-producing had become a deeply unnatural industrial process but that its byproducts had suddenly made the Savannah River the Southern equivalent of the Cuyahoga. The South had at last joined the industrial club—and it was reaping its alleged industrial “rewards.” This is precisely why Nader’s team headed to Savannah. Chapter Five is the story of Fallows, his investigation of Union, and the environmental degradation that seemingly no one at all saw coming—from the water. The story of Nader’s quest, in fact, was the fire-starter for this work. Fallows’ study, *The Water Lords*, became an important part of the dialogue in the burgeoning American environmental movement. Savannah stood at the crossroads of this new movement and the industrial legacies of the South—the death of King Cotton, the resurrection of the land via the forests, and, finally, the first flush of globally-reaching businesses that created new questions for Southerners and historians alike.

As James C. Cobb points out in his *Selling of the South*, as late as 1938 Franklin Roosevelt named the South as the nation’s number one persistent economic problem. By then, the New South rhetoric had already aged and failed for half a century. “Industrialists were less interested in schools and hospitals” (i.e. social reforms more generally), he insists, “than in low taxes.”<sup>20</sup> It wasn’t until business acumen combined with Progressivism in the 1920s that industrial growth became associated with societal betterment in the American political mind. But the Great Depression would shatter many of those initial dreams, and, as Cobb shows, it was

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<sup>20</sup> James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South*, 3.

not until the post-World War II era that the “idea that promotion of economic expansion would be a legitimate function of government gained considerably wide acceptance.”<sup>21</sup> But Cobb *knew* that there was another, slightly-earlier story to be told along the banks of the Savannah River. Indeed, he cites Fallows and the *Water Lords* on several pages in *Selling*. During a southern history seminar in my first year of graduate school, he pointed with a sly smile to a footnote in the book—a footnote he knew would lead me to the story of Nader, Fallows, and Union Bag.<sup>22</sup>

This dissertation, then, is the story of how Savannah boosters sold Union on their town and then reaped the consequences. It is the story of the ways that people—families, farmers, foresters, and later industrial businessmen and workers—lived on the land, as well as the ways they conceptualized it, and how these things changed as coastal Georgia transitioned from a more rural society to a marginally-urban one.<sup>23</sup> This work is also the story of how Georgians became “paper men” themselves—how they confronted changing economic and social relationships to the land, and especially, to the trees. As the pines were transformed from an obstacle to a renewable resource (and then into an endangered species, according to both ecologists and impassioned activists like Fallows), Southerners’ conception of themselves and their land also changed. They became industrial workers, in many cases, no longer farmers. But many farmers remained on the land, albeit in a much more complex capacity. Rural residents moved to towns, then suburbs, where they re-made their ideas of landscape and finally saw the culmination of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>22</sup> This contract held that Union would be “harmless from any claims, demands, or suits for the pollution of air or water caused by operation of the plant” and that the Industrial Committee of Savannah would pay any incurred fees for subsequent litigation. (Footnote from p. 230 of Cobb, *Selling*.)

<sup>23</sup> Mikko Saikku, *This Delta, This Land*; Saikku’s book is not anthropocentric like most historical monographs but is instead mainly a study of a bioregion—the Mississippi Delta. But Saikku’s work and commentary has done much to open up a new dialogue of southern environmental history. Here he examines the ways that humans literally changed the Delta’s landscape, from Native American farming practices to European agriculture. He is, at once, making the Delta’s environmental history unique AND part of broader patterns in American (and even global) environmental history. He also makes valuable connections between industry, agriculture, and ecological changes. For example, he shows how the expansion of the cotton empire linked directly to the development of larger-scale flood control techniques. Later, he shows how timber clearing opened new areas to settlement.

these environmental changes come seeping out of their water taps. Many of them would eventually protest those changes. But it is also important to remember that trees bore a kind of witness to these changes, embodied them, and to some degree caused them; trees, it is fair to say, were the matrix within which twentieth-century Georgians (and, on a larger scale, Southerners) were formed. Ultimately it is this symbiotic relationship between trees and people that form a major animating impulse for this work, though it takes the specific form of an investigation into all that brought Union to Savannah, and all that followed in its train.

In 1950, a representative from the American Pulp and Paper Association named W.B. Greeley wrote a treatise on a “rational approach to forest practices on private lands” for *American Forests* magazine. By then, the pulp and paper industry had made major inroads in the South; in fact, it had made major inroads in the very manufacture of American life. Its relationship to forestry and the people “of the forest” (i.e. rural southerners) became so utterly important that Greeley suggested that “by teacher or by policeman” the industry would have to ensure that southerners managed their forests in a timely and holistic manner. In his eyes, such a relationship had long flourished in European countries, where land was a rare prize. “I have seen the lines of sturdy country women coming out of the woods,” Greeley wrote, “with heavy branches on their backs.” But that level of commitment and connection to the land had never materialized in America, he went on, because the soil here was free and cheap and seemingly boundless. The frontier mentality—a huge part of this work because it has traditionally been such a large part of the southern mind—had ravaged the forests.<sup>24</sup> To a certain extent, this is true.

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<sup>24</sup> Very recently, environmental historian Mart Stewart emphasized the *lack* of wilderness in the South. Even during the colonial period, he suggested, slaves and workers knew even the darkest crevices of the woods around them. Agricultural life in the swamps of the South, for example, basically required of its slaves an intimate knowledge of the roughest and most treacherous land and water. For the definitions of wilderness and even conservation/environmentalism, we often look to Thoreau. But Thoreau is Northeastern, Stewart insists, just like

The “forest-earned” dollar, as Greeley put it, would make southerners re-evaluate their ideas about trees. And that is what the pulp and paper industry has done en masse—for rural dwellers and urbanites alike.<sup>25</sup>

Savannah, in turn, is a place where we are most ceremoniously confronted with what historian Numen Bartley once called the “two Souths.”<sup>26</sup> One is older, rooted down not only in the hardpan of poverty or the smell of fried chicken and barbecue on a Saturday night but also in the triumph of a southern spirit over heat and failure and two centuries of an inferiority both real and imagined. There is something romantic about this older and dustier South, as there always is in the withering, even if it never was the land of bourbon-sucking cavaliers and debutantes that *Gone with the Wind* convinced us it might have once been. This South Romantic has always partially obscured and tinged the South Industrial. Like Phoenix rising from the ashes, Union Bag was erected triumphantly upon the ruins of an older era. The New South owes everything to the Old one. The South was always behind, always backward, always playing catch-up, always scrambling, always on the make, always out to prove itself, always hoping to be truly modern. It is the ultimately irony that the region achieved many of its industrial dreams just as the landscape began to show signs of pollution too invasive to ignore.

Savannah is, then, also a character in the story of this “paper dream.” Second only perhaps to New Orleans or Charleston in its tragic aura, it has entered the American mind as a place steeped in the thickest of syrupy romances. Its figurative masthead is a plantation's whitewashed porch, its mascot a mockingbird singing sweetly from the branches of some ancient magnolia tree. The city had bars when bars were not even legal, and now it is known notoriously

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Turner is Western. Article from Paul Sutter and Chris Manganiello, ed., *Environmental History and the American South: A Reader* (University of Georgia Press, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> W.B. Greeley, “A Rational Approach to Forest Practices on Private Lands,” from the 1950 Annual Meeting of the APPA, reprinted in *American Forests*, May 1950.

<sup>26</sup> Numan Bartley, *The New South, 1945-1980*, 105.

for its liberal open-container policy. John Berendt, whose *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* stands as the city's modern sonnet, wrote that the town was and is like “*Gone with the Wind*” on mescaline.”<sup>27</sup> Many an essayist has joked that in Charleston, a visitor will get asked who their parents were, in Atlanta they will be asked what their job is, and in Savannah, they will be asked what they would like to drink.<sup>28</sup> William Bartram wrote that the city's magnolias smelled sweet like the finest perfumes. (This was before the sulphur permeated the air.) John Muir once slept for a week under the oaks of its cemetery. Savannah is a place known for its ghosts. The city's tourism has come to depend upon it.

With the metaphorical equivalent of an eraser-pen, Savannah's city planners, beginning in the 1960s, relegated the last century of their city and its hinterlands to the obscurities of the more-academic history, instead highlighting the white-wigged, mint-julep-sucking families of its earlier incarnation—the one Sherman purportedly refused to burn down during his march to the sea. The ghosts of the Civil War remain much more intriguing than paper mills or environmental racism. But in 1971, industry experts would venture that paper-making was proving a far scarier danger than Sherman ever was.<sup>29</sup> In literature and in popular history, the Port of Savannah remains awash in the imagery of an Old South dependent upon mono-crop agriculture and the social and economic dominance of a wealthy white paternalism. Guidebooks revere stately oaks shadowing the town squares, panoplies of pine on dusty roads leading outward, all smiled upon by a bright southern sun. Few of them mention nearby pulpwood mills, chemical manufacturers, or the conditions of the Savannah River. None of them will tell you about the importance of a new oxygen-based bleaching process—which cut down on the mills' carbon footprint after

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<sup>27</sup> John Berendt, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story* (Vintage Books, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Line taken specifically from: Tom Coffey, *Only in Savannah: Stories and Insights on Georgia's Mother City* (Savannah: Frederic C. Beil, 1994), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Quote from Harrison Wellford in Fallows, *The Water Lords*, xv.



decades of environmental degradation. Even when it is successful, industrialization doesn't make the South “southern”; the older sites do. And so the industry must often be tucked away. But once, as this dissertation will show, the pungent smell of paper-making's sulphur pervaded every local's thought about their economic future. And it smelled a lot like money in the beginning.

## CHAPTER 1: SAVANNAH RISING

*“There was something, I thought, very graceful in the millions upon millions of tall and slender columns, growing up in solitude, not crowded upon one another, but gradually appearing to come closer and closer 'till they formed a compact mass, beyond which nothing could be seen.”*

(Basil Hall, on the Georgia longleaf pine, from *Travels in North America*, 1827-1828)<sup>1</sup>

*“Georgia became a vast expanse of docks, dense with the cotton and turpentine and resin which the railroads have brought down from the fields and forests of the whole Georgia interior to form the selvedge of the salt marsh here stretching to the horizon and facing into it.”*

(William Dean Howells, from “Savannah Twice Visited,” 1919)<sup>2</sup>

In 1827, the Scottish naval officer (cum travel writer) Basil Hall etched delicate scenes of a pristine and unbroken pine forest in what were still the wilds of Georgia. His travels that year had already led him through a variety of the South's corridors, but he claimed to be bored by most of them. It is through outsiders' eyes like Hall's that we saw every corner of the Georgia wilderness first. “Wilderness” was, in fact, during this early period often defined as “forested area.”<sup>3</sup> It was not until Hall left the port town of Savannah behind, headed into the interior of the Georgia Piedmont, that he felt at once truly and happily belittled by a vast ocean of pine trees, marked here and there by the sun in “great patches of lustre”.<sup>4</sup> But whatever beauty the trees offered, Hall thought that they offered no culture: “Perhaps the same remark will hold pretty generally in the world, animate as well as inanimate—the higher the culture, the richer the fruit,

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<sup>1</sup>Captain Basil Hall, for the Royal Navy, *Travels in North America in the years 1827 and 1828, in Three Volumes: Volume III*, Edinburgh: printed for Cadell and Company, Edinburgh and Simpkin and Marshall, London, 1829, 256. For a much more detailed account of Hall's impact on travel writing in Georgia, see: Christopher R. Lawton's Dissertation, University of Georgia, Department of History, December 2011.

<sup>2</sup> From William Dean Howells, “Savannah Twice Visited,” 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (Yale University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Captain Basil Hall, for the Royal Navy, *Travels in North America in the years 1827 and 1828, in Three Volumes: Volume III*, Edinburgh: printed for Cadell and Company, Edinburgh and Simpkin and Marshall, London, 1829, 175.

the flowers, the perfume.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, it was the travel writer's ubiquitous critique of Georgians' haphazard-seeming mobility that produced the first published impressions of the settlements seeping outward from Savannah.

The Georgia pine was not always so wrapped up in these notions of class. Perfumed only by its stinging needles, the longleaf pine forest of the American South once stretched sixty million acres wide, sweeping from the southeastern tip of Virginia, east to a flat point in Texas, and down further into the Piedmont regions of Alabama and Georgia. The trees were always hemmed-in by aridity to the West of their limits, and by freezing, heavier soils to the North. These were the pines that Native Americans hunted deep within. At the time of western settlement, at best estimate they totaled about 85 million acres (of the 156 acres in its native area). Native American agricultural burning techniques had helped to form the longleaf woodlands, which began where the eye could see and extended into a leathery haze at the horizon line, dotted with open spaces where fire had carved out natural breaks. And although it is almost impossible to know when and if Native Americans interrupted the longleaf's virginal growth cycle, ecologists can surmise that their practices had helped to make the pine fire-resistant. Their migratory slash-and-burn techniques also increased the amount of deciduous trees throughout the Southeast.<sup>6</sup>

William Bartram traversed these southern pines in 1791 and deemed them “stately,” and, indeed, “vast.”<sup>7</sup> Seventy years later, famed naturalist John Muir walked the fall line of the Gulf States along the northern edge of the longleaf forest. Muir described the massive pines he

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<sup>5</sup> Hall, *Travels*, 276.

<sup>6</sup> Basic information for Native American agricultural techniques in the Southeast gathered from and/or informed by: Mikko Saikku and Timo Myllyntaus, *Encountering the Past in Nature: Essays in Environmental History* (Ohio University Press, 2001); Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Megan Kate Nelson, *Trembling Earth: a Cultural History of the Okefenokee Swamp* (University of Georgia Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Bartram; Klaus Steinbeck, “Changing Trees Bring Changing Forests,” Prepared for the Daniel B. Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, Published 1997.

encountered on his journey as “strong, hard, and very resinous” and wrote passionately of his thankfulness for “admission to this magnificent realm.”<sup>8</sup> This was the forest modern Georgia writers like Janisse Ray heard tale of, longed for. Even if he did not see the forest the same way these writers would come to, Oglethorpe's legacy is forever tied up in coastal Georgia, and in the trees. A nine-foot statue of him commands Chippewa Square, nestled in the center of Savannah's twenty-one surviving town grids.<sup>9</sup> Daniel Chester French, who would find a greater fame in his design of the Lincoln Memorial a few years later, posed the British general forever standing at attention south-ward, his gaze locked in concentration toward the Spanish threat from Florida. Chippewa Square is lined with oaks and smaller arboreal adornments to shade his gaze, purposefully gothic and haphazard. Realist William Dean Howells called it a “noble sequence of wooded and gardened squares.”<sup>10</sup> The trees shield a god-like Oglethorpe under a canopy of eclectic southern grace.<sup>11</sup>

Along the eastern seaboard, trees often stood as symbols of great hopes for the land that the English came to inhabit, a harbinger of undying fertility to colonists who wanted desperately to stretch out upon an endless landscape after leaving behind their over-crowded one.<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> John Muir and edited by Frederic Bade, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Boston and New York: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1916 edition), 93.

<sup>9</sup> Chippewa Square is considered one of Savannah's “nineteenth century” squares, part of an expansion beyond Oglethorpe's original vision. Laid out in 1815, officially its intention was to commemorate American soldiers who perished in the Battle of Chippewa in the War of 1812. Because of the statue, though, many local residents refer to it as “Oglethorpe” Square, even though there IS an official Oglethorpe Square in town. Many Americans may notice that Chippewa Square looks familiar to them for a completely different reason; the iconic park bench scene from the film “Forrest Gump” was filmed in the center of the square.

<sup>10</sup>William Dean Howells, “Savannah Twice Visited,” 1919.

<sup>11</sup>Betsy Fancher, *Savannah: Renaissance of the Heart* (New York: Doubleday edition, 1976); Ray Purvis, *Savannah Bits and Pieces* (Savannah: Kennickell Printing, 1976). Both of these books appeared in 1976 as nostalgic reminiscences of Savannah's famed history and charm. Both are also written by Georgia natives who found it necessary, as the city's racial and socioeconomic conditions came under fire in the 1970s, to defend its reputation. This dissertation utilizes many works I deem “colloquial” in the sense that they are literature and history, but also a product of a time and a place so specific, and informed so specifically by their author's identity, that they fall more in the realm of primary sources begging for analytical breakdown.

<sup>12</sup>S. Max Edelson, “Clearing Swamps, Harvesting Forests: Trees and the Making of a Plantation Landscape in the Colonial South Carolina Lowcountry,” from Paul Sutter and Chris Manganiello, ed. *Environmental History and the American South*, 106.

single palmetto had already quickly become the trademark emblem of South Carolina—an insignia that represented both something natural as well as the new and man-made commerce at its banks. And even though both southern colonies originally prided themselves in felling trees (“burthens,” as they were commonly known), their disappearance was a constant and growing reminder that the land could change.<sup>13</sup>

It is also an inescapable fact that Savannah existed *because* of South Carolina. Savannah was not, in the beginning, a place where established colonial entrepreneurs pinned their *greatest* hopes. Instead it was in its original incarnation an experiment, a huddling together of struggling British families--to see not only if they could conquer a specific natural world in the name of agricultural success but also if they could protect the British political stronghold in a new world. Georgia would buffer South Carolina like a pillow, its settlers an odd mix of farmers and tradesmen, many of them debtors taking their seemingly final chance at redemption on this Earth.

Its fabled beginning as a penal colony still circulates as an entertaining story—originally an effort by old textbook writers to play up early Georgia's danger factor and narrative intrigue. But professional historians have long set the record straight—that Oglethorpe did *not*, in fact, command a ship of dangerous criminals across the Atlantic to settle on the Georgia coast.<sup>14</sup> Oglethorpe, storied at a young age through a publicized (if also a bit over-dramatized) military career in England, did take it upon himself in the 1720s to visit England's deteriorating prisons in

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>14</sup> Oglethorpe is much-storied (in Georgia history as well as British history). It would be impossible to cite each and every narrative that explores his relationship to his colony, but for a basic overview of what has been written, see: Rodney M. Baine, ed., *The Publications of James Edward Oglethorpe* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994); Harvey H. Jackson and Phinizy Spalding, eds., *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); John C. Inscoe, ed., *James Edward Oglethorpe: New Perspectives on His Life and Legacy* (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1997); Phinizy Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Phinizy Spalding and Edwin L. Jackson, *James Edward Oglethorpe: A New Look at Georgia's Founder* (Athens: Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, 1988); Phinizy Spalding and Harvey H. Jackson, eds., *Oglethorpe in Perspective: Georgia's Founder after Two Hundred Years* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989).

an effort to jumpstart their reform.<sup>15</sup> Oglethorpe achieved, according to one writer, the status of an “outstanding figure of philanthropy in an era of [otherwise] great political corruption.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, Oglethorpe was an eighteenth century booster.

On one of these visits, Oglethorpe allegedly came across a man who he had called a good friend “loaded with irons” on his person in the Fleet Jail and “otherwise cruelly used,” very near death.<sup>17</sup> His name was Robert Castell, an architect whose *Villas of the Ancients Illustrated*, written in the 1720s, was an inspiration for Oglethorpe's eventual design of Savannah.<sup>18</sup>

According to Thaddeus Mason Harris, Oglethorpe's faithful biographer, it was in that instant that Oglethorpe decided to initiate, through his position in the House of Commons, an official investigation of the prison system. A series of impassioned filibusters apparently followed, in which Oglethorpe executed, through a great vein of wit, a compelling argument for the Crown to invest in freeing select debtors and shipping them off to the valuable American colonies, where (and these are purportedly Oglethorpe's own words, later transposed into the colony's charter) “by cultivating the waste and desolate lands, they [colonists] might not only gain a comfortable subsistence but also strengthen the colonies and increase trade.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Oglethorpe, born in 1696 in Surrey, served as personal assistant to the Prince of Savoy. Considered a youthful self-starter, he reportedly played a vital role in the Austro-Turkish War from 1716 to 1718 before entering Parliament as a conservative in 1722 at the age of 26. There he found men quite literally wasting away in shackles, locked up for their inability to pay back loans to their debtors. Some reports on his early career claim that he had a dear friend who died of smallpox around the same time—the disease a result of neglect and abuse in a British prison

<sup>16</sup> Laura Bell Palmer and Elfrida de Renne Barrow, *Anchored Yesterdays: The Log Book of Savannah's Voyage Across a Georgia Century* (originally published 1923, re-published in 1956 by Ashantilly Press of Darien Georgia), xii. This book represents a collection of locally-written histories that inform this dissertation. I never intended to study local histories when I set out on this project. But I quickly found that Savannah has produced more passionately-published local-press works than perhaps any other southern city besides Charleston or New Orleans. Learning to navigate them is an art-form, mostly because they are chock full of inaccuracies that are very likely the direct result of overextending nostalgia for the Old South, and old Savannah, and a way of life that may or may not have actually existed for old money families.

<sup>17</sup> Thaddeus Mason Harris, *Biographical Memorials of James Oglethorpe: Founder of the Colony of Georgia in North America* (Boston: printed for the author by Freeman and Boles Publishers, 1841), 29.

<sup>18</sup> Turpin C. Bannister, “Oglethorpe's Sources for the Savannah Plan,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Vol. 20/No. 2, May 1961, 47-62.

<sup>19</sup> Harris, *Memorials*, 48.

The chief aim of a colony in Georgia, Oglethorpe proposed, would be to promote egalitarian agricultural living. Most politicians and speculators at the time knew, though, that it was also an effort to fill in a gap of settlement along the eastern seaboard. Oglethorpe was a man perhaps acutely prone to exaggerated and lofty dreams.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, in April of 1732, King George II signed Georgia's charter (his moniker forever etched into the idea of the place). Georgia would be the thirteenth, and the last, of Britain's colonies in America. With the sweep of a pen, George and Oglethorpe cemented the idyllic but highly-politicized hope of a workingman's utopia in America—a place where small, yeoman farmers would work alongside a mercantile group to create a communal and protective outpost on the southern Atlantic coast. Such dreams of a “class-less” colony made sense only in theory.

The original charter echoed with an air of philanthropy, putting forth that potential colonists were necessarily those who “through misfortunes and want of employment [were] reduced to great necessity, insomuch as by their labor they are not able to provide a maintenance for themselves and families.”<sup>21</sup> When it came time to select the roster of settlers, however, Oglethorpe introduced a wholly new concept of the “worthy poor” (a term modern Americans are also, sadly, familiar with).<sup>22</sup> Writing almost three hundred years later, in 1923, a local Savannah author named Laura Palmer Bell—who had just spent several months seeped in Oglethorpe's biographical memorials—concluded that “doubtless the plan of colonizing” included discriminating the “reputable families from among this victimized class.”<sup>23</sup>

In the end, the opportunity of colonization was awarded to a very few men wishing to escape the threat of further imprisonment alongside England's ever-deepening pool of debtors.

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<sup>20</sup> James C. Cobb, *Georgia Odyssey: A Short History of the State* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997 and 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Original Charter of the colony of Georgia, this text accessed at *The Avalon Project* (Yale University).

<sup>22</sup> To note, Robert Castell perished in Fleet of smallpox before any of these plans were cemented.

<sup>23</sup> Palmer and Barrow, *Anchored Yesterdays*, xii.

Oglethorpe furnished thirty-five men aboard his ship *Anne* with muskets, bayonets, and swords; among them were carpenters, bricklayers, mechanics, and farmers—as well as Trustee-appointed officials, a group which included a bailiff, a recorder, two constables, two tithing-men, and eight “conservators of the peace.” Oglethorpe packed up ten tons of beer for the journey, and at Madeira he also further-stocked the ship with five tons of wine “for the service of the colony.”<sup>24</sup> Long story short, these men, these heads of families and former debtors, they had weapons and women and drink.<sup>25</sup> On the morning of January 13, 1733, *Anne* dropped anchor not at the Port of Savannah but on the outskirts of Charleston, South Carolina, where the passengers were greeted by several eager tour guides and transferred to smaller vessels toward Yamacraw. “Ancestor worship is Savannah's besetting sin,” one Atlanta writer has offered, and still every year residents re-enact this birth of the city like a colorful creation story.<sup>26</sup>

The 35 families and their leader did not arrive at the point of a stark “wilderness,” nor were they cast on the shore without the crutch of a fully-functioning nearby colony, plenty of maritime reinforcement, and the advantage of geographical knowledge provided by settlers who had ventured into their designated new homeland before. Oglethorpe described the area along the Savannah River as “plain high ground,” sturdy banks along a wide stream, “bordered with high woods on both sides.”<sup>27</sup> What he realized in those first observatory moments was that the land was not “waste” or “desolate” at all; in fact, it was a visibly-thriving ecosystem, slightly charred by recent periodic burning but otherwise functioning and rather green. Thus formed a

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<sup>24</sup> Harris, *Biographical Memorials*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> From Harris, *Biographical Memorials*; also “Account of the first planting of the colony of Georgia,” published by Beryamin Martin, London, 1741. By all accounts, both first and second (as well as third, to count historians’ perspective), this voyage was largely uneventful and relatively successful. Two children were lost at sea to disease, but given the track record of cross-Atlantic voyages during the early eighteenth century, two persons lost was altogether a very low margin.

<sup>26</sup> Fancher, *Renaissance*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 59.



wholly new challenge to him and his first group of settlers: how would they, instead of saving a desolate place, adapt to it?

The Savannah colonists frequently called Oglethorpe “father.”<sup>28</sup> Their official seal bore, on one side, the image of a leaf—on top of which was written “Non sibi-sed allis” (“Not for ourselves, but for others”).<sup>29</sup> At his knee, they set out to build a community of gardens and homes that would reflect the utilitarian, self-sustaining vision he had sold in strides to their financial backers. The colonists planted gardens early, often before they began construction on their homes, spreading seeds for thyme, sage, leeks, scallions (“skellions” in contemporary diaries), celery, and various other minor foodstuffs. Southern soils are, in ecological terms, quite “old.” They lack minerals because a warmer climate prevented glaciation, but this makes the soil's organic materials overall more vulnerable to heat and extreme weather shifts. Seeding agriculture endeavors in them would prove much more unique an experience than Oglethorpe had anticipated.<sup>30</sup> Early settlers and travelers consistently reported that a mist of smoke hung, clogged, in the air on a regular basis throughout the colony as Native Americans and new white settlers alike took to torching large areas for agricultural pursuits and patches for animal husbandry.<sup>31</sup> If an official class of “workers” existed in early colonial Georgia, it was composed solely of whites. And if a sense of true communitarianism existed there, it was in large part because classes of “workers” were not yet boldly-differentiated from any other ones.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This is a fact generally agreed upon by Oglethorpe's biographer, Harris, as well as dozens of works of literature and memoirs reviewed for this work.

<sup>29</sup> Bell and Barrow, *Anchored Yesterdays*, xii.

<sup>30</sup> Albert Cowdrey, *This Land, This South: An Environmental History* (University Press of Kentucky, revised 1996), 2.

<sup>31</sup> Pikel, *A History of Georgia Forestry*, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Harris, in *Biographical Memorials*, comments that South Carolina also sent “laborers” to Georgia to help. Slavery was, in ordinance with the Georgia colony's original charter, completely forbidden in the territory, and it remains unclear through the available records what contemporary observers might have meant by “laborers” in this specific context. It is completely possible that free whites or white indentured servants were commissioned to make the

As it was in new colony after new colony along the eastern seaboard, Georgia settlers took as one of their primary tasks the ceremonious cutting-down of peripheral trees.<sup>33</sup> They got to know the rivers that separated them from Spanish Florida—the Altamaha, the Ogeechee, the Savannah, and St. Johns. Crude sawmills would go up on the River Ebenezer. For the sake of the communitarian way, early on they erected a “publik” store house out of large square timbers. The private houses went up by way of sawed timber as well, framed, covered with shingles, and often finished with brick chimneys—the product of rich clay in the Georgia soil.<sup>34</sup> Thus, even in these early days, sawmills became a pivot for the community's day to day functions. And the town was, after all, made directly of wood.<sup>35</sup>

The botanist Hugh Anderson, who would become one of the most vocal and vehement critics of the new colony after experiencing its “hot, inhospitable climate,” reported in 1741 that there existed a viable ten-acre garden of “orange, mulberry trees, vines, some olives which thrive well, and peaches, apples, etc.” “It must be confessed,” he went on, “that oranges have not so universally thriven with us by reason of several blasts of frost in the spring.” The mulberry trees provided a food source for silkworms, and Georgia silk became a trustworthy export for British

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journey southward. However, it also seems entirely possible that black labor was used during the colony's first trying weeks and months.

<sup>33</sup>The original houses went up slowly, painstaking efforts delayed at intervals by periods of procrastination and arbitrary celebration. Allegedly the consumption of rum became so wildly inappropriate that on November 23, 1733, the Trustees ceremoniously outlawed it. The settlers would be allowed to continue to consume wine and other spirits, but not the devil's rum. Barrow and Bell, *Anchored Yesterdays*. According to the original Trustees' plan, each male who made the journey on the Crown's dime received a town lot as well as a five-acre garden plot beyond the common land but within walking distance of it *and* access to a 45-acre farm farther out on which he had promised to grow mulberry trees. Surrounding plantations of five-hundred acres were granted to settlers who had travelled with their own money *and* brought along with them at least ten servants to build and then work their house and its fields.

<sup>34</sup>Howells, “Savannah Twice Visited,” 1919. Many of my uses of Howells and of other literary figures that wrote of Savannah but were not *from* Savannah were inspired by the collection of writings assembled by Patrick Allen in *Literary Savannah* (Trinity Press, 2011).

<sup>35</sup>Turpin C. Bannister, “Oglethorpe's Sources for the Savannah Plan,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Vol. 20, No. 2 (May 1961), 47-62.

royal women who donned it at London galas. But transplants from the Mediterranean climate—the oranges, the silk—did not *thrive* long in coastal Georgia.<sup>36</sup>

But Oglethorpe continued to escort more new settlers over in the subsequent years, many of them from other parts of Western Europe. He proclaimed with much fanfare that “the [formerly] solitary place was glad for them.”<sup>37</sup> Oglethorpe settled twelve French families in High Gate, five miles south of Savannah, and just as many German families in a nearby settlement called Hampstead. In March of 1734, a ship arrived from the Salzburgers for the purpose of populating Ebenezer, twenty miles inland, where a sawmill was already running. In April of 1735, Scottish “Highlanders” settled the town of Darien, the location of a set of Spanish missions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and a future lumber stronghold.<sup>38</sup> In Savannah, Oglethorpe his colonists continued to construct with precision the town-square design he had put together so meticulously. The colonial population of Savannah remained under 1,000 in its earliest incarnation, and because of that just six original squares sufficed. On March 29, 1734, ninety-one houses could be counted in the town-proper.<sup>39</sup> In 1790, by the time Savannah did count 2,000 inhabitants, some 82,000 settlers had already stretched beyond the town's borders into the hinterlands.

However, removed from their homeland, and ill-experienced at agricultural maneuvering, early colonists failed to replicate with any real precision their heirloom English agriculture and social structure in the Georgia coastal environment. Meanwhile, Oglethorpe himself was often

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<sup>36</sup> Botanist Hugh Anderson was one of three very vocal critics of the Savannah colony in 1741 who, ironically, penned the first history of the colony. Patrick Tailfer, Hugh Anderson, and David Douglas, “A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia (originally published in Charleston and London in 1741 but reprinted and referenced here through its reprinting in:) Trevor Reese, ed., *The Clamorous Malcontents: Criticisms and Defenses of the Colony of Georgia, 1741-1743* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1973); Other plants in the garden included figs, vines, pomegranates, coffee, cotton, several West Indian plants, and a plant of bamboo cane from the East Indies.

<sup>37</sup> Harris, *Biographical Memorials*, 64.

<sup>38</sup> I. James Pikel, Jr., *A History of Georgia Forestry* (Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Athens, The University of Georgia, 1966), 3.

<sup>39</sup> Barrow and Bell, *Anchored Yesterdays*, 15.

too obsessed with making his farmers into part-time militants.<sup>40</sup> British poets wrote Oglethorpe into their expansionist prose. James Thomson, in his volume of British freedom entitled *Liberty*, exclaimed: “Such, as of late, an Oglethorpe has form'd; and crowding round, the charm'd Savannah sees.”<sup>41</sup> Writer William Dean Howells, who counted Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson among his friends, wrote extensively about the legacy of Oglethorpe as founder and cultural symbol. By the mid-eighteenth century, he surmised, the “colony was chopping its place out of the primeval forest and building its houses in little formal rows along the river bluffs.”<sup>42</sup> “Enabled to cut down a great many trees,” in fact, colonists were instructed by Oglethorpe directly to amass a good deal of lumber stands for domestic use.<sup>43</sup> As with most American colonies at their birth, forests were “used, [but] never loved,” forest historian Thomas Cox reminds us. Early Georgians became lumber men out of pure necessity.<sup>44</sup> Savannah was, indeed, in the words of settler Francis Moore, “a town built of wood.”<sup>45</sup> Trees bore witness to its evolution, but strictly in their usage—not their perceived value.

Settlers also brought with them ideas from Europe about customary rights of farmers to commonly-shared lands, as well as a general dislike from the wealthy class they knew formerly as gentry. All of this produced a squatter mentality in the periphery of Savannah, where its settlers began soon to wander.<sup>46</sup> All over the country, land owners dealt similarly and consistently with squatting, burning and cutting, and timber theft. This level of entitlement was

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<sup>40</sup> In 1739, Oglethorpe suited up as General in front of an invading force of Georgia men during the War of Jenkins' Ear, fought between the British settlers and adversaries in Spanish Florida (part of the War of Austrian Succession). Max Seville, *Empires to Nations: Expansion in America, 1713-1824* (University of Minnesota Press, 1974), p. 125.

<sup>41</sup> James Thomson, *Liberty Pt. V The Works of the English Poets* ed. Samuel Johnson, 21 vols. (1810), XII, 493-500, passage quoted from XII, p. 497.

<sup>42</sup> From William Dean Howells, “Savannah Twice Visited,” 1919.

<sup>43</sup> Harris, *Biographical Memorials*, 62.

<sup>44</sup> Cox, *The Lumberman's Frontier*, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Francis Moore, *A Voyage to Georgia: begun in the year 1735* (printed 1744), 24.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

hardly malicious, though, and neither was it particularly entrepreneurial. Usually, it remained a matter of self-sufficiency. Class developed, as it usually does, as wealth accumulated in specific pockets. Many of the settlers who left the city behind left with the intention of finding their own piece of the new frontier, encouraged by the vast forests and simultaneously disheartened by the growing unequal distributions of wealth in the port city.<sup>47</sup>

One early twentieth century historian found ample evidence that there was from the beginning a “large volume of timber near Savannah” that was recognized as being suitable for shipbuilding and fitting and that a “few boats laden with lumber were dispatched to the West Indies” in the colony's first few years. But there remained an early fear that return voyages would allow too readily for the smuggling of slaves and rum.<sup>48</sup> Still no one could see the tree as a crop, only a side matter. The first major products from Georgia forests were naval stores from the longleaf pines and ship timbers from live oak.<sup>49</sup> Networks were created with the Northern ports of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. By the seventeenth century, the navies of Europe required an exorbitant amount of naval stores as well as other naval products like tar, pitch, and resin (often referred to as “rosin”). The British looked to their colonists in the Americas to reinvigorate their supplies, and Carolinians in particular profited greatly in the beginning—after discovering that the longleaf pine had resinous, rich, re-generative trunks to tap into. Crude turpentine could be found in the resin canals of the tree's inner bark and sapwood. Its essential oils were used for paint, varnish, and paint thinners, while its resin was employed in the production of soap, wax, and paper.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Fallows, *The Water Lords*, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Amanda Johnson, *Georgia as a Colony and State* (Atlanta: W. and W. Brown Publishing Company, 1938), 81.

<sup>49</sup> Virginia S. Wood, *Live Oaking: Southern Timber for Tall Ships* (Northeastern University Press, 1981).

<sup>50</sup> Modern uses of resin (rosin) also include: the production of linoleum, certain prescription drugs,

Early colonists tapped into old-growth longleaf quickly and unabashedly, and to them certainly the supply seemed to stretch out in an endless line. Tapping crude gum from a pine tree is relatively easy business; effectively one must just cut into the trunk at an ideal juncture and allow the sap to fall into vessels (and then into “stills” to separate the resin and turpentine). But the process scars a tree. Often a trunk becomes similar to the arm of a patient who has been pricked with too many needles. There become fewer and fewer places to extract the gum, until finally the matter blackens.<sup>51</sup> More gradual than clear-cutting, it is nonetheless a form of deforestation.

These were smaller operations in the colonial period, though; turpentine would not become a major Georgia export until late into the nineteenth century. But according to the French botanist Francois Andre Michaux, who traveled the southern states in search of these images of land use, coastal Georgians already realized that “the value of the long-leaved pine does not reside exclusively in the wood.”<sup>52</sup> Georgians’ relationships with the trees surrounding them has illustrated repeatedly that the re-imagining of social landscapes is more often than not quite shocking.<sup>53</sup> But it was still unclear, in the mid-seventeenth century, which agricultural endeavors would prove most profitable for the newborn colony. These trees were still colonial, but settlers *did* begin to associate them with small-scale industry.

Their neighbors to the slight-North had already set up a system of agriculture that appeared superior and, more importantly, had proven much more profitable. The slave trade fed the South Carolina plantations like a bottle feeds a baby, providing the glut of labor needed to

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<sup>51</sup> Herbert L. Kayton, Interview with Roy R. White, October 7, 1959; Interview with G. P. Shingler, June 30, 1959. All interview files and transcripts are held by the Forest History Association (from here on referred to as FHS).

<sup>52</sup> Francois Andre Michaux, *The North American Sylva*, extracts contained in *Naval Stories: History, Production, Distribution, and Consumption*, compiled by (Savannah Mayor) Thomas Gamble (Savannah, Georgia: Review Printing and Publishing, 1921), 9-12.

<sup>53</sup> G. Melvin Herndon, “Forest Products of Colonial Georgia,” *Journal of Forest History*, XXIII (1979), 134.

satiate the intense process of rice production that the state had grown its reputation on. They had already perfected the process of wet-culture rice growing, which involved intense manipulation of the environment—clearing, ditching, leveling, flooding, and the like. Students of ecology are familiar with this type of system, most commonly referred to as eco-energetics; humans plus natural energy made a complete system. What South Carolinians had seemingly perfected was a way to literally corral nature.<sup>54</sup>

So much of what Oglethorpe imagined Savannah to be was based on a surface belief that the forests, marshes, and waterways—the core landscape of coastal Georgia—had been operating naturally and with little human control exerted over its ecological processes. And it might be true that some landscapes have had so little inhabitation and intervention that they are something we could deem “virgin” in this sense, that they could reach an ideal, un-manipulated climax state.<sup>55</sup> But in the case of Savannah, Oglethorpe realized in the course of settlement and beyond, Europeans instead entered a centuries-long dialogue between man and the forest, man and the water, even man and climate. This relationship can only really be described as chaotic.

The indecisive path of Savannah's entrepreneurial endeavors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a tale of ecology, economy, and ideology all in one.<sup>56</sup> As colonists on the Atlantic seaboard settled alongside the landscape into a New World system of cash crop agriculture, they were very much aware of an ongoing ideological dialogue with their natural

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<sup>54</sup>Mart Stewart, *What Nature Suffers to Groe: Life, Labor and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002).

<sup>55</sup>“Climax communities” is not a new concept or a new debate by any means. They are defined as biological communities of plants and animals which, through the process of ecological succession—the development of vegetation in an area over time—has reached a steady state. This equilibrium occurs because the climax community is composed of species best adapted to average conditions in that area.

<sup>56</sup>William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (W.W. Norton and Company, 1996); Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 1994); The cognitive lenses through which people perceive their relationships to the natural world—called an idealist level—often prove elusive unless one is willing and open to believe that people base their economic decisions at least in part on their perceived notions of the environment surrounding them.

world. For example, water limits the location and design of wet-culture rice plantations. Freshets and hurricanes flood terrain, dumping saltwater on young rice fields, proving that neither nature nor its human manipulators are completely in control. South Carolinians pioneered the messy process of adaptation to these water limitations, failing and falling to floods, disease, and labor shortages before a successful system brought equilibrium.<sup>57</sup>

In Georgia, ideologies of landscape remained nascent through the eighteenth century. One by one, Oglethorpe's visions turned hazy in the face of environmental realities. Within a decade of settlement many of his people felt restrained by idealism. Animals ran free and feral throughout the countryside, unrestrained by sporadic fencing and open commons areas.<sup>58</sup> The deep and unmarked woods offered solace not only to lost and wondering domestic creatures but also to slaves who rushed down from the Carolinas to seek refuge in one of the only places they were truly protected by law. Georgians, for the most part, frowned heavily upon these fugitive slaves in their midst. It is largely because of the woods' reputation as an underground railroad of sorts that many increasingly-urban settlers in Savannah began to view the periphery, the woods, as a place for the laboring and wandering sort—not as a place of industry. Oglethorpe, often back in England by this point, maintained his stance, quote, that slavery “would end all white ‘industry’.”<sup>59</sup>

The ban on slavery in Georgia was lifted in 1749, however, after vociferous Savannah businessmen complained that high labor costs were basically the only thing preventing the growth of real enterprise in the area. The only path to success, these early boosters claimed, was

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<sup>57</sup> Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (1973). Wood showed that South Carolina rice growers in the colonial era chose and imported enslaved Africans from the “rice coast” of West Africa specifically because of their expertise in rice cultivation and technology. See also: David Eltis, Philip Morgan, and David Richardson, “Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 112, No. 5 (2007).

<sup>58</sup> Virginia deJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> Barrow and Bell, *Anchored Yesterdays*, p. 14.



to throw off the shackles of idealism. By embracing a slave economy, elite Georgians had begun to define their own environmental identity. No longer hindered by one man's vision, a society and an ideology—based on landscape—took root. Oglethorpe had spent much of his time in Georgia on his own farm at St. Simon's Island. He left his beloved colony for the last time in 1743. It is perhaps the greatest irony of Savannah's cultural legacy that its often quoted, often revered creator spent very little of his life in the city and did *not*, in the end, see what it would become.

Once the plantation system began to dominate the Georgia economy, the relationship between town and country developed in ways familiar. Seated firmly in Savannah proper, businessmen and merchants worked as middle-men, serving the plantation growers and (to a lesser extent monetarily) the hinterlanders and townspeople who spread out from the center in an attempt to eke an existence off the lands as well. The largest plantations in coastal Georgia were based around the production of sea-island cotton, rice and indigo, but interestingly enough, most of them also counted lumbering as a crucial “side project” of sorts. The crown stimulated the economy in coastal Georgia by granting liberal land grants to sawmills, but it also made efforts to control the quality of the lumber leaving the mills (primarily through measuring staves).<sup>60</sup> And in the shadows of the plantations, slave families and poor whites alike used lumbering as a source of supplementary income, squeezing out meager existences through cutting wood for shipment. Lumbering became representative of the lower classes' economic systems, and often even those of black slave life.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Here the relationship between city and hinterland is crucial; as early as the colonial period in Georgia, the town of Savannah relied largely on the agricultural output of surrounding areas for its survival.

<sup>61</sup> One of the Trustees' original goals was to provide potash to England; this endeavor never really took off, and investors realized that they could take greater advantage of labor in the colony by sawing timber for the Sugar Islands or Maderas. G. Melvin Herndon, “Forest Products of Colonial Georgia,” *Journal of Forest History* 23 (1979), 130-135.

Even if trees were not yet seen as a crop, the commodification of the land itself made for a mad-dash into the hinterlands. Hall saw everywhere he went in Georgia's interior signs of the “mushroom growth of rapid and unthinking speculation.”<sup>62</sup> His traveler's vision of the forests was repeatedly interrupted by what he considered the misuse of the land—settlements that lacked so many infrastructures: permanency, educational systems, refinery, and stable, large-scale agricultural pursuits.<sup>63</sup> These Georgians (poorer whites) were not yet on a quest for permanency, mostly because their invisible problem, so to speak, was that they did not know what a permanent industry in the woods might look like.

William Bartram set out to study the flora and fauna of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida in 1791.<sup>64</sup> Savannah (or, “Savanna” as he refers to the city in all of his surviving notes) would be his first stop, where he refueled his body with much feast and his mind with much chatter. Apparently Bartram made such a good impression on the well-to-do men of Savannah that he received many invitations to visit plantations out in the country. He spent several days drifting from one home to another but mentions absolutely nothing of the plantations' slave population—persons he must have encountered in his lengthy daily walks. From Savannah and its immediate hinterlands he wandered up and down the coast of the Savannah River, via foot and vessel.

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<sup>62</sup> Hall, *Travels in North America*, 278.

<sup>63</sup> Albert Cowdrey, *This Land, This South: An Environmental History*, 54. Cowdrey, a godfather of southern environmental history, has offered that two competing visions have compelled its inhabitants—one, that the South had abundant resources, that it could support endless agricultural endeavors, and two, that southerners had failed at using their landscape properly.

<sup>64</sup>Bartram, *Travels*; *William Bartram, Travels*; Also consulted for this section and the overall contextualization of Bartram: Kathryn E. Holland Braund and Charlotte M. Porter, *Fields of Vision: Essays on William Bartram's 'Travels'* (University of Alabama Press, 2010); Christoph Irmscher, *The Poetics of Natural History: from John Bartram to William James* (Rutgers University Press, 1999).

Bartram's writings were effusive on the subject of tree species during his “journey southerly.”<sup>65</sup> In the area surrounding Savannah, he immediately rejoiced over a “beautiful grove of magnolias, myrtles, and sweet bay trees,” also beloved tupelos, relaxed and calmly swaying in the breeze.<sup>66</sup> As he left the town-proper and journeyed into the hinterlands, he writes of the hospitality and piety of the plantation owners he visited, returning to Savannah as a “recreation point” during his trip. The Altamaha turned swampy and began to feed into smaller, mossier creeks as he left the areas of plantations. At the intersections of the Broad and Savannah Rivers—where Elberton lays—Bartram observed oak trees ten feet in diameter and forty to fifty feet in limbs reaching outward, like patterns perpetually leading up to the sky. At his feet, he noted, the soil was “deep, rich, a dark mold.”<sup>67</sup>

Out of anything he seemed most impressed by the abundant savannas of the land, and of the long lines of seemingly unbroken pine-lands. Reservoirs of water, he commented, were again and again “defended from the active and powerful exhalations of the meridian sun, by the shade of the pine trees.”<sup>68</sup> That pine is a tree built by fire Bartram could not question during the summer storms he witnessed, particularly on one occasion when he doubled-back at a “fiery chasm” which hit the trunk of a pine in his vicinity with “inconceivable rapidity.”<sup>69</sup> Virgin or not, Bartram walked deep into the longleaf forest that ecologists would mourn some two hundred years later. He noted that the “sudden transformation from rich, cultivated settlements, to high pine forests” was slightly shocking but beautiful all the same.<sup>70</sup> Bartram came across men at work “squaring pine and timber for the West Indian market,” a sign that the commodification of

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<sup>65</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, 36.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>67</sup> Klaus Steinbeck, “Changing Times Bring Changing Trees,” written for the Daniel B. Warnell School of Forest Resources at the University of Georgia, published Summer 1997, 3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 197.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

lumber was underway.<sup>71</sup> The most nascent generation of Georgia lumber men were cutting without abandon.

By the 1770s, sixty owner-planters controlled fifty percent of the colony's overall slave population. Wealth was ample but collecting in a small number of pocketbooks.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, less-moned white yeoman farmers began, with good reason, to resent their brethren. “Crackers” in the hinterlands fed Georgia's industries with their extractive practices, but their reputation became forever cemented as one highlighted by backcountry ignorance. Planters accumulated wealth, businessmen fed off them from their comfortable perches in Savannah, and poor Georgia whites continued to live, quite literally, from the land—cutting trees to sell and planting gardens for subsistence along their westward-facing path of migration. In 1777, the state legislature passed a “headright” law to further motivate the continual settlement of the land heading into the Georgia interior, west and northwest.<sup>73</sup>

Thus began an era of rabid cutting *encouraged* by the state. By the turn of the century, “free” land was completely gone, and in 1802, the boundary between Georgia and Alabama was drawn firmly as an era of land-granting closed. With no primogeniture rights, one forest historian has since posited, it was “inevitable” that the land eventually would become split into smallish parcels, thus ensuring forestry problems to come.<sup>74</sup> The utter chaos of Georgia social structure at the time, and particularly along the backwoods corridors, made for skirmishes. Urbanites and plantation owners remained consistently and often violently at odds with “Cracker”

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<sup>71</sup>*Ibid*, 212.

<sup>72</sup>Cobb, *Georgia Odyssey*, 5

<sup>73</sup>This granted “free” land to anyone who desired it, and up to 500 acres were granted to those settlers ready and willing to erect sawmills in new areas.

<sup>74</sup>Pikl, *History of Georgia Forestry*, 4-5.

coalitions in the country, many composed of non-Anglican upcountry planters and small farmers.<sup>75</sup>

The many uses of timber made it a versatile entity on which to pin small pockets of industrial hope. Crude paper-making, for example, could prove profitable in the right location, but overhead was high, the chemical processes had yet to be perfected, and the transportation of paper to other parts of the country could be cumbersome. Georgia's first natal paper mill appeared in 1810 at Scull Shoals on the Oconee River in Greene County, founded by Zachariah Smith, and produced a small amount of newsprint before failing and shutting down just two years later. The second was a mill on the Oconee River closer to Athens, built by John S. Linton and Albert Chase fifty years later, called Pioneer; this one also lasted only a few years. In 1873 the Atlantic Paper Company factory in Savannah opened at the west edge of Bryan Street on Ogeechee Canal, the only paper-making facility in the area until 1931 when chemist Charles Holmes Herty would open the Savannah Pulp and Paper Laboratory on the western end of River Street.

But a burgeoning extractive lumber industry appeared; naval stores and turpentine offered some planters a lucrative supplementary income. Until the late nineteenth-century, though, most of the American commercial lumber industry would stay in the North and Midwest, and both competing with Canadian interests; it would not be until those areas had largely been depleted that speculative industrialists would move South in search of wood for the railroads and urban development. Before the Civil War, though, in places like the Georgia Piedmont (north of Savannah, a mixed region between the pine-barrens and the mountains) and coastal Georgia, farmers focused on clearing whatever land they could for crops. Cutting and burning upset the

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<sup>75</sup>Joseph Harris Chappell, *Georgia History Stories* (Silver and Burdett, 1905) section Chapter IX "The Stamp Act in Georgia," 119.

traditional ecological rhythms of tree growth; quick-growing slash pines became more dominant in these areas.

In January of 1818, a conglomeration of the area's remaining Creeks were forced to cede a tract of land below the Altamaha River to the state of Georgia. Until then, the river had unofficially served as a dividing line between European and Native American settlements. The Georgia legislature quickly divided the newly accessible land into three counties, one of which was Appling (which eventually produced Georgia nature writer Janisse Ray as a daughter). Into these new territories, settlers from eastern and western Europe began to make their mark on the landscape.<sup>76</sup> And by 1819, Savannah was the country's 16<sup>th</sup> largest city, with the mighty but often tepid river serving as its gateway to the world. Along the “Factor's Walk,” merchants touted their wares, whether they be cotton, rice, or turpentine. The River became a meeting place of city and hinterland if only because it became the point at which raw goods changed hands. The moonlight-and-magnolia vision of the Old Plantation South was born in the sitting rooms of a place like Savannah—a place where status did mean everything, whiskey did flow freely, and economic maneuverings had everything to do with the whims of a reigning white male planter class. Pride of India trees lined the thoroughfares like upright lollypops. Carriage tours of the squares bespoke of the place's self-prescribed eloquence and grace. The town's squares were preserving patrimony for generations to come.<sup>77</sup> Outside the city, the Hermitage Plantation, founded by a Scotsman named Henry McAlpin, produced bricks in abundance for the ever-expanding town squares. McAlpin's was an industrial, not agricultural, plantation, but he housed nearly 200 slaves at the turn of the nineteenth century. They worked 375 acres, 43 of which would, a century later, become home to the largest paper mill in the world. It was

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<sup>76</sup> Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians 1733-1816* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>77</sup> Bannister, “Oglethorpe's Sources,”--Bannister uses this turn of phrase, thus deserves citation.

entrepreneurs like McAlpin that cemented Savannah's reputation as a “Mother City” of Georgia—a modernizing and live-able place where merchants and businessmen enjoyed the fruits of their investments.<sup>78</sup>

The hinterlands were different. Brits and Scots-Irish who settled the backcountry of Georgia were, to phrase it mildly, known as a migratory lot. They were, in fits and starts, making the “wild” into the rural. In an anonymous letter to the Earl of Dartmouth, a wealthier colonial explained what he believed the term “cracker” (which was already well in use during this time frame) to mean. They were “great boasters,” these “crackers,” he insisted, “a lawless set of rascals on the frontiers of Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia, who often change their places of abode.” There are so many supposed origins of the term “cracker” (and most of them derogatory like this one) that to focus on the insult itself is both academically and culturally useless. What is more intriguing is the behavioral pattern under scrutiny. Poorer Georgia settlers were moving, yes, because they were following not only their pioneering drive but also the trees. Hall had written of the crude “forest houses” that he bunked in, made of logs with a steep roof and usually just one wall separating two dank rooms, signified a certain level of commitment to settlement and development, but for the most part (according to Hall and many other writers), interior Georgians followed the lumber to sell, the food, and subsistence more generally, like a child chasing a lightning bug far off in the night.<sup>79</sup>

These were the earliest of Georgia lumber men—farming, performing odd jobs, tending to the basic needs of their families' survival. Some towns had been built up around sawmills and then quickly abandoned. No one was replanting yet. The woods were still an edge to fold back like pages in a book—dark, foreboding, and seemingly endless. While there may have not been

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<sup>78</sup> Union Bag and Paper Company, assorted “Savannah Mill” publicity pamphlets, vertical files, Forest History Society (Durham, North Carolina).

<sup>79</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, 277.

much overt power at stake in the trees before the Civil War, it is unmistakable that the men who lived among them in the South understood their importance. What banded Georgia, and her sister even more southward, Florida, to the original Atlantic colonies was what one historian has termed this “lumberman’s frontier.”<sup>80</sup> This is the moment that American men, some of them immigrants, some of them transient, stepped into a “virgin” forest with their axes. This is the moment that *made* every interior settlement in America, from Maine to Georgia to Louisiana and outward West.

The lumberman's ever-moving, ever-changing frontier serves as an ample lens through which to view the development of work and family economies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These men carved trees from the land and logged them, selling them upstream, North and out westward, or tapped their trunks for turpentine. These were Ray’s ancestors, for example, in Appling County. They had “no thoughts of a future,” she claims, only the desperate want of a decent life, of cash buried deep in their mattresses and food on the table, and eventually of moving onward to new and seemingly endless woods frontiers.<sup>81</sup> Because of this, Ray insists, their legacy is one of ruination. In fact, they viewed the pine as an obstacle in their path.

Some of these lumbermen were the direct descendants of the men (and women and children) who General James Oglethorpe brought with him. But more of them were not.

Pinelanders, “rural Crackers” as they are known so often pejoratively, migrated to the piney

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<sup>80</sup>Thomas R. Cox, *The Lumberman's Frontier: Three Centuries of Land Use, Society, and Change in America's Forests* (Oregon State University Press, 2010). Cox's recent book is, by far, the most comprehensive study of the lumber industry and how it evolved in nearly every corner of the country. Cox takes on the heady task of dissecting how multiple generations of Americans attempted to corral nature in places where trees became a pivot for settlement, work, and the growth of capital. This dissertation is thankful and largely informed by his summative narratives of migratory lumber men and the logistics of how and why industries formed in different parts of America at different times. Though little space is dedicated to the South in Cox's work, it is important to note that this dissertation's main points fall directly in line with some speculative conclusions he makes about the development of coastal Georgia. While he does not take the time to explicate the ways of the forests before the point of white settlement, it is precisely his choosing of the lumberman's emergence that makes this work quite astounding. For a more holistic look at America's forests and their ecologies, one need only look to Nancy Langston's *Forests Dreams, Forest Nightmares* or Lawrence Earley's *Looking for Longleaf*. But then one should read Cox's book.

<sup>81</sup> Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 86.



woods to support a burgeoning urban economy spilling out at the coastal center of Savannah. This was the height of a migration era in the South's forests—migration of both people and lumber. And this era initiated what would become a centuries-old battle of wits between southern farm and city, between the woodsmen and the profiteers who made southern pine a top commodity.<sup>82</sup> Industrial pursuits were still far out in the distance, but the value of “industry” and work ethic were repeatedly brought into question. Savannah would become a gateway, not just in the sense of serving as a port to the world, but also as a filter between the known and the unknown—between the pruned oaks and the tall wild pines, between the mint juleps and the corn grits, and between the ledger and the axe.

Critiques of rural Georgians were many. Emily Pillsbury Burke gained most of her notoriety as a writer when she was a teacher at Oberlin College in the 1850s, but it was *because* she published a series of “Reminiscences of Georgia” that she intrigued readers as well as educators looking for answers to the questions of the South's seeming darkness and backwardness. She accepted a job at Savannah's Female Orphan Asylum in 1840, took an avid interest in the plight of poorer Georgians, and even married a local reverend (Burke)--though he died shortly thereafter. Hers is a narrative carved from a certain moral authority. She found

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<sup>82</sup> Robert Outland, *Tapping the Pines: The Naval Stores Industry in the American South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004). In many ways, this dissertation is also a part of a larger turn toward an alternative view of the nineteenth and twentieth century Souths. While Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, et.al.'s *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* broke historiographical ground as a social labor history, it also begs to be challenged in its singular focus on the cotton textile industry. For example, Robert Outland has spotlighted the naval stores industry, which took root commercially around the 1820s and muddled along as a low-wage, non-unionized piney woods industry. In contrast to the Piedmont's cotton mills, furniture manufacturers, and tobacco giants, the piney woods of Georgia, Florida, southern Alabama, and Mississippi entered the late nineteenth and early twentieth century on shaky agricultural and industrial legs, so to speak. Outland proclaims that southerners, for the most part, are the poor whites, small piney woods farmers, and ex-slaves who made up most of the population and attempted to literally pull their livelihoods out of the land, often living and working on top of depleted soils and clear-cut fields. Outland actually opens his book *Tapping the Pines* with an analysis of a speech by Henry Grady; in it, Grady championed the longleaf pine as a watershed resource of the mythic “New South” rising from the ashes of the antiquated, pre-industrial “Old” one. Of course, as my work will show, this was a premature proclamation.; for the relationships between hinterlands and urban metabolism, I am informed most directly by William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (W.W. Norton and Company, 1992).

southerners lacking severely in what she termed personal “industry”--work ethic—and formed the hypothesis that “cracker” whites in the hinterlands were afraid to work hard, to produce much of anything, because they feared being compared to black slaves that toiled in the manual labors. But she presented so much of her observations on their surface, though meticulously, writing anecdotes about poor girls who rode to school on wild horses with no shoes, or of families selling small wares in weekend markets. There is a semblance of her wanting desperately to see Georgia as a beautiful place, but she did little venturing out into the countryside to investigate what rural white lives might have really looked like. She openly called poorer Georgians “as degraded and ignorant as the slaves” she encountered in the city.<sup>83</sup>

Burke accused Georgians of having no ambition; there is a sense in her narrative, just as there is many northern narratives of the pre-Civil War South, that without the manufacturing base like the one northern and many Midwestern areas had long-established, southerners would remain caught forever in a cycle of poverty and manipulation. Her log also works heavily to downgrade the status of Oglethorpe as mythic founder. In several passages she notes that her contemporaries in Savannah were “lineal descendants of those paupers from England, whom General Oglethorpe brought to this country.”<sup>84</sup> Thus she promoted this idea of forever connecting Oglethorpe's original settlers with a southern backwardness and inability to form proper institutions. The present institutions and state of society, in Georgia and the South as a whole, she claimed, were “calculated to paralyze every energy of both body and mind.”<sup>85</sup>

But some residents—the ones with more to lose and less to enjoy, the ones who served the elite in domestic and commercial venues—did begin in the first two decades of the

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<sup>83</sup> Emily Pillsbury Burke, “Reminiscences of Georgia,” from Letter XXVI (accessed Google digital reprint, 2010).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

nineteenth century to voice their concerns over poor conditions in the city's infrastructure.<sup>86</sup> Editorials in the local paper alluded to refuse swimming in the town grids, flooding over some of the town's landmarks. These conditions would not have actually made Savannah unique from other nineteenth century cities, where horse manure flowed as easily as clean water was hard to get, but contemporary editorials *then* turn the ideas we have of an evolved environmentalism *now* quite on its head.<sup>87</sup> This is because they are not at all different from complaints filed about the Savannah sewage system in the 1960s. Upon its original founding, city planners had simply diverted sewage streams to the Savannah River, claiming that the refuse would gladly continue on into the Atlantic and cause local residents no residual worry. As the city expanded south, though, the sewage had to be sent in other directions, into streams and swamps. It would be the 1950s before the city installed any sewage treatment plants, and even then, they would be primarily for the service of the new suburbs—not the inner city.<sup>88</sup>

The nineteenth century in the South was, for lack of any euphemisms worth using, a time of unlimited exploitation of natural resources. Southerners stretched out atop the seemingly endless frontier with heavy feet, heavier axes, and little concern for causing the land any sort of permanent damage. The new federal government attempted to save some of the South's trees in the name of nationalism, primarily for its navy; none of the programs worked very well.<sup>89</sup> And

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<sup>86</sup>Malcolm Bell, Jr., *Savannah Ahoy!: The Steamship and the Town in the Gala Year of 1819* (Savannah: Pigeonhole Press, 1959), pages 2-3; *Charleston Gazette*; *Savannah Daily Gazette*

<sup>87</sup>Historians have yet to settle on a simple definition of "environmentalism." Most, however, agree that it, above all else, implies a group's collective sense of concern for changes in or damages to the environment and some sort of active movement to improve it. For a basic introduction to "environmentalism" and the many ways it has manifested in the twentieth century in America, see Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) and Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945* (Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998).

<sup>88</sup> Discussion of Savannah sewage pulled from: Fallows, *The Water Lords*, 27 and an expose article printed in *The Savannah News-Press*, August 2, 1970.

<sup>89</sup> 1807 legislation protected against trespassers on private timberlands, but acts of defiance were as common as can be. By 1817, the government "put away" public reserves of live oak and cedars; acreage was set aside in reserve throughout the South. Again, though, many of these laws were cursory at best and in reality more ceremonially than

by the 1850s, the new prevalence of iron warships cut the demand for wooden ones. The rise of the row-crop empire ensured that a small number of people would change the land in the biggest ways—clearing it with a frenetic energy as demands for crops grew, both in the states and abroad. From the Carolina Piedmont, down and west to the edges of what we know as Texas, new “southerners” toted their tools and their slaves along in the hope of agricultural fortune.<sup>90</sup>

By 1860, coastal Georgia was a front wheel on the southern rice train. Class divisions became cemented in Savannah and can be seen on any map of the period. The city elite lived at its center, surrounded by the ramshackle structures in working-class neighborhoods radiating outward. Further out, the plantation structure looked much the same way in concentrated fashion, with slaves laboring knee-deep in marshes at the edge of wilderness areas. The region was captured in a sense in Spring of 1862, when Union troops took the fort at the mouth of the Savannah River. But it was not until December of 1864, as Sherman marched towards the “Mother City” (though crippled and looking markedly less maternal) with 62,000 men at his heels, that the city was threatened with invasion. The town's leaders quickly surrendered, three days before another solemn Christmas, and although the city was largely spared, the real battle would begin immediately thereafter in its hinterlands.

This is a hitch in telling a story about an older place, in this case a city. No matter how important the city and its population is in reconstructing a sense of social and economic process, it is here and in many others cases impossible to not reiterate that the rawest moments of lifestyle evolution occurred back at the point of near-wilderness. Sherman's infamous call for coastal Georgia's plantation land to be handed over ceremoniously and speedily to the area's former

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anything else.. The 1820s saw the nation's first forest experimentation stations, but it was not until the immediate pre-Civil War era that trespassing laws finally received adequate enforcement.

<sup>90</sup> It is important to keep in mind that at this time, in the immediate era prior to the Civil, the aspects of life that southerners have used to define the great “Old South” took root for barely one generation; Ulrich Bonnell Phillips and John David Smith, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (University of South Carolina Press, 1929).

black slaves made the hinterlands, quite literally, a new battlefield. Freedmen took land from their former masters, and then the former masters took it back—often violently. This cat-and-mouse game continued well into the 1870s, when the federal government's shakily-progressive stance on racial equality waned completely.<sup>91</sup> Georgia freedmen had little to work with but often called the pinelands that they had been so unceremoniously thrust into “God's pantry”; in the late nineteenth century, they learned the interior and coastal Georgia landscape better than perhaps any previous settlers.<sup>92</sup> Conflict emerged between them and the poorer whites of the region too, as small landowners felt cast adrift as well in a new racial and economic world that they had little control over. “Side project” industries like logging and turpentine made sense on a scarred landscape. Without much need yet for obsessive clearing, the turpentine industry flourished in a modest but mobile fashion, edging down the coast. Pitch and tar are winter products, though, and provided only supplementary incomes during periods of land clearing. In 1867, just after the war, naturalist John Muir walked a thousand miles down to the Gulf of Mexico. Just as Bartram, Hall, and later, Ray, traversed the southern landscape so they might be able to explain it, Muir wanted to discover it footstep-by-footstep, blinded from the modern filters of vehicles, roads, or printed travel guides. It was near Augusta that he reached the “northern limit of the remarkable long-leafed pine,” and it is from that point on, as he headed into Savannah to pick up wired money from his brother, that he was consumed with the majesty and reach of the region's resources. Muir measured long-leaf pines with heights of sixty or seventy feet as well as up to

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<sup>91</sup> This chapter has allowed for a painfully-short summation on Savannah during the Civil War. For an in-depth look at Savannah during the war, see: Jacquelyn Jones, *Saving Savannah: The City and the Civil War* (New York, Knopf, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> Quote from J. William Harris, *Deep Souths: Delta, Piedmont, and Sea Island Society in the Age of Segregation* (Taylor and Francis Press, 2003), 16.

thirty inches in diameter. He saw the pines infiltrate the most minute aspects of interior Georgians' culture as he scooted along riverbeds and toward the coast.<sup>93</sup>

In places where brushy pine seedlings (likely slash pine, where the longleaf was becoming already cutover) popped up, he noticed that young rural children “fancied that they resembled brooms,” and used them “in their picnic playhouses.”<sup>94</sup> At every stop he saw someone cutting wood for an impending fire. Dotted the heaviest of woods he encountered freedmen in distress, and just as many former black slaves that had yet to escape the physical or mental shackles of their laboring environment. Muir made his way farmhouse-to-farmhouse requesting small amounts of bread and water, often accepting in-house lodging and family meals when offered. He was close to Savannah by the first of October, 1867, and wrote of “splendid grasses and rich, dense, vine-clad forests” and, later, “pines in glorious array with open, welcoming, approaching plants.”<sup>95</sup>

Closer to the city, the ravages of war became more evident. The land's wounds were still bleeding. The “ragged, desolate fields” bordering the path into Savannah remained burned and fallow, overrun with “coarse rank weeds.”<sup>96</sup> In a few spots, Muir reminds us that the woods had been openly and “ruthlessly slaughtered.”<sup>97</sup> He would end up in Savannah a few days later with no money and no food. An outcast in a city functioning but lacerated by the poverty of post-wartime, he found no place that suited him except for a pile of rocks in the oak-covered Bonaventure Cemetery—which was part of an ill-fated cotton plantation founded by a Frenchman (the name, ironically, means “good fortune”). Savannah's Parks and Tree Commission, which according to one native writer guarded the “city's trees as zealously as Fort

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<sup>93</sup> Muir, *Walk to the Gulf*, 54.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 56 and 65.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

Knox protects the nation's gold reserves," kept abreast of the urban seedlings.<sup>98</sup> There in a dark but adorned cemetery, Muir slept for days, hallucinating, so it is a wonder that near the end of his records Muir proclaimed with seeming sincerity that he "best like[d] the Georgians."<sup>99</sup> Muir's log through Georgia is a peek into the physicalities of transition. He walked the path of the lumber man's frontier at just the moment when it would be all but plundered, by Georgians and by outsiders.

Historian Albert Cowdrey wrote with frankness that poverty is "no friend to natural resources, which are typically devoured piecemeal to sustain existence"; during the Gilded Age, southerners scraped together their existences however they could.<sup>100</sup> Land speculation after the Civil War transferred huge chunks of timber land into private hands—most of them northern and Midwestern. This was truly the age of southern logging; as early as 1860, lumber corporations, mostly from the Northeast, purchased or leased large tracts of forest, built sawmills and railroads and begun exporting lumber, while employing local men on a seasonal basis as timber cutters and log haulers.<sup>101</sup> The South joined the Northwest and Northeast (and Canada, for that matter) as a major lumber source; yet the region still *produced* very little by way of manufactures. Many freedmen turned to truck gardening to make money, an endeavor that fueled what can only be best described as a "family economy."<sup>102</sup> Others joined hinterlanders in cutting longleaf for the burgeoning lumber industry as the coastal plain became cleared of what Bartram had called its

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<sup>98</sup> Coffey, *Only in Savannah*, 4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>100</sup> Cowdrey, *This Land, This South*, 103.

<sup>101</sup> Charlotte Todes, *Labor and Lumber* (New York: International Publishers, 1931), 40-42. Historians have long observed that Northeastern and Midwestern corporations flocked to the South in the early-twentieth century primarily because labor was indeed so affordable and accommodating. Todes, who wrote in the 1930s, suggested that the abundance of unused land played just as significant a role, but no major scholarly works have yet really latched on to this idea.

<sup>102</sup> Discussion of family economy in agriculture and rural societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Sue Eleanor Headlee, *The Political Economy of the Family Farm: The Agrarian Roots of American Capitalism* (Greenwood, 1991); Jane H. Adams, *The Transformation of Rural Life in Southern Illinois, 1890-1990* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Hardy Green, *The Company Town: Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills that Shaped the American Economy*; William P. Jones, *Tribe of Black Ulysses*.

“wide” and “open” forests. African-American men often set off as saw mill workers, log haulers, and road builders who sent home money to provide for their more-stationary families.<sup>103</sup> These men all made the conscious decision to sell their labor, first through sharecropping and then in industry, typically to white employers, and thus became not men merely pushed or pulled around by abstract economic forces but purposeful participants in a nationalizing economy. In this respect, the proliferation of sawmills and lumbering served as a gateway for black workers into a modern economy.<sup>104</sup>

Logging in the North Georgia mountains in 1880s generated the building of more and more sawmills. Small towns sprung up around them, as they did elsewhere in the South, which survived off of exporting lumber along new rail lines. The railroads were to the South’s pines, Ray writes, what they there were to buffalo in the American West—a means to extinction.<sup>105</sup>

Naturalist Roland Harper reported with amazement in the *Savannah Morning News* in 1911 that over one hundred thousand new settlers entered the wiregrass region in the last decade of the

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<sup>103</sup> (By “workers,” I also mean farmers, it is important to note.) Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, et. Al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. *Like a Family*, published in 1987, was not the first work of social history to address the connection between industrial labor and family or community networks but followed the emergence of a race-, gender- and class-centered “New Labor History” in the late twentieth century. Prior to this trend, however, the “Old Labor History,” which, most historians agree, included scholarship from the 1920s through the 1980s, had traditionally presented a labor history narrative centered on the activities of labor unions and their politics. Led by the work of John R. Commons and the “Wisconsin School” of institutional and economic history, the “Old Labor History” often cited the New Deal-era, a time when white industrial workers achieved significant levels of organization and solidarity, as a benchmark for the American labor movement’s success, thus inadvertently excluding other issues such as race and gender. For the shift toward the “New Labor History,” see, among many others: Herbert Gutman, who helped to establish the importance of community for the working class: *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working Class and Social History* (New York, 1977), *The New England Working Class and the New Labor History* (Urbana, 1987), and *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1987); David Montgomery, *Workers’ Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles*, (Cambridge University Press, 1979); David Brody, “The Old Labor History and the New: In Search of an American Working Class,” *Labor History* 20 (Winter 1979); Leon Fink, “Looking Backward: Reflections on Workers’ Culture and Certain Dilemmas within Labor History,” in J. Carroll Moody and Alice Kessler-Harris, eds., *Perspectives on American Labor History: The Problems of Synthesis* (DeKalb, Ill., 1990). Critics have pointed out that the fragmentation of labor history into individualized studies of race, class, and gender, those such as *Like a Family*, de-emphasized the role of politics and union activity in shaping the life of an industrial worker. I argue that in the South southern timber owners became heavy political actors even if they were often not directly associated with union activity.

<sup>104</sup> William P. Jones, *Tribe of Black Ulysses*

<sup>105</sup> Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 99.



nineteenth century.<sup>106</sup> Other countryside towns became nothing but ghosts, though, because soil erosion became a serious problem in the nineteenth century (if not before in some places), as did declining prices for cash crops cotton and tobacco. Wealthy plantation owners and smaller growers alike abandoned huge tracts of land throughout the South, leaving fields to fallow under the southern sun.<sup>107</sup>

And at the start of the twentieth century, almost no efforts were yet in place to re-forest the South in any organized fashion. This lack of action was part and parcel of a deeper ideological issue—the absence of a cohesive, narrative conservation ethic in the South. It also represented a complete naiveté to the potential boon of reforestation. Destructive fires, left unattended and often wrongly blamed on the “ignorance” of rural farmers, also prevented the natural regeneration processes of the longleaf stands. The simple ecological fact is that the longleaf forests might have otherwise had a chance to regenerate on top of cutover tracks. The connection between nationalism, natural resources, and the state's responsibilities for spearheading efforts of conservation was born in the Northeast in the early nineteenth century, the child of naturalist thinkers and writers who had just as much to say about stewardship as they did patriotism.<sup>108</sup>

In contrast, New South boosters saw extractive industry as the region's panacea. In two of his most famous speeches, given in Boston and New York in 1889 and 1886 respectively, Henry Grady announced with great fanfare that the United States would no longer be two nations

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid; In accordance, the population of some Georgia counties increased by up to 75 percent during that time, usually depending on their proximity to new railroad line production.

<sup>107</sup> On soil erosion, see: Avery O. Craven, *Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1606-1860* (University of Illinois Press, 1925); Stanley W. Trimble, “Perspectives on the History of Soil Erosion Control in the Eastern United States,” *Agricultural History* 59 (1985): 162-180; Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement 1890-1920* (Harvard University Press, 1959).

<sup>108</sup> The first statewide forest inventory took stock of reserves in Massachusetts in 1830, but surveying measures had not yet migrated southward.

in any way. The southern economy had changed irrevocably and for the better, he said, the ills and limitations of plantation agriculture permanently replaced by industrial pursuits. By 1900, in reality, the South was in large part becoming an industrial colony through activities like clear-cutting.<sup>109</sup> And in 1907, Henry James still called Savannah the “last exoticism,” an isolated place where residents grasped for spinning strings of the Old South.<sup>110</sup>

The South also remained largely absent from the conservation debate in the nineteenth century because of its perceived lack of wilderness.<sup>111</sup> The southern agricultural experience was so defined by constant contact with unsettled areas, and by the rapid growth of monocrop agriculture, that southerners either felt highly frightened by it, and saw it as a dark place, or felt so comfortable with it that they paid it no mind. But there were some scattered conservation and reform impulses in the South in the early and mid-nineteenth century, Stewart reminds us, generally in response to the ideological attacks on slavery.<sup>112</sup> Perhaps the South's most infamous conservationist son was Edmund Ruffin, a paternalistic Virginia planter credited with firing the “first shots of the Civil War.” But he also attacked his own class of planters for their abrasive agricultural practices. Many southern farmers refused to believe that southern soils could be in danger, mostly because they were so abundant. In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act would, ironically,

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<sup>109</sup>Historians have already rightly questioned the New South's original periodization, arguing that the region remained largely rural and distinctly “un-modern” until it became industrialized in the early twentieth century. Most would agree that the New South calls of Henry Grady's fiery late-nineteenth century speeches were more a premature myth-building than anything else. Godfather of modern southern history, C. Vann Woodward, suggested that the rhetoric of the New South was palatable to whites primarily because it allowed them to dissolve racial conflict, the recantations of their racist actions, and economic changes into a veritable syrup of romance. This traditional narrative of the New South dictates that the collapse of the planter class and subsequent rise of the southern businessmen created a new social polity to serve them; the rise of the southern cotton mill has been used to symbolize the ascendance of a new polity, but many don't find the explanation adequate. Edward Ayers pulled the narrative away from Reconstruction and toward agrarian revolt (Farmer's Alliance and People's Party); for Ayers, the railroad played the role that Redeemers played for Woodward. And Gavin Wright then painted the “newer” period as a post-1940 labor market.

<sup>110</sup>From Henry James, *The American Scene* (1907)

<sup>111</sup>Mart Stewart, “If John Muir had Been an Agrarian,” in the Sutter, Manganiello collection; Thoreau is often cited as “only Northeastern,” just as Turner is often cited as “only Western”

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

mandate the basic principles of Ruffin's earlier message regarding soil—notably that applied science would yield high production.<sup>113</sup>

In 1959, a local writer from Savannah named Joe Purvis suggested that Savannah's most innate charms had “cruised” her “serenely through history since the Civil War,” a result of the graces that nature had bestowed upon her.<sup>114</sup> These are the gentle nudges toward peace that local literature always offers. Savannah, Georgia, would not cruise but rather careen through the twentieth century fueled in large part by its romanticized southern-ness, stabilized periodically by gluts of resources and innovative specialists who would re-imagine the coastal and piney woods landscapes in wholly new ways. But at the turn of the century, not quite two hundred years after Oglethorpe laid a flag along a stretch of dirt on Yamacraw Bluff, Georgia was quickly becoming a wasteland. Savannah-proper remained a largely-profitable and consistent port—what Muir called the consistent “hum of Savannah”<sup>115</sup>--many of its elite having decided long ago to ride the coattails of the lumber boom. However, the city's men had not yet come face-to-face with the lumbermen who fattened their back pockets and what more they might offer; the story of the periphery colliding with its center was yet to be told.

In the backwoods of Georgia, a burgeoning turpentine industry created the first professional interaction between scientific managers and tree farmers. The turpentine industry was, like so many processes and groups discussed within the confines of this project, a migratory business that remained strong only as long as resin-filled trees remained abundant. This is why it literally scooted down the eastern seaboard in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, climaxing at different ports along the way until coastal Georgia became one of its last great potential frontiers. From this industry emerged a unique transitional generation of land managers known

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<sup>113</sup>Edmund Ruffin (Jack Temple Kirby, ed.), *Nature's Management*.

<sup>114</sup>Purvis, *Savannah Bits and Pieces*, 8.

<sup>115</sup>From John Muir, *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*, 77.

as the turpentine “factors.” Factors were *not* necessarily foresters, nor did all of them hold scientific degrees. Factors took the crude gum from trees from the producers in the countryside. Often times they were also in charge of managing the land in place of the owners and farmers themselves, and when this was the case, the factor often hired groups of transient black workers to chip the bark and tap the trees.<sup>116</sup> Factors were eventually forced to become, at least in part, conservationists in the name of the product they profited from. As a group, they represented a meeting point between the countryside and a port city like Savannah.<sup>117</sup>

The first substantial pulp and paper mills did not pop up in the South until the post-Civil War era: first in Marietta, Georgia (1864), Hartsville, South Carolina (1890), and Big Island, Virginia (1899). The first “official” Kraft paper mill, built in 1909 in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, made wrapping papers by cooking pine via puerile sulphate processes. In 1912, a mill in Moss Point, Mississippi was the first to attempt to use longleaf for paper (they failed, in the end). At least eight mills opened in the South during the 1920s, but they were small and largely unrepresentative of any broader endeavors.<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile, in the Northeast and Pacific Northwest, paper producers were scrambling to troubleshoot their disappearing raw product. Canadian and Scandinavian imports of newsprint and cheap papers drove the prices down. Pulpwood costs and values had reached a breaking point, and particularly in the New England states, foresters did their best to convince paper manufacturers that they must begin to seriously consider plans for the growing of their future supply of timber.

J.B. Harrison, speaking from the Proceedings of the American Forest Association in 1897,

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<sup>116</sup>Kayton interview, 3-4.

<sup>117</sup>During the era of the Depression, the government stepped in to limit the number and height of trees which could be tapped in the South. Similar to the conditions of the New Deal's Agricultural Adjustment Act, this measure ensured that turpentine producers could continue stay afloat financially without endangering the trees on their land, whether it was the land they owned or the land they leased.

<sup>118</sup> Earle, T.W., “Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association at Work for Fifteen Years,” Address to the Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association (Savannah, Georgia, January 19, 1955), 1-3

proclaimed with some foresight that: “The careless and wasteful methods of the treatment of our forest interests and resources, which have been common in this country, have always had close and vital relations to the general contents of the American mind—that is, to the whole body of ideas, theories, opinions, beliefs, and assumptions which belong to the intellectual life of our people. They are features and products of our mental conditions and environment, and belong naturally to the stage of civilization and development which we have reached.”<sup>119</sup> A “spendthrift’s childlike faith in inexhaustibility” from the nineteenth century would inform the twentieth—not only in the South but across the country’s forests.<sup>120</sup> Harrison insisted, during a time when few thinkers made this connection, that the American mass mindset involves and incorporates the symbolisms of natural resources, but no one gives it much credence because this mass mindset is so difficult to define. As the following chapters will show, the forest “problems” in Georgia would indeed become a deep psychological dilemma.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>“Pamphlets on Forestry,” University of California Agriculture and Forestry files, *Proceedings of the American Forest Association* from 1894 and 1896, Washington, D.C. Vol. 18, 1897, 158.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 2: THE FLOWERING OF THE BIG MILL IDEA

*“There is only one sure way for a resident of these United States to remain oblivious of the forest fire problem would be to spend all his life indoors and at least fifty miles from any forest area.”*

(J.B. Woods, in *American Forests Magazine*, 1935)<sup>1</sup>

In a 1968 essay published by *Forest History*, Georgia economist I. James Pikl, Jr., suggested that the tale of how Georgia did *not* develop a profitable pulp and paper industry prior to the 1930s is just as exciting (if also a bit disheartening) as the story of how it *did* develop one later on. It seems inconceivable that pulp and paper barely made a dent in the state's economy in the first few decades of the twentieth century, simply because Georgia's mills were, by the 1960s, ranked first in pulping capacity in the South (ahead of Louisiana, Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia, all historically large producers).<sup>2</sup> The era between 1900 and the 1930s saw timber speculation at its worst, he wrote, but, “happily, it had seen the beginnings of forest management and industry permanency on a scale great enough to give [at least the] promise of effectiveness.”<sup>3</sup> The learning curve would be steep for all involved. In Pikl's view, the shared historians' and journalists' task was to reward the public with a “picture of reality which is every bit as exciting as the popular tales which, for one reason or another, they seem to prefer.”<sup>4</sup> He was right. And

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<sup>1</sup> J.B. Woods, National Lumber Manufacturers Association, “Why Forest Fires,” published in *American Forests Magazine* and accessed as a typed draft in letter form to Ovid Butler, editor of the magazine (vertical files of the Forest History Society), 1935, 1.

<sup>2</sup> I. James Pikl, Jr., “Pulp and Paper and Georgia: The Newsprint Paradox,” *Forest History* Vol. 12 No. 3 October 1968, p. 6-19, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* and Fannon, “Pulp and Paper..”

<sup>4</sup> Pikl, “Pulp and Paper,” 11.

the “real” narrative of the pulp and paper empire in the South is that it almost did not happen at all.

The period between 1860 and 1920 was a time of great contradictions. From 1869 to 1899, the value of output rose six fold in the South, and capital investment increased by ten times. But it remained largely rural, and the cut and run strategies allowed for no real permanency. The countryside has always provided both an alternative and a critique of urban society.<sup>5</sup> But as all of the above proves, in the South, the “loss” of traditional agricultural pursuits had actually happened long before the modern era. After the Civil War, work for lower classes of southerners had become so migratory that the “family farm” structure was already on its way out.<sup>6</sup> So it was not the potential loss of the rural, per se, that frustrated Georgians whose land would become entangled in questions of land use. It was often the loss of power, the control over the land itself and what it symbolized, that caused scuffles in the early twentieth century landscape.<sup>7</sup>

The rural and urban mingled on this landscape already. Both black and white males began to imagine to that better lives awaited them in more densely-populated places which had a hand in wartime production and modern manufacture.<sup>8</sup> Still others during this time continued to reach their hands into a timber economy that often seemed to be literally floating toward them.

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<sup>5</sup> The rise of industry in the twentieth-century South is a process inextricably tied into the themes of loss and declension. Historical studies of the loss of the agricultural lifestyle in rural American communities have traditionally used the word “transformation” to denote great changes in economies. In using the term “transformation” I am referring most specifically to the historiographical shift offered by historians Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude—that the persistent rural character of American life (or, in some places, the persistence of rural nostalgia) is tied inextricably to the presence of capitalistic endeavors even in the earliest parts of the American countryside. See: Hahn and Prude, *The Countryside In the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America* (University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>6</sup>It received a brief revival in coastal Georgia after the war in the growth of small, family-owned black farms, see: J. William Harris, *Deep Souths: Delta, Piedmont, and Sea Island Society in the Age of Segregation* (Taylor and Francis, 2003), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Historian Mart Stewart saw Georgia as a contested political landscape prior to the twentieth century, and it was just as much one once the plantation economy died. A group of people usually define “landscape” according to the purpose they sit it fit for. The word itself implies a sense of power and control over nature, which we know is impossible, but perhaps it is always more of a meeting group for opposing cultures fighting for vastly different goals.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 136-137.

The Hilton family of Darien, Georgia, for example, is notorious for having floated barges full of long-leaf yellow pine up the Altamaha towards the Northeast; Hilton Timber and Lumber Company held so much control over the town itself that its daily bore the name the *Timber Gazette*—because, according to a resident, timber had simply become “king here now, and we have christened our paper after him.”<sup>9</sup> Despite developments like this, the statistical majority of Georgians remained out on the land. And it would be a re-imagination of the way they viewed and used their landscape that invigorated tree-heavy industries.<sup>10</sup>

At the start of the twentieth century, there were no large-scale local or national programs in place to reforest following the timber harvest of the late nineteenth century. Pine trees typically regenerate, but sunlight and moisture are requisite, as are the natural openings in the pine landscape created by things like rain or the recurring order of wiregrass species.<sup>11</sup> Without this scenario, cutover completely, large tracts of formerly thriving pine land were turning fallow. By 1910, half of the country's overall lumber production came from the South. It was an industry with an insatiable client base, because the South had ahold of the last remaining cookies from a large jar.

U.S. Forest Service investigations from 1910 and 1920 confirm that most lumber companies were willing to ship anything from anywhere to turn profits in the post-Civil War

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<sup>9</sup> Information and quotation pulled from Harris, *Deep Souths*, 141.

<sup>10</sup>If the growth of agriculture and the movement of people in colonial Georgia had been the first massive change on the land, then the period between 1860 and 1920 constituted a “second great transformation” of rural life in the South. This “transformation” is best defined by the process of reckoning—a mass reckoning with the environmental, economic, social, and cultural changes associated with industrial and agricultural growth in areas that are, at times, both rural and urban. These are the “middling” areas, that developed in spades in twentieth-century America, with neither huge or small populations but a keen sense of vitalism in a changing, growing regional and national economy. The phrase “great transformation” comes from many books on rural life in America in the nineteenth and twentieth century. For the best study of rural life spanning both centuries, see: Jane H. Adams, *The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890-1990* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 269.



era.<sup>12</sup> And once timber depletion became a real problem in the South and in the West, middlemen and woods-products manufacturers began to pass along ever-increasing costs to consumers.<sup>13</sup> This was cut-and-run at its climax, before enough researchers and scientists took note of the ways in which the country's "frontier" expanses were actually almost as cut-over as the Northeast. By 1930, Georgia would be home to an upwards of 60,000 abandoned farms, and in some counties forestland losses would reach 90 percent. The consequences of cutting without planting caught up with lumber frontiers in less than one generation.<sup>14</sup> And since half of the country's timber resources remained in the private hands of a mere 250 major owner-operators, any large-scale sea change would have to happen via a local, state, and national contract of sorts. Woods-industries like paper-making remained mostly a Northern and Midwestern concern.<sup>15</sup> But the USFS recognized as early as 1916 that there existed a gap in the manufacturing of paper, on the end of the producer as well as for the conservationist. They released a series of reports that year which, in summary, ventured that "satisfactory wood pulp can be made from a number of heretofore little known woods." The spruce forests of the country, previously bountiful in the Northeast and Midwest, were at that point "threatened with [utter] exhaustion" and the cause of a severe price spike in pulpwood and consumer paper. The bulletins also recognized a chief problem for the industry as a whole—that the methods of manufacturing groundwood pulp had "changed very little since its introduction to this country in 1867." Using new woods, like the

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<sup>12</sup> Information and historiographical debates regarding the lumber industry in America and in the South are related from: Vernon H. Jensen, *Labor and Lumber (American Labor Series No. 2)* (Ayers Publishing, 1971); Cox, *Lumberman's Frontier*; Jeffrey A. Drobney, *Lumbermen and Log Sawyers: Life, Labor, and Culture in the North Florida Timber Industry, 1830-1930* (Mercer University Press, 1997); Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares*.

<sup>13</sup> Earl Hart Clapp, USFS Report, "Timber depletion, lumber prices, lumber exports, and concentration of timber," 1920, 4; Wholesale lumber prices rose ten and fifteen dollars per thousand in the late-nineteenth century, as transportation costs ballooned.

<sup>14</sup> Use of the term "lumber frontier" is from Cox as well as Tim Flannery, *The Eternal Frontier: An Ecological History of North America and its Peoples* (Grove Press, 2002); Flannery contends that railroads definitively opened the lumber frontier in the Great Lakes and the West, tying the notions of Manifest Destiny and a resource "frontier."

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 5

pinetrees of the South, would require innovations in the pulp-making process. It was this early, twenty years before Union would become the first paper concern to move South, that the USFS recognized an equation no conservationists, southern forester or factor, or paper producer had been yet able to: that the pulp-making plants of the country “must eventually move to points where they can obtain a plentiful supply of wood and an abundance of cheap water-power, two prime requisites in the business.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1920, a self-professed “Yankee” factor named Herbert L. Kayton took to holding business meetings deep inside the oft-burning woods near Savannah. He was, in essence, both so far and so close to the city in those moments. Fires spread out in patterns there all the time, like concentric circles hovering closer and closer to a climax. Cows grazed in the darkness alongside hazy flames of purples and oranges. The real victims, though—old-growth longleaf pines—never stood a chance.<sup>17</sup> Kayton had become obsessed and sickened by the process and began inviting other people from local industries to witness the destruction firsthand.

The culprits stretched far and wide, both animal and kinetic. Residents in Savannah may have fancied themselves isolated, but these lights in the distance would come to bless and haunt them in decades to come. If the lack of industry in the woods, the lack of permanency, created an invisible problem, then the fires were the visible one. Farmers burned to clear land, as they had for centuries, torching pastures and trees in hopes of sustaining an agricultural system. Many cattlemen ignited fields in dry season as well, hoping grass would grow faster once the rains came. Many also thought that the boll weevil thrived in wooded areas that surrounded cotton fields, so to prevent the pest from jumping in they would burn around the edges of their

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<sup>16</sup> USFS, US Department of Agriculture, “Government Makes Paper from New Woods,” Paper-making files, FHS.

<sup>17</sup> John B. Woods, “Why Forest Fires?” in *American Forests*, magazine of the American Forestry Association, accessed through archived correspondence between Woods and the publication's editor, Ovid Butler, FHS vertical files.

land, watching and waiting to stop it before it reached too far. Still others used burning as a revenge tactic against unruly neighbors, stealing through the night in search of retribution for a misplaced cow or a low return on a month's crop.<sup>18</sup> But many of the blazes proved the work of nature's hand—the sting of a lightning bolt during a summer storm, or the heat of a drought that sucked the lifeblood from a state with no naturally-occurring lakes, and thus, very little inland-thriving water. The life of fire in the woods was not new, but the scale of Georgia agriculture and clear-cutting on the coast and in the piney woods had taken its toll over the past two centuries.<sup>19</sup>

Kayton winced at the misinformation of these landowners and the spectacle of the fires. To understand the woods, he reasoned, one had to literally stand with them at intervals, feel swallowed by them, to smell the burning bark and the acrid mist nearby that covered the earth like a rough, wet blanket.<sup>20</sup> But doubtless the farmers had spent their lives doing just that. It was Kayton's status as an outsider, an expert, that made his summation both different and, in this situation, more business-like. The southern forest had been his business for a long time. He'd supervised the turpentine processes in Georgia so well that many of his services were no longer *needed*. Under his tutelage, a number of the state's industry-minded tree farmers had begun to understand the ecology of their land. He was an outsider that had converted himself into an insider.

Still, Georgians with smaller holdings or less experience with industrial endeavors continued to let their land be burned or cut without reserve. Kayton often felt like a doctor

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<sup>18</sup> Cowdrey, *This Land, This South*, 176.

<sup>19</sup> The reality of a fire in a forest is that it strips away all trappings, revealing a disturbed and raw ecosystem from underneath. Small animals that manage to survive hobble around in shock for days afterward. Burned limbs look as haunting as skeletons. So do smaller pines whose trunks have been tapped prematurely of their rosin.

<sup>20</sup> Traditionally, factoring is a way for businesses to sell all or part of their receivables or invoices in order to receive the cash they need immediately. A more detailed account of the factoring experience is given in a latter part of this chapter.

losing his patients in droves. He spent the first two decades of the twentieth century befriending both local tree farmers and forestry specialists who had become just as disillusioned with the state of Georgia's timber land. Kayton was a living, breathing manifestation of the tides turning in southern forests in the early twentieth century. Trained in scientific forestry, he knew that lumber prices in the South had increased three-hundred percent by 1920, and that timber resources nation-wide were very suddenly at their most precarious in historical memory. According to Kayton, many land owners remained ignorant to the potential financial boon of growing new pine trees on their property simply because there remained such a cultural distance between professional forestry (its Georgia practitioners mostly residents of Atlanta or Savannah) and farmers.<sup>21</sup> This was the “invisible problem” created decades earlier in the piney woods.

For many of Georgia's farmers, it seemed on the surface both biting and fitting that foresters had gone into cahoots with local businessmen and government officials. There existed a real animosity between some rural Georgians and the people they often referred to as the “Bolsheviks in Asheville or Washington.” The American hinterlands are not (and never have been) at all removed from capitalistic endeavors of the agricultural or industrial variety.<sup>22</sup> What Kayton's actions show is that those inextricable connections often became reliant on very *direct verbal* interaction between the two groups. The relationship could not exist merely as an exchange of goods or resources.

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<sup>21</sup> Herbert L. Kayton, Interview with Roy R. White, October 7, 1959; Interview with G. P. Shingler, June 30, 1959. All interview files and transcripts are held by the Forest History Society in Durham, North Carolina.

<sup>22</sup>The idea that extractive industries link the city and the country, the rural and the urban, in inextricable ways is anything but new among scholars. Much justified to-do has followed the publication of works such as William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis*, which most blatantly absorbed the full academic realization that William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*

Labor historians have also come to surmise that *people* are actually the most important imports and exports between the urban and the rural.<sup>23</sup> The common impression is that after the Civil War, wandering and seasonal laborers, both black and white, infected the traditional relationship between farming and manufacturing. This is, of course, a ridiculous narrative.<sup>24</sup> These rural Georgians actually *created* that relationship, and largely *after* the war.<sup>25</sup> But the first move toward protective management of the land, according to Kayton, was mostly at the instigation of private industries (chief among them, turpentine) instead of the government itself: “It was not the law, however, that finally secured protection against damaging fire. It was a process of education of those who had to lose by the fires.”<sup>26</sup>

The Georgia Forestry Association was made up of landowners, several farmers, several turpentine men, and, in Kayton's words, the two “of us from Savannah,” one an exporter and one a factor. And it may not have actually been *only* rural Georgians that felt uneasy about the involvement of the federal government in forestry matters. Kayton claims that they were repeatedly informed by state officials that if the matter were handled by Georgians some success

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<sup>23</sup>Modern rural laborers have, in literature and culture (and even in academic studies prior to the 1990s), usually been depicted as an oppressed and rather dirty working mass of men. Frank Tobias Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American West, 1880-1930* (University of Illinois Press, 2003): Higbie's book is important because it posed the question of whether or not labor historians have overlooked the narratives of seasonal laborers. It is nearly-impossible, though, to fully answer that question because in so many places there exist no workable sources for these men and women. A key comparison here is also between Georgia's tree growers and Wheat Belt farmers; Higbie's farmers have a similar relationship to wheat business leaders as growers did to Union and paper boosters in the South; Hal Barron, *Mixed Harvest: The Second Great Transformation in the Rural North, 1870-1930* (University of North Carolina Press, 1997): Barron explores the dual nature of family farms (economic and social), and his discussion of the loss of control in rural places informs much of my work. In the case of both of these books, their themes coincide directly with my debates regarding both urban and rural connections and nostalgia, but in the West and the rural North, respectively.

<sup>24</sup> For the unpacking of this myth specifically, see: William P. Jones, *Tribe of Black Ulysses*

<sup>25</sup> Rural and working class Georgians were far from marginal. These people had little time to leave behind any workable sources, though, a fact which has contributed to their push into those labor history margins. Far too often, we have no records at all of poorer southerners who toiled in early semi-industrial settings in the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Citizenship is, so often, so synonymous with submission to a fluctuating, and sometimes dangerous, labor market. Thus, in the darkest and most interesting corners of American history prior to and even after World War II, laborers are sadly often still watered down to seemingly emotion-less citizens pushed and pulled against price markets and industrial developments. This is how the more-organized industrial North and the oft-chaotic industrial actually look the same in one crucial way

<sup>26</sup> Kayton interview, 1.

was possible, but defeat was sure if 'those Bolsheviks' from Asheville and Washington tried to interfere."<sup>27</sup> Kayton's group made it their primary goal to help tree farmers *use* their pine land for responsible profit-making. As death knells rang for the cotton and rice empires in the South, it would be those with foresight that saw the potential trees as crops. Instead of burning them, or sending them off haphazardly to other parts of the country, by the 1920s there existed a very real potential in turning them into Georgia manufactures. Kayton made the compelling argument that there need not be much of a difference in school of thought between these university-groomed foresters and the general tree-farming public.<sup>28</sup> The longleaf was largely gone by this point, replaced by second-growth and slash pines. In many places, these new pines were close to being particularly ripe for use. If not extracted and treated according to "best practices," then they would not grow back for another cycle. When it came to trees, rural Georgians just could not win. They had been told by colonial entrepreneurs and agriculturalists to cut them down for the sake of a row-crop future. Now they were being told to save them, even grow more of them in a new, controlled environment.

On a chilly evening in March of 1921, R.S. Kellogg, Secretary of the Newsprint Service Bureau, addressed the Society of American Foresters from a pedestal at Manhattan's Cosmos Club. Kellogg outlined the East's two primary arboreal dilemmas. The paper industry, until this point undeniably synonymous with the newsprint industry, would have to: one, begin using new types of trees, and two, begin growing its own pulpwood for survival. For both tasks, the organization he represented, as well as many others in the paper circles, would need help from the foresters. The country had entered "truly a paper age," Kellogg insisted with considerable

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid; Frank G. Wisner, "Lumber Finds Widening Markets," prepared for the National Lumber Manufacturers' Association, published in *Nation's Business Magazine* (U.S. Chamber of Commerce), December 1926 edition.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 2.

foresight, and the future of paper-making lay in forestry and farming, not in lumbering.<sup>29</sup> If Americans could be trained to use paper in every facet of their lives, then the forests could also be trained to regenerate and satisfy a continual demand.

Paper producers had not yet begun to look southward to make these changes. Coastal Georgia had, though, already and undeniably entered a dialogue of urban metabolism. In the place of rice and cotton plantations rose hierarchies of lumber production. In the city, many residents operated under the assumption that trees were an immeasurable and majestic natural resource, fostering a sense of community around the idea that their more-urbane existence was made possible by an abundance in the countryside.<sup>30</sup> Savannah's Park and Tree Commission made painstakingly detailed reports to the mayor of Savannah every year, splicing dollars and cents to police every tree within the city limits.<sup>31</sup> But in reality, Georgia had been more cut-over than any other southern state, by the 1920s nearly 19 million acres gone.<sup>32</sup>

Timber scouts found that Henry Grady's modern version of a newer South still barely existed. In their eyes that became a blessing, for they would meet with little resistance to cut-and-run strategies in its absence. For many outsider-businesses, the South looked very much as tender and unreliable as it had during the Civil War. The "New" South was, to most, still as abstract and elusive as it had been in 1880. Ironically, Grady had once championed the longleaf pine as a watershed resource of the mythic "New South" rising from the ashes of a pre-industrial "Old" one. Even if Georgians were lumbering, that did not necessarily mean that they felt a part of an industrial order just yet.

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<sup>29</sup>By 1920, Americans consumed 147 pounds of paper per capita; "Forestry Essential to Permanence of Paper-Making Industry," USDA Division of Publications Press Service, March 25, 1921, Paper-making vertical file, FHS.

<sup>30</sup>Purvis, *Savannah Bits and Pieces*, 29.

<sup>31</sup>"Annual Message to the City Council of Savannah," Mayor Reports of the Savannah Park and Tree Commission, Savannah, Georgia, 1899-1910, digitized and searchable by Google.

<sup>32</sup>Cowdrey, *This Land, This South*, 176.

The Southern Forestry Congress, founded in Asheville, North Carolina, held their Sixth Annual Meeting in Savannah at the city's Municipal Auditorium in 1924, cementing the ornery separation of professional forestry and the practices of the rural hinterlands.<sup>33</sup> The men took an automobile tour of Savannah, picking up the highlights of its fame and southern charm—chiefly the stories surrounding Oglethorpe, the fallen but purportedly “forever magnificent” plantations, and Sherman's 62,000-man march through to the sea. They then picked up their wives from the hotels downtown and feasted at an oyster roast on the lawn of Savannah's Yacht Club. That night ended with a drive down to Tybee Beach for a splendid little toe-dip in the ocean.

That week, commission members also hosted a tree identification contest for fifth through twelfth graders in Savannah's (white) Public Schools. All over town there were briefings, presentations, talks. For a few days, Savannah was literally abuzz with forestry professionals. Mayor Paul E. Seabrook opened the ceremonies with a speech within which he called his charge formally the “Forest City of the South” and the “premier naval stores port of the world.” But the chief purpose of the meeting seems to have been the revitalization of the potentially-wavering turpentine industry, a seaport glut which Savannah had long capitalized on.<sup>34</sup> There was not a real mention of the coming paper industry. The potential for a globally-relevant paper manufacturing base in the state questionably remained such an impossibility that it warranted little to no discussion, at this, the South's premier forestry meeting.

If members needed any reminding that the event they attended was *supposed* to be by its very nature extremely important, they got it in the reading of a letter delivered by an assistant to Present Calvin Coolidge. In it he suggested that the “American people came into the possession

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<sup>33</sup> It is evident, given the gap between founding and the number of annual meetings held by 1924, that the SFC skipped two years.

<sup>34</sup> *Proceedings of the Sixth Forestry Congress*, held in Savannah, Georgia, January 28th-30<sup>th</sup>, 1924 (Durham, North Carolina: Seaman Printery, Inc.), 1925, 12.



of the greatest wealth in virgin timber with which any people in the history of the world was ever endowed.”<sup>35</sup> The whole country was on trial for its disabuse of timber stands. But the South was in the spotlight because it had the greatest chances of revitalizing its timber stands. Kayton (then representing Carson Naval Stores Company of Georgia) spoke not long after. His speech—which began, simply, with the question “Can the Factor Prevent Reckless Turpentine?”--recounted the recent wasteful cutting of small timber in Georgia, as well as other places, and the rapid draining of trees by chipping too deeply and too often. Kayton reiterated to his colleagues that a deeply-embedded turpentine industry was *really only* 50 years old in this part of the South. It was not until after the Civil War that the spotty pockets of resin (rosin) production joined up into a sizable regional endeavor. Savannah's prized position as a chief turpentine port, he surmised, was really only a product of time and migration. As the forests had fallen like dominoes southward in the nineteenth century, coastal Georgia had become an accidental final port of call for an industry that would crumble without better management.

Like many times before and many times after this specific speech, Kayton included in his narrative a sophisticated level of class analysis that no one could be entirely sure was purposeful or not. He spoke of his early career as an era of complete ignorance in the woods, where turpentine for Georgians was a piecemeal existence at its worst and a complementary side project at its best. And in the immediate post-Civil War era, he claimed, demand for timber was so great that turpentine men began the practice of extracting “pale” rosins from their trees, tapping in entirely too early into delicate pine stands. Much of the speculated lands that these men worked were leased for small periods, a circumstance which sadly often left little room for concern over what the conditions of the land in question might be after the lease ended.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 31.

Alexander “A.K.” Sessoms, who hailed quite purposefully and vocally from Cogdell, Georgia, reiterated that the use of the woods for industry was above all a “matter of education” and that he would do all in his power “to prohibit that gross destruction of his own resources.” Sessoms' private business concerns, which he had inherited from his father, relied heavily on the production of turpentine from smaller growers who he leased from. He did not own *their* property, obviously, but he had a vested interest in how they conducted themselves as farmers. A Mister C.S. Hodges, from Decatur County, Georgia, land of the “yellow pine,” jumped up from the middle of a crowded room during the conference to say this: “I have observed that necessity is a severe schoolmaster!”<sup>37</sup> In other words, it would be a dwindling pine country that woke Georgians up from their slumped and resource-induced slumber.

Because of the freeing power of absolute mobility, interior Georgia settlements like Baxley (where Janisse Ray was born) were often misplaced—off center, away from workable water sources. But the thing that tied many of them together was lumber. Georgia may not have had “paper men” yet, but they had “lumber men” and smaller sawmills in droves. In 1906 the sawmills of America produced more lumber than ever came out of the forests of this or any other county in a single year before that. But in 1932, lumber production sank to its lowest point since the Civil War.<sup>38</sup> This was, quite simply, because so much of the American forest had been cut down. Even amidst the educational efforts of foresters and the business ideas of scientists, managers, and southern farmers, Georgia came around slow to what Woods called the “flowering of the big mill idea.” Kayton and Woods agreed, also, on one important sidebar—that there were too many Georgians that did not have reasonable access to the educational tools they'd need to prosper.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 36-37. Longleaf would often be referred to colloquially as “yellow pine” in rural Georgia.

<sup>38</sup> R.W. Fannon, “Growth of the Pulp and Paper Industry in the South,” *Pamphlets on Forestry* (Vol. 18) (Forestry files, University of California), 96.

The South had to fight its reputation of inferiority on all fronts. The American Pulp and Paper Association, the mouthpiece for the industry on a national front, often began the transcripts of their meetings and briefings with quotes from Shakespeare's greatest men; in the 1920s they loved particularly Julius Caesar's thoughts regarding manhood—that “there is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, lead on to fortune.”<sup>39</sup> In an official history of the organization, its pamphlet admitted that in the late nineteenth century paper mills “were very much scattered and often isolated.”<sup>40</sup> Back in 1894, President Warner Miller offered that the paper trade, “perhaps more than any other, represents the general business of the country. All business is transacted on paper, and by the use of paper, and the paper trade is taken as a measure of success of the general business of the country.”<sup>41</sup> According to the APPA, pulpwood production and its trappings represented an industry full of “men of wisdom, men of initiative, men of ability, men of high ethics.”<sup>42</sup> But as much as it loved to laud its producers and members in print, the southern expansion of paper is barely ever mentioned in its records. Perhaps it was because the APA revered its original founders as real heroes, and in that narrative there lay precious little room for the South.<sup>43</sup>

Contemporary writers and scientific experts often attributed woods fires and rural crime to an ignorant backwoods mindset. The aptly-named John B. Woods, of the National Lumber Manufacturers' Association, deemed them the obvious “heritages of a pioneering period and of a careless attitude toward life,” a sign that rural farmers had not yet achieved a “full civilized

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<sup>39</sup> American Pulp and Paper Association, “New Horizons: A History of 75 Years of the American Paper and Pulp Association,” Forest Product History Foundation Files, Minnesota Historical Society, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

nature” in an era of otherwise-increasing modernity.<sup>44</sup> He did not seem to take into consideration that those “pioneer heritages” were, without question, foundational to the urban metabolisms in cities across the country. He saw rural peoples as un-evolved. During the first few decades of the twentieth century, and arguably even longer, a gap of understanding between urban manufacturing centers and rural hinterland areas perpetuated a belief among many “city folk” (to quote Woods in his categorization) that the risks to the lumber and paper-making industries, brought on by fire, were the sole work of absent-minded growers “out in the sticks.”<sup>45</sup> He also suggested that the greatest cause of forest fires was basic human indifference, writing in an *American Forests* essay that rural Americans were too often like a shepherd he'd observed on Yamsey Mountain in Oregon—an “ignorant” Irishman who saw jack pines begin to burn and instead of offering help ran back to his flock to move them westward.<sup>46</sup> The prejudice against rural dwellers was not confined to any specific region, obviously. Woods' ethnic slurs were unfortunately quite representative of sentiment in the South as well, as many city-dwellers in places like Savannah looked down upon their brethren in the woods, many of them new immigrants of Irish, Scottish, or Eastern European descent who had forged into inner timber regions of the Southeast and created rural pockets of small, lumber-centered towns.

Woods' speech, “Why Forest Fires?” (also printed as an article in *American Forests*) is ridden with the strains of a rural-urban dichotomy. Woods truly believed that it was the “town and city” folk who needed to understand the forest fires, because they held all the political power. His opinion of the average urban American was not shining either, though; city-dwellers, he said, “cannot or will not absorb much information [either] unless it is fed to them by Walt Disney or

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<sup>44</sup>John B. Woods, “Why Forest Fires?” in *American Forests*, magazine of the American Forestry Association, accessed through archived correspondence between Woods and the publication's editor, Ovid Butler, FHS vertical files.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 2.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid, 4.

Charles McCarthy.” But, he continued, at least “their behavior conforms to a pattern” at predictable intervals. Rural-dwellers were too sporadic and unpredictable for Woods. That they were not folded into the mainstream of American culture and society made him forever nervous.<sup>47</sup>

According to Woods, there were two schools of thought among “country folk” when it came to burning. One touted the importance and necessity of burning each year, to conjure fresh grass, kill unwelcome vermin, and fireproof the forest for the subsequent twelve months. The second supported the idea that forest growth prospered when soil was enriched by accumulated leaf mold, and that both upland hardwoods and pine would suffer from repeated firings. There lay grains of truth in both parts of Woods' dichotomy, although his prejudice against the first line of thinking as purely “ignorant” illustrates a lack of compassion for rural residents who had been passed down burning traditions for generations in some places. Squatting and burning were sometimes crimes, but they were also customs to many who practiced them.<sup>48</sup> But Woods still insisted that he and other experts must work to make the damage caused by the fires seem “personal” to those southerners they were trying to reach. Rural southerners did not understand the consequences of the fires, he stated again and again, and the wealthier southerners often just miles away should not have “to worry” about them either.<sup>49</sup> The editor of *American Forests* sent Woods a personalized letter shortly after receiving a copy of the piece in which he remarked, “John—you sure hit the ball on this one.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Woods, “Why Forest Fires?,” 2-3.

<sup>48</sup> Cox, *Lumberman's Frontier*

<sup>49</sup> Woods, “Why Forest Fires?” 51.

<sup>50</sup> Misc. Letters, un catalogued, “Forest Products” file, FHS.

There were foresters studying and working in the South at this time, and those men often had a more progressive view of the farmers in their midst.<sup>51</sup> Kayton and his colleagues devoted inordinate amounts of time and energy from 1922 until 1925 not only pushing through a state law that would prohibit subjective burning but also to educating those “who had to lose by the fires.”<sup>52</sup> Members of the group came into close contact with many southern timber farmers, touring rural areas, even “popping in and giving a talk in a school room” here and there, as one forester recalls.<sup>53</sup> The organization, full of concerned businessmen and forest and chemical experts from all around the region, worked tirelessly, according to Kayton, to make sure any law passed would allow for enforcement powers to be handed down locally. The men feared, more than anything, that state and national forest officials would hamper local efforts.<sup>54</sup> Kayton made several fire-and-brimstone trips to Atlanta to plead his case. Within a few years, through the educational efforts of the GFA and an anti-burning law, passed in 1925, the madcap fires began to die down a bit. Kayton and his fellow crusaders quickly realized that the majority of the culprits were ready and willing to educate themselves on cutting and regrowth techniques.

As idyllic as it may be to believe that men like Kayton worked to save the trees of Chatham County out of only an altruistic love of the natural world, the story is of course much more intricate. Sustainable forests meant sustainable profits, and the educational efforts of the GFA signaled only a first step in what would become a dense process of preparing Georgia pine for sustained use. The southeastern forests of the 1930s were to the untrained eye an

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<sup>51</sup> Programs started at the University of Georgia in Athens in 1906, and in 1914 at the Georgia State Forest School. The Forest Farmers Association encouraged responsible tree farming in Georgia during this time. The Weeks Act of 1911 put out a siren call for steeper conservation; it made allocations for the protection of headwaters of navigable streams and the prevention of deforestation and erosion (Chattahoochee National Forest). The Clarke-McNary Act of 1924 fed subsidies for nurseries.

<sup>52</sup> Cox, *Lumberman's Frontier*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Inman F. Eldridge in Elwood R. Maunder, *Voices from the South: Reflections of Four Foresters* (Forest History Society, Santa Cruz, California, 1977), 44.

<sup>54</sup> Kayton interview, 5-6.

unequivocal mess. Some cutover lands sat fallow, surrounded by small farms and struggling towns. In other places, second-growth forests composed primarily of slash pines grew fast like kudzu's bigger brother, spreading so quickly that many timber growers and farmers employed burning techniques to maintain their acreage. It was feast and famine all at once. The GFA was not the only organization working during the 1920s to educate rural southerners and bring them into an opening dialogue with burgeoning ideas of industry in the areas. The American Forestry Association and Lumber Manufacturers' Association both sent liaisons out into the rural countryside—not only in Georgia but throughout the South.

This scene probably seemed strange to rural Georgia residents in the 1920s: imagine a boxy black truck with the phrase “Stop Woods Fires!” emblazoned on the side, with music cracking from an infantile amplifying system on its side, chugging up the side of a hill in the middle of a hot Spring afternoon. Or that same black truck sitting in the middle of a church picnic area, surrounded by women in hats and children playing duck-duck goose. These were “exhibit” trucks sponsored by the Southern Forestry Educational Project, which ran programs in Florida and Mississippi as well.<sup>55</sup> The project launched in September of 1928 at a forestry fair in Waycross, Georgia, its primary mission to prevent the state's increasingly profitable population of second-growth pine from burning by the hands of farmers who didn't, to quote their promotional material, “know any better.”<sup>56</sup>

One of the pamphlets for the SFEP's second year (1929-1930) has just a photograph of a young white child on its cover. The boy is about five years old, with curly hair, wearing britches and long socks, white shirt and a large tie, leaning against a healthy-looking young pine tree.

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<sup>55</sup> Second Annual Report of the Southern Forestry Educational Project, July 1, 1929-June 30, 1930, accessed through the vertical files at the FHS, 2.

<sup>56</sup> It received formal support from the Georgia State College of Agriculture, the Georgia State Board of Forestry, the Georgia Forestry Association, the United States Forest Service, the South Carolina State Forestry Commission, the Mississippi Commission of Forestry, the Florida Forestry Association, and the Florida State Board of Forestry.

Both seem to be in their most nascent and hopeful stages as beings. The boy and the tree, they are intended to be one and the same thing. “Growing children need growing trees” was the slogan at hand, a reminder that the organization had based its operations around the idea that stopping fires, and growing more trees all the time, were quintessential goals for rural communities to thrive in the South. That little boy needed trees so he good grow up and go to a good school, eat a healthy lunch every day. Or, more precisely, his father needed to grow trees in accordance with the new methods that the state forestry association and the SEFP had started to promote en masse—so that he could provide all those things for his son. The SEFP focused its efforts on rural primary schools, with the intention of reaching parents through their children's evolving and joyfully impressionable attitudes. In 1929 and 1930, they visited almost 500 schools in Georgia alone, but only 42 of them were counted as “negro” schools. That same year, their reports boasted that they had reached 96,350 white students in Georgia—but only 26,816 black children.<sup>57</sup>

The contract for the program included a clause stipulating that one of the aims of the project would be to promote “scenic values which have a very definite place in the development of the state.”<sup>58</sup> Given, most rural Georgians had little time to think logistically or romantically about their scenic environments, but that particular aim did help the SEFP get money from deeper pocketbooks in the cities. The project would embrace three main strategies—one, traveling motor trucks with motion picture machines, forest reels, literature, and lecturers on board; two, education exhibits illustrating the “evil effect” of uncontrolled burning, for county fairs and other rural and urban gathering places; and three, enlisting the cooperation of rural leaders, 4-H clubs, Boy Scouts, agricultural agents in the counties, local women's clubs and

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<sup>57</sup> SEFP pamphlet 1929-1930 report, 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 5.



forest and wildlife groups—basically, a community of civic groups. Field headquarters for the project were established at Thomasville, Georgia (very close to the Florida border), on September 1, 1928.

At the heart of the SFEP's efforts were the traveling picture shows—some 14,000 feet of 35 millimeter reels packed up into those black vehicles that wheeled along dirt-made roads, chugging along like a cross between a gothic milk truck and a large hearse. In Georgia alone, the organization claims it reached an audience of 178,000 between July of 1929 and June of 1930, from “women's clubs to turpentine camps.”<sup>59</sup> Often they showed copies of the Department of Agriculture's ready-made films—gems like “Trees of Righteousness,” “Trees from Seed to Sawmill,” “Pines for Profit,” and “Friends of Man.” The organization admitted that the most successful showings were ones that incorporated and dealt with a “local atmosphere.” Rural Georgians did not necessarily yet connect to ideas of forest protection, and certainly not the conceptions of national forestry. But they did enjoy conversing about what was going on in their own woods and on their own lands.

The SEFP went as far as to produce their own film in 1929, written by and co-starring the project's regional directors. It filmed over a few days in the woods of South Georgia with a marginal budget. The feature was entitled, simply, “Pardners”—the story of a “small southern orphan boy cast adrift in the piney woods” who became “interested in trees” and the ideas of “reclaiming his father's old worn out farm by planting pines.” This was propaganda perhaps even more so than the school rulers that the SEFP handed out which said, in childish font, “Stop Woods Fires” or “Idle hands, idle industries.” The SFEP reports foolishly and perhaps ignorantly brag that these phrases were “taken home to rural houses, where they are read and remembered”; in the midst of the onset of the Great Depression in already-struggling counties, wracked by

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid, 9.

poverty, it is truly difficult to believe that people gave much thought to a ruler.<sup>60</sup> Unsurprisingly, the film ends happily, as the orphan becomes the modern tree farmer—who, incidentally, goes on to purchase a first-rate automobile and marry the “girl of his dreams.”<sup>61</sup> The idea that by the 1920s the small boy already had to work to “reclaim” a haunted rural place is perhaps the most telling part of the narrative. It would not be industry that made these places feel dead. Many of them already did.

The SEFP's “final report” cover was illustrated with a picture of a “mountain school in Dixie,” a bevy of children standing in front of a crude log structure in what appears to be a stark winter forest. There was allegedly “no school too remote” for them, and it was not only children who gathered in the schoolhouses.<sup>62</sup> The staff had quickly discovered that their events garnered the most attendance by adults—their real target audience, despite the elementary angle—when they took place in the autumn and winter months; this makes perfect sense, given most rural Georgians' lives were still tied intimately to the farming and harvest calendar. The project was brought to a “pre-arranged conclusion on June 30, 1931” but, according to its final report, the hope was that it would continue to stimulate others programs just like it throughout the South.<sup>63</sup> In studying the forest fire situation as an educational problem, the committee agreed that the “greatest need for public enlightenment unquestionably was among the rural people of the South who have followed for generations the custom of burning the woods annually”—a custom based on the “ignorance of forest growth and forest values.” Thus, it is apparent, even after traveling hundreds of miles and interacting with thousands of young school children, that the board members of the SEFP had not yet re-imagined their impressions of hinterlanders. The whole

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid, 5

<sup>61</sup>SEFP Final report, page 6, 13.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 14.

<sup>63</sup> SEFP Final report, 2

project had been “for the children of the Piney Woods,” yet it seems as though the stereotypes about their fathers remained iron-clad.<sup>64</sup> Still, it received praise from local officials across the piney woods South. The President of the State College of Agriculture at the University of Georgia said it “aroused a new consciousness” previously unknown in forestry. The Florida Forestry Association President added that he was “confident that no amount of money expended in any other direction could have accomplished so much good.”<sup>65</sup>

Georgia's relationship to the SEFP proved rocky in the end despite its status as founding state. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1929, the program's Regional Director traveled to Atlanta to determine why the Georgia budget prepared and submitted early that July had yet to be signed, and learned at a meeting that day that the Georgia Forestry Association's Executive Committee had voted in their minutes a resolution to discontinue their support for the program. The GFA had asked that the American Forestry Association be notified of their “desire to withdraw their cooperation from the Southern Forestry Educational Project and be relieved of their agreement.”<sup>66</sup> This withdrawal was a product of two factors—one, fear that the SEFP's tactics were not reaching the right audiences in Georgia, and two, that the GFA did not possess enough resources to furnish the full amount of the commitment for that calendar year. A representative from the AFA then met with the Corresponding Secretary of the GFA to determine whether some kind of disciplinary action should be taken in the matter. At an impromptu conference in Atlanta, the GFA agreed to continue on the basis of a \$3,000 annual appropriation instead of the original commitment of \$6,500.<sup>67</sup> In the following year, it became alarmingly clear that GFA's limited financial contributions would not be enough to sustain the programs in rural Georgia; on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1930, a

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>65</sup> SFEP Second Annual Report, 20-21.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

full calendar year before the SEFP would step away from the program as a whole, efforts in Georgia had been suspended.

The efforts of the GFA and the AFA's educational programs, among other endeavors, made for a marginally-successful (if piecemeal) effort to get southern landowners on the same page. Such were the conditions faced by the forestry experts who conducted the Forest Survey of the South in the 1930s. An inventory of the southeast revealed that enough raw timber existed to feed a major industry. Inman F. Eldridge, an expert forester and native, self-proclaimed "loyal" southerner who participated heavily in the 1930s survey, recalls that he and his colleagues saw the potential for benefiting myriad groups across the state through the organization and utilization of timber as a crop.<sup>68</sup> Mill workers and laborers would see paychecks, of course, but so would the "old boy who had a farm here with forty acres of timber."<sup>69</sup> Proper land management could work hand in hand with industry, they proposed, to reinvigorate places like coastal Georgia.

Paper was an idea that had been circulating but had never really landed in the South. The *hope* of southern paper started in educational and professional circles before it reached the Savannah center or the rural hinterlands. On a broad scale, it was a larger network of industry executives, promoters, and engineers. Kayton had served as Vice-President of the Forestry Congress at its Seventh Annual Meeting in 1925 in Little Rock, Arkansas. There, pulp and paper engineer R.W. Fannon went for broke when he commanded that "due to large investment and the nature of pulp and paper mills," they would not be able to follow, as saw mills and turpentine

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<sup>68</sup> Pikel, *History of Georgia Forestry*, p. 89; Eldredge had attended the Biltmore Forestry School—the nation's first—and would go on to gain the distinction of first commercial forester in the state when he personally managed 170,000 acres of forest land for Superior Pine Products in Fargo. When he retired in 1942 to consult privately with growers, he saw that the industry had change completely—and in his mind, for the better

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Inman F. Eldridge, *Voices from the South*, 39.

had, “the retreating fringe of virgin forest.”<sup>70</sup> It was as if the Congress, which met in Savannah the year prior, had been injected with the big mill idea; yet, much of the conversation in Little Rock was still only speculative at best. Another paper engineer in attendance offered that experiences in other parts of the country had taught the industry that “more money will be made of these cutover lands [in the South]” via the paper industry than was made of the previous virgin timber lands. The SFC was a manifestation, in the years preceding the paper boom in the 1930s, of the deep breaths of foresters who knew that only major changes in the manufacturing attitude of southerners would save the last stand of the pines. And while countless people in countless places were responsible for the introduction of this industry to the southern forest, it would be the very specific actions of a few that cemented its transition from a possible future to a reality.

In 1927, an already-retired and ex-president of the American Chemical Society, a man whose moniker would eventually grace everything from schools to the Alumni Athletic Field at the University of Georgia, began to envision great commercial possibilities for the manufacturing of paper from the southern pines. Influential chemist, and Georgia native, Charles Holmes Herty had been experimenting with tree resin and its delicate composition for years. Born in Milledgeville and an 1886 graduate of the University of Georgia, Herty made it his life's work to imagine the future possibilities for an industrial Georgia.<sup>71</sup> T.W. Earle, president of the Gair Woodlands Corporation in the 1950s, identified Herty as not only a great chemist but also “one of the foremost conservationists of the South.”<sup>72</sup> Many chemists scoffed at Herty’s early attempts to prepare sulphite and groundwood for paper-making, most of these in the first few

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<sup>70</sup> *Proceedings of the SFC*, 109

<sup>71</sup> Biography of Herty from multiple sources, including: Pikel, *History of Georgia Forestry*, p. 89-90; Germaine M. Reed, *Crusading for Chemistry: The Professional Career of Charles Holmes Herty* (University of Georgia Press, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> Earle, T.W., “Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association at Work for Fifteen Years,” Address to the Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association (Savannah, Georgia, January 19, 1955), 1-3.

years of the twentieth century; he'd been told repeatedly that southern pine contained far too much of the resin. However, several years later, Herty discovered that by substituting semi-bleached sulphite pulp made from southern pine, newsprint production was not only possible but potentially quite lucrative. The secret that for so long no one in the industry seemed to realize is that longleaf has a high specific gravity in its woods, resulting in a high yield of pulp per cord.<sup>73</sup>

Prior to, and in tandem with, his work in the field of paper-making, Herty had become a central figure in the waning turpentine industry in coastal Georgia's countryside. He traveled with a cadre of growers and producers, including the vocal southern entrepreneur A.K. Sessoms, to France in 1925 to investigate European techniques. According to Kayton, Herty returned from the trip with a firm understanding and execution of something called the "cupping" method. In the "olden days," as Kayton liked to say, it was foregone to producers that the colors of resin from tree trunks would vary in color, from crystal-clear to something as dark as watery molasses. There existed different grades of turpentine, but because the tapping system remained archaic, most men in the business understood that the color changes were natural, a direct product of the age of the tree or how many times it had been tapped. The cupping method changed that. A container could be placed right next to the tap point; discoloration (from the gum falling down a series of tap points and chipped bark) was lessened significantly.

But it was not only Herty's contributions that made the Georgia turpentine business change in the 1920s and 1930s. Companies like Hercules Powder (and later Chemicals) Company, which had a research lab based out of rural Delaware, spent time and money developing the most cost-efficient ways to gather the largest amounts of turpentine for the market, which was still quite lucrative. Their scientific managers designed a newer system of

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<sup>73</sup> Forest History Society file, "Paper and Papermaking," Box 27, USFS and USDA Press Release; "NRA Backs South in Newsprint Aims," *New York Times* May 23, 1934; "See Paper Made of Southern Pine," *New York Times* June 26, 1934.

larger stills within which crude gums could be washed with acids and detergents. They also adapted the Yaryan Method—developed by a turpentine company in the Midwest—which steamed and distilled rosin, turpentine, and pine oil from stumps; the whole tree was no longer even necessary.

In the 1930s, Hercules also gained notoriety for grading lighter rosin. This meant that the coloration of the resin coming in from the countryside would no longer matter at all. The archaic “coffee pot” method of the Georgia countryside—which involved three- and four- hour batch runs and then straining resin with everyday cotton batting—made no sense anymore. By the 1930s, Kayton reasoned, some fifteen hundred smaller stills operating from North Carolina down and over to east Texas had been subsumed into twenty-five to thirty massive stills, all of which were scientifically managed. Yaryan alone opened up two massive distilleries along the Gulf Coast before Hercules bought the company in 1919.<sup>74</sup> The scientists had set new standards, and in the process made the factor a thing of the past. In 1937, a writer in *Papermaker Magazine* called turpentine the “pithy child of Mother Nature” and ventured that its relationship with the pulp and paper industry would prove beneficial. Its household products, advertised heavily by companies like Hercules, made a home “sanitary, welcoming, classy,” and suddenly it was as if the mechanization of turpentine had made it modern despite a gritty history.<sup>75</sup>

After the professionalization of turpentine grading, many Georgia tree farmers found himself in a wholly-new place—a deeper understanding of the ecology of his land *and* the ability to sell crude gum directly to companies in a cash sale.<sup>76</sup> Factors like Kayton were then able to make themselves over in a new role of scientifically-trained booster, utilizing both the practical

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<sup>74</sup>David Dyer and David B. Sicilia, “From Commodity to Specialty Chemicals: Cellulose Products and Naval Stores at the Hercules Powder Company, 1919-1939 *Business and Economic History, Second Series*, Volume 18 (1989), p. 59-71.

<sup>75</sup>J.N. Borghin, “Pine Tree Under Your Roof,” *Papermaker* Number 1, 1937, 24-27.

<sup>76</sup>Kayton interview, 7-9.

skills he had picked up in the field and his professional and political training. This is also why Kayton is a crucial and transitional figure during this period in Georgia; not every factor in his business had gone to college, and very few were as enlightened about the political process or economics as he was. Kayton made himself into a scientific manager.

It was that same attitude of scientific management and improvement that allowed Herty to move seamlessly from one industry to another. In May of 1930 he participated in the GFA's "Georgia Commercial Forestry Conference" held in Savannah in tandem with efforts by the city's Chamber of Commerce. Speakers from industry, civic groups, and the government concerned themselves with the failing of the lumber industry, forest taxation run amuck, and the pressing need to find newer, renewable uses for Georgia timberland.<sup>77</sup> Herty then entered the Savannah business community as a consultant for Savannah Industrial Committee in 1931. He had been officially commissioned with \$20,000 from the city, \$50,000 from the Chemical Foundation, and an experimental facility to study adaptability of southern pine for paper manufacture.<sup>78</sup> Herty was an early southern "paper man," as well as a scientific manager-promoter, like no other. Although any myth of Herty *inventing* Kraft paper-making in the South has absolutely no basis in reality, he was very much the father of the paper *dream* in Savannah.<sup>79</sup>

Initial goal was to provide southern pulp for a run of newsprint in Ontario, but paper was a controversial topic in the business world because many experts believed that the Northern and Canadian newsprint "interests," in fact, were purposefully blocking the flow of capital to the

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<sup>77</sup>Text of the conference, see: *Georgia Commercial Forestry Conference*, Bulletin 11 of the Georgia Forest Service, July, 1930, State of Georgia Archives.

<sup>78</sup>Pikl, *History of Georgia Forestry*, p. 89-90; Susan Dick and Mandi D. Johnson, "The Smell of Money: The Pulp and Paper Making Industry in Savannah, 1931-1947," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 84, No. 2 (2000), 308-323.

<sup>79</sup> There is a long-standing myth that Herty was the very first chemist to make paper from southern pine. The first batch of sulphate pulp from "southern" pine was actually made by a man named Ed Mayo in 1911 at a mill in Orange, Texas. Herty's real contribution was establishing that young southern pine was not composed of resinous heartwood but would instead be manageably pulped and ground for paper-making. He presented these findings in many places, including his paper entitled "Report of the Division of Pulp and Paper Research" for the Georgia Forestry Commission in 1932.



unborn southern branch of the industry as well as to established regions in the U.S. Herty knew that if cultivated properly, in his mind “like field crops,” slash pine could be harvested as soon as five years from the planting of their seedlings.<sup>80</sup> But, alas, prices for newsprint were dropping and foreign competitors stacking up. It became clear by 1935 that newsprint would not be heading South.<sup>81</sup> Herty played the role of booster after that, helping to tempt northern companies down South with the lure of southern pine for other types of paper, like Kraft.<sup>82</sup>

The Southern Newspaper Publishers Association (headed in Nashville) met with Herty and his committee to go over the raw data in the summer of 1934. They inspected his laboratory in Savannah, where seventeen younger assistants continued to plug away at paper-making tests with slash pine. That same year, the SNPA's president James G. Stahlman proclaimed that if Herty's “hopes were realized, it will result in an industry for the South second in importance only to cotton.”<sup>83</sup> Yet new industry meant learning conservation. Of the 36.5 million acres of old growth forests said to have “greeted General Oglethorpe,” very little remained by 1930. But restocking efforts—and this includes natural regeneration after the cutover period--had already brought about 13.7 million acres back into rotation. This was not enough to save the myriad lumber and sawmill towns in Georgia that had literally survived off of revenues from timber cutting in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Abandoned mills made abandoned towns. The boll weevil hit Georgia with without abandon. The educational efforts of the GFA and the SEFP had made small inroads in the countryside, but Georgia tree farmers would remain

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<sup>80</sup> The science later proved this theory fairly unrealistic.

<sup>81</sup> “Pines and Pioneers,” *Time* 1 July 1935.

<sup>82</sup> Info on Herty and his plans for a newsprint industry in Georgia and his work with the pulp/paper industry: *New York Times*, April 6, 1937; October 12, 1936; January 28, 1936; March 15, 1935; March 9, 1935; July 11, 1934; June 26, 1934; May 23, 1934; July 21, 1932.

<sup>83</sup> “See Paper Made of Southern Pine,” *The New York Times* 26 June 1934.

disconnected from farther-reaching industrial success until a major industry gave them direction and connected them in *real*, verbal, transparent ways to a manufacturing center.

But according to Kayton, it was Herty's work in the “little experimental plant” in Savannah that cemented the fate of the paper-making business. It was from that moment forward, Kayton shared, that “mills from the North commenced coming down here [the South] and buying up pine land.”<sup>84</sup> Buying and leasing land to cut was one thing. Growing trees and building the infrastructure for mills was another. But now the science had been proven. Southern pine could be, because of the booster efforts of Herty and groups like the GFA, relied upon.<sup>85</sup>

This was not a perfect storm, but it was a building crescendo. According to Frank Heyward, who had been trained by men like Kayton and famed forester Austin Cary, the full realization that the educational efforts of foresters had everything to do with politics *and* the promise of localized southerners committed to utilizing a half-idle and half-ruined forest was new in the 1930s.<sup>86</sup> Heyward and Kayton would both eventually join Austin Cary in the annals of forest history—never quite as well known, but spoken about with a similar reverence in the closely-knit circles of the tree business, and later the southern paper business. They considered themselves educators, unknowingly perhaps a perfect union of the lessons of practical forestry, North and South. They all agreed that Georgia farmers had to take responsibility for the ecologies of their land. “It took a few years to convince some of these boys,” Kayton said with laughter in his voice many years later, but timber dwellers in Georgia would soon enough realize the full capacity of their land. “And...when the paper mills came in and began to buy up the land

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<sup>84</sup>Kayton interview, 2.

<sup>85</sup>J. B. Woods, Forester, National Lumber Manufacturers' Association, “Report on Industry Progress,” from the “Paper” files at the Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina.

<sup>86</sup>Heyward cut his teeth during that decade at the Southern Forest Experiment Station in New Orleans. He earned a Bachelors in forestry from the University of Michigan and later a Masters from the University of California. Later he worked in Lake City, Florida, researching naval stores production in the shadow of Kayton, and particularly the effects of fire on soil.

and land became more valuable,” he added, “they realized they [had been] throwing away their best assets.”<sup>87</sup>

This revelation received support from one more crucial figure—Cary. Many have attempted to equate Cary's status as godfather of a modern forestry in the South with Charles Herty's status as godfather of modern paper-making in the South, but according to Heyward, Cary was absolutely nothing like the well-mannered and even-tempered Herty. Cary apparently hated young professional foresters, called them “whipper-snappers.” Heyward used to have dinner at his house. Long periods of silence with Cary were often punctuated with relentless and hardened soliloquies on the state of the field. As he aged, according to a woodlands manager from International Paper, he began to serve primarily a “freelance function” and “could do any way he saw fit”; this meant, essentially, that he could and would give advice that seemed often more radical or caustic than the main line.<sup>88</sup>

Cary vocally and viciously disagreed with New Deal efforts to gain control over harvesting of timber on private lands and expand national forest systems. In his mind, the early twentieth century South was still the South of the lumberman's frontier, as promising as the bigger ideas of manifest destiny in the far western states. Carey was also a stolid Republican. He “was a businessman, and he spoke the language of businessmen,” recalled Heyward in an oral history interview from 1959. Perhaps, then, Cary is the best human vessel in understanding this level of forest confusion in the 1930s. His appreciation for and vehement protection of forest lands no one could doubt, but he also rallied for the success of independent landowners, the pioneer and frontier mentalities, and, ultimately, private business.

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<sup>87</sup> Kayton interview, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Earl Porter, conducted by Elwood Maunder and Joe Miller for the Forest History Society, October 1963, 30.

The interactions between Kayton, Herty, Sessoms, Cary and Heyward form a melodious record which, when picked apart and put back together in light of the coming paper boom and the advent of state forestry, paints a clear picture of death and rebirth at a matrix of co-existence in coastal Georgia. Sessoms, who was a wild-eyed entrepreneur with investments stretching from land speculation in Mexico and Texas to an experimental railroad that ran from Fargo to Waycross (where he owned much land), was poised against federal or state regulation of his forest lands, but he was also an avid participant in a new wave of conservation ethic in Georgia. He was a “good ole boy” whose father made his money by factoring large chunks of land along the coast and in the Georgia interior. The less-wholesome actions he often took, according to colleagues like Heyward and Kayton, were often directly related to his frustration with other farmers or landowners that did not value such thoughts. In 1933, he nearly met his financial end when a group of smaller timber growers whose land lay in the middle of his set fire to a section of his trees. Sessoms retaliated by planting poison at the entrance to one of the water holes on the joint property. This killed many of the landowners' cattle. Revenge was slow, but it was brutal. “One nice, windy, dry March day,” Kayton recalled second-hand, “fire started on Sessoms' land in four or five places.” It took three days for local firefighters to take it down, and in the end, Sessoms lost an estimated \$65,000 worth of timber.<sup>89</sup>

These smaller stories gave way to bigger processes on the land. For example, the fall of the cotton empire. As late as 1928, nearly four million acres of Georgia land had still been tied up in cotton production. However, the availability of steady farm work was, by then, quickly dissipating. Cotton land became a land of suffering and sacrifice—a combination of the debilitating effects of the Depression, the migration of the cotton empire westward, the menacing

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<sup>89</sup> Kayton interview; Frank Heyward, “History of Industrial Forestry in the South,” published for Gaylord Container Corporation, February 1958, accessed in the vertical files of the FHS.

of the boll weevil, and the general lethargy of rural areas sucked dry of natural resources and without a manufacturing center. Cotton remained a staple crop in the South through the 1920s but proved an insurmountable problem after the Depression as planters compensated for falling cotton prices.<sup>90</sup> In response to this overproduction—considered a national economic crisis—the New Deal’s Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) paid southern farmers to cut back on yield in order to raise prices.<sup>91</sup> By the 1934 production year, cotton had been reduced to just over two million acres in Georgia. The demise of King Cotton, coupled with the Depression, left a large number of Georgians unemployed and, as a result, quite receptive to the promises of industrial employment—namely, a living wage.<sup>92</sup>

Even as cotton moved westward, there were places in the Midwest and in the western states that looked markedly similar—at least socioeconomically—to coastal Georgia. As the Sunbelt formed in the early twentieth century, shared conditions for rural residents and agricultural and industrial workers could be imagined not necessarily as “southern” but instead in the context of their environment. Across the Southeast and into the Southwest, from Florida over to Texas and curving upward into the southern regions of California, common conditions of low labor union organization, the rise of military installations, political conservatism, and urban expansion into previously rural areas made the labor geographies look quite similar.<sup>93</sup> This made the whole area look riper and riper for the industrial “picking.”

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<sup>90</sup> Ben Werner, “A Landscape Changed,” *Savannah Morning News*, October 6, 2002.

<sup>91</sup> Donald Holley, *Second Great Emancipation* (Fayetteville, Ark., 2000), 59. The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), part of Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal agricultural program, was intended to aid in the relief of Southern farmers, many of whom lived in extreme poverty as cotton prices fell in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The AAA cut cotton production throughout the South. For further information regarding the AAA’s effect on African American farmers, see, Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 43.

<sup>92</sup> Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost*; Ben Werner, “A Landscape Changed,” *Savannah Morning News*, October 6, 2002.

<sup>93</sup> See particularly Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); See also Philip Scranton, editor, *The Second Wave: Southern Industry from the 1940s to the 1970s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

The New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps was also a major participant in southern reforestation. There had been a decisively environmental component of the Great Depression that stretched from uncontrollable flooding in places like Mississippi, to the Dust Bowl in the Midwest and West, and to far reaches of the country (including, of course, the South) in the form of deforestation and resource depletion. Roosevelt's New Deal, then, was not just a reply to economic depression but also to environmental depletion. The Soil Conservation Service, Tennessee Valley Authority, and CCC collectively represented the New Deal's efforts at resuscitating the country not just via their pocketbooks but also their backyards, so to speak. Many called the CCC the President's "Tree Army"; he used its resources in a cycle of where he saw fit—which is why its focus shifted from reforesting to farm revival after the Dust Bowl, and then to National Parks. By the late 1930s, the tree-bearing army had largely moved on, but left behind in their wake rows and rows of seedlings that had been—to many officials responsible for the CCC—a symbol of hope for the South's industrial and agricultural futures.<sup>94</sup>

The average southerner could not be expected to interpret the intellectual activities of southerners like Kayton, Herty, or Heyward as southern engagement with the rise of a new industrial order. But they could be made to feel involved through events such as "Pulp and Paper Week," watching films entitled "Care of the Forests Helps Paper Have Its Day," and participating in sponsored civic club meetings throughout rural and urban communities. By the mid-1930s, the USFS, the GFA, and growing lumber and paper concerns understood with candor that 193 million acres of forest in South held potential commercial importance. This was a chance, the association advertised, to finally "truly" usher the South into the "mainstream of America's

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<sup>94</sup> Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*; American Pulp and Paper Association, "Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Woodlands Section," New York City, February 1926.

modern marketing economy.”<sup>95</sup> Speaking in 1935 on the state of lumber-related industries, a forester with the National Lumber Manufacturers Association said with great passion that “students of American industrial progress may well regard the 30 years just gone as the most exciting generation in our economic history, characterized by discovery, growth, and change, all on a gigantic scale.”<sup>96</sup> These were words of hope during the Depression era but also on the eve of the southern paper boom—a transformation that would be even bigger, and more consequential, than the staggering period of which he defended.

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<sup>95</sup>Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association, Forest History; Same press release sent to St. Mary's—Clarke Mathewson state chairman of observance, Hodge, Louisiana, Jacksonville, Florida, Mobile, Alabama, Columbus, Mississippi, Plymouth, North Carolina, Catawba, South Carolina, Kingsport, Tennessee, Nacogdoches, Texas, Fredericksburg, Virginia

<sup>96</sup>J. B. Woods, “Report on Industry Progress,” papers of the National Lumber Manufacturers Association, misc. paper files, Forest History Society (Durham, North Carolina), 1.

## CHAPTER 3: NORTHERN ROOTS BE DAMNED

*The forester's lesson of conservation has found its ways into the bible of practical business.*  
(*New York Times*, February 1937)<sup>1</sup>

*The generation that owned their own farms are probably continuing to live on them but work at other jobs. They commute.*  
(Earl Proctor, for International Paper, on the southern paper boom, 1963)<sup>2</sup>

Francis Wolle, inventor of the first bag-making machine in 1851, founded the company that preceded and then gave birth to Union Bag in West Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania had always been a stronghold for lumber and paper-manufacturing, but bag-making had never been automated. In an early publicity letter regarding his invention, Wolle exclaimed: “With it, I made by way of experiment, bags of various sizes,” and the “bags I made were thrown out at the rate of [already] 1,500 per hour.”<sup>3</sup> Union Bag's recorders would later claim that it was in this moment that Wolle (and the company his innovation created) changed the shopping habits of Americans for the better and forever.<sup>4</sup>

But between Wolle's moment of invention and the 1930s, Union had a rather up-and-down history, rising like a rocket for a period and then nearly flaming out altogether. In the nineteenth century, bag-making thrived easily—the market was new, exciting, and wide open. Even when paper technologies remained nascent, and the chemical processes still required

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<sup>1</sup>“From Pines to Paper: A New Industrial Boom in the South,” *New York Times* Feb. 7, 1937, pp. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Earl Proctor, Interview with Elwood Maunder and Joe Miller, conducted October 1963 and October 1964, property of the Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina.

<sup>3</sup> *Savannah News Press*, April 29, 1956, quoted in *Water Lords*, 155; *New York Times*, February 8, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> W. Craig McClelland, “Union-Camp Corporation: A Legacy of Leadership,” published by the Newcomen Society of the United States (New York, Exton, Princeton, and Portland), 1995, 8.



refining, smaller companies could make a killing—because demand rose more quickly than the supply could. The overall quality still left something to be desired, but Americans adored their new grocery bags. By 1870, Union's licenses furnished ninety percent of machine-made bags in the country. This meant that in less than a decade, bag manufacturing went from its experimental phase to its first stages of mass production; this is, in any light, quite phenomenal. In 1875, the licensing companies combined to form Union Bag and Paper Company. And by the 1890s, the company had centralized its operations at a bag factory in Hudson Falls, New York; the former licensors became selling agents, and droves of young white women worked around the clock at Hudson Falls to produce thousands of bags per day. By 1912, though, the company had dipped way below its previous profit margins. When Union (as well as other similar companies) began to feel the first wave of a slump in the first two decades of twentieth century, they attempted to broaden demand by creating wholly new products they could also present as “necessities.”

They were made from the same material—course, tawny-colored paper—but employed its material in different ways. The most foolish (but perhaps remarkable to describe) example of this marketing strategy happened *in* 1912, when Union sent out a plea to women in the form of a cookbook—a catalog of “paper bag cookery” recipes. Among the first lines in the how-to manual? “Do not attempt to cook in any other bag.” A Union bag would be tantamount to culinary success. “If the bag should break while in use, enclose the food and broken bag in another bag.” Two Union bags would be tantamount to greater culinary success. Union was promoting then, literally and figuratively, these layers and layers of disposability. Paper, like so many products advertised in the early twentieth century, was supposed to make housework easier for American women. “Cooking in paper bags,” the manual read, “appeals to housewives as an economical, labor-saving method of preparing a meal.” Culturally, working men already had the

“brown bag lunch.” That image was decidedly blue-collar. Union was essentially asking American families to also eat a “brown bag dinner.” Ironically they did so with the help of a Mr. E. Bailly, Head Chef at the Hotel St. Regis in New York City—the same four-star hotel where Union executives traditionally held all of their private meetings.<sup>5</sup> And so the company also attempted to pass along the sophistication of *their* New York lifestyle. Or at least they tried to. The St. Regis dining room certainly never cooked any roasts in paper bags. Not surprisingly, Americans never took to cooking their nightly chickens in paper bags either. It did not seem natural, nor did it seem very sophisticated. The venture failed miserably. And the cooking bags themselves, having been mass-produced in anticipation of large sales, ended up in a storage facility north of New York City—where they would collect dust for almost twenty years.

A World War I boom brought the American paper industry back into the black temporarily. But production still suffered an overall bottleneck until the refinement of the sulphate pulp process—one that would prove the boon of the industry and the bane of future environmentalists. Sulphate pulp utilizes an alkaline process instead of the traditional sulphite acid treatment in paper-making (the one even Herty was still using in Savannah in the early 1930s). This new process yielded tough, thicker brown-colored Kraft paper that quickly dominated the paper market in the United States as well as abroad. “Kraft” is German for “strength.” Once industry experts realized that this new Kraft paper could be produced using southern pine, the entire American paper game changed. The South's reputation of inferiority, at least in this instance, was turned on its head. To quote a Union executive: “Until then,” many in the industry considered that “southern pine was little more than a weed, good only for turpentine

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<sup>5</sup>*Paper-Bag Cookery: Complete Directions and Recipes* Union Bag and Paper Company, NY, published April 1912 (digitized by the Sloan Foundations, Library of Congress Americana Collection).

and railroad ties.”<sup>6</sup> In practice, the contrary was true. The “long, soft fiber” in southern pine proved perfect for the new sulphate pulp process, and it was both decidedly and ominously cheaper than Northern spruce (which was, as previously discussed, quickly becoming extinct).<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the lure of cheap trees in the South, the Northeast's paper mills also began to feel what they perceived as a malicious push from Canada. The United States had largely depleted its go-to timber supply, but Canadian companies had long-discovered what American companies were yet to totally grasp--that timber land was best treated as a renewable crop. Unimpeded by tariffs, Canadian paper began to clog the American market. Newsprint, once an American manufacture-staple, became so cheap that it made little sense for companies like Union Bag to even produce it anymore; them and other similar manufacturers turned to groundwood products and wrapping papers exclusively. They had no choice. Thus, with Canadian competition *and* no Kraft pulp mill, Union's managers watched with dismay as costs continued to rise while volume decreased and prices weakened with no visible new entres in sight.

They finally set up a Kraft pulp mill in Tacoma, Washington, but the costs of transporting the raw material back to the main factory in New York was never an equation that made sense. Sales' and management's faith dipped so low in the 1920s that, in the words of one future company president, “Union Bag began to look like a [walking] fire sale.”<sup>8</sup> The Hudson sulphite mill closed in 1927, and shortly thereafter the company also sold their Tacoma location. By 1930, a manufacturer that would later glean so much of the country's market share in Kraft paper

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<sup>6</sup>McClelland, “History of Union-Camp,” p.10.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid; also “Paper—an Industry Facing New Problems of Supply and Demand,” *The Index* (New York Trust Company), Volume 16, Number 6, June 1936; for the best work on the ecology and the symbology of the Northern spruce, see John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness, and Greed* (Random House, 2006)

<sup>8</sup> McClelland, “History of Union-Camp,” 12.

actually owned *no* pulp-producing mills.<sup>9</sup> *Fortune* called the company “big, dumb Union,” “fat with war profits...and dozing.”<sup>10</sup>

It was at this moment of desperation that Union met its “salvation” in Sandy Calder. This was a man who would become notorious at Union for handing out first-rate cigars at meetings and “sinking a hole-in-one five different times—once at a tournament in front of a gallery of several thousand people.” He had started as a twelve-dollar-a-week salesman for a pulp broker (via an inside connection through his brother Lou, who employed Sandy up to that point at his own paper company called Perkins-Goodwin) and later snuck in as a senior salesman just as his division in the company was about to be let go.<sup>11</sup> His first week on the job, Calder purportedly went into one of Union's warehouses and found the dustiest, most obscure product left inside from earlier days—those cookery bags, a failed endeavor—and promptly sold 50 carloads around New York City. Shortly thereafter, he landed a long-term account with department store goliath Woolworth's and sealed his fate as the man “who would save Union.”

By 1927, he was Vice President of sales. In the late 1920s, the time he spent with a “southern woodsmen turned pulp agent” named Jim Allen (the head of Florida Pulp and Paper, later acquired by St. Regis, one of Union Bag's largest competitors) proved a harbinger of the southward move, but in the meantime the company still had to buy its pulp from competitors just to stay in production.<sup>12</sup> Even after he assumed the Presidency in 1931 and successfully extracted Union from its cumbersome contracts with Scandinavian pulp producers, Calder knew that a

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<sup>9</sup>By 1930, the company was making only a billion more bags than it had just thirty years prior, while the United States' paper industry on the whole had risen from five to thirty-three billion bags in production per year; *Fortune*, August 1937, “Brief History of Union Bag & Paper Corporation.”

<sup>10</sup>*Fortune* quote cited in McClellan, 13.

<sup>11</sup>Born in Brooklyn in 1886, he tried out a first career as a high school basketball and football coach before attending St. Lawrence University in Canton and becoming a salesman; “Alexander Calder, Sr., 76, Dies,” *The New York Times* 23 October 1962; also biographical entry from *Who's Who in America*, 1961-1968, Volume II, 147.

<sup>12</sup>J.H. Allen, “Future of Southern Paper Production,” *Proceedings of the Southern Forestry Congress*, 110 (“Pamphlets on Forestry” Collection, Vol. 18, University of California).

move anywhere, especially to the South, would be a battle with the Board of Directors. Its name aside, and ironic, the company's roots had always been planted firmly in the Northeast because of its legacy in the New York mill. The company remained in the red in 1932 with a net profit loss of over two hundred thousand dollars. But after more solid profits in 1933 and 1934, Sandy and his brother Lou took it upon themselves to buy the majority stock in the company and ceremoniously announced to the Board that, “northern roots be damned,” they would be “heading South” very soon.<sup>13</sup> Calder knew it was the only thing that could truly save the company. In the South they would have access to cheaper labor, more abundant untapped water sources, and the nearby multiplying, second-growth pine.

A 1937 *Time* piece admitted, with input from the company's executives, that Union Bag had, at first, missed “two industrial revolutions” prior to their move. Their late entrance into Kraft processing counted as one missed opportunity, and the delayed realization that Southern loblolly or slash-pine would be cheaper to treat than Northern spruce-pines counted as a second, if forgotten, one in the decades prior. Building the Savannah plant finally provided assurance to Union Bag, and its president, Sandy Calder, that the company had fully “caught up with the paper revolution.”<sup>14</sup>

That “revolution” had transpired during the same time frame that the South had completed its first full transformation, from a plantation-based rural economy to a resource (but still very rural) hub. But Union could not “head South” without help from other outside investments. They needed capital to fulfill the narrative. Calder recognized that the move down to Georgia would cement two ideas that the USFS had first reckoned with back in 1916, but then only on paper: one, that in the South, labor would come cheaper and without the trials of

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<sup>13</sup>McClelland, “Union Camp Corporation,” 15.

<sup>14</sup>“Paper Profits,” *Time*, 27 Sept. 1937.

unionization, and two, that land and water were also cheaper and more abundant than in the clogged Northeast corridors. Even with those savings taken into account, Union would still request \$325,00 in cash from the city of Savannah for a plant site. Two men, William Murphy and Mills Lane, also offered up one million dollars from their own bank (Citizens and Southern Bank of Savannah, a branch of a well-known Atlanta bank) and 1.5 million from “other local sources” he had initiated.<sup>15</sup> One of those sources was the insurance firm of Johnson, Lane, Space, and Company—which mustered another 1.5 million; Johnson, in an interview conducted almost forty years later, admitted that the money was the single “hardest [he] had ever raised.”<sup>16</sup>

This was a major and rare moment of *pre-war* (World War II) southern industrialization, and it was also the first use of southern capital *ever* in the relocation of a Northern company.<sup>17</sup> This was the birth of the southern paper subsidy. In decades following their inhabitation of the Savannah River, Union would come to rely socially and culturally on the narrative that they had somehow “saved” the city. Truth be told, without tireless efforts by men like Johnson, the mill might have ended up somewhere else (the company also looked at Charleston and Jacksonville) or nowhere at all. It became a mutual financial investment, but Calder and his cohorts did not treat it as such. In a contract with the city to be examined in more illuminating detail later, the company asked to lease the 440 acres on the river for a reduced rent—at the beginning a mere three hundred dollars, for a stretch of land that cost the city government about twelve thousand

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<sup>15</sup> Citizens Southern would go on to become one of the premiere subsidizers for Georgia industry in the twentieth century. Founded by Mills Lane, it would be his son Mills B. Lane who stood at the helm in the 1950s and 1960s and helped to pioneer the credit card industry. By the 1970s, it would be the South's largest and most successful bank. See: "Mills Lane's Wonderful World," *Time*, March 8, 1968; Peter Mantius, "Banker Mills Lane Jr.: The Community Builder Has Walled Out the Past," *Atlanta Sunday Journal-Constitution*, November 1, 1987; and the Mills B. Lane Jr. Papers at the Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Johnson, conducted by James Fallows, Savannah, Georgia, July 1970, quote published in Fallows, *Water Lords*, 157.

<sup>17</sup> Pikel, *History of Georgia Forestry*, 31.

dollars annually in interest alone. The city also agreed to build, with money from its own coffers, both a road and a stretch of railroad leading to the plant.

And so it was the apparent graciousness of the city's boosters that the plant became a reality. It was in so many ways this consenting marriage of problem and solution—not the colonization of a southern state, as has often been reported. In turn, the idea that Savannah was naïve to economic growth in the twentieth century is just as easily preposterous. Before the Depression hit, just as it hit everywhere, the 1920s had seen a three hundred million dollar a year profit from businesses along the Savannah River. Savannah also had already experienced what industry, *at least on a very small scale*, looked and felt like; on the corridor of the Savannah River that would eventually house Union as well as three other major plants, the Savannah Sugar plant had opened its doors in 1917. But it smelled faintly of sweetness, not like the sulphur that was on its way.

Worry quickly arose that this wave of sudden and increased longleaf cutting would become a swan song for the worrisome and labored-over division of Southern forestry. Calder and Union sensed the brewing of these animosities and announced in a press conference that they would make every possible effort to adopt and enforce a “constructive forest policy” for securing, using, and replenishing southern pine lands. They vowed that the pulpwood industry would help the southern forests grow and even thrive, not draw a painful last breath. This announcement went hand in hand with a second burst of fire prevention programs in Georgia in the late 1930s. That fires were considered a “way of life” to rural Georgians remained undisputed. But by 1935, the GFA realized that to truly cut down on incidents, they would have to convince the state *courts* that burning constituted arson—a felonious attack on areas of private property. Union

stood to gain from these legal endeavors; keeping fire off of the land the company planned to lease and purchase increased their profit margins even more.<sup>18</sup>

Plans for the four million dollar plant were officially approved in July of 1935. A *Time* reporter was quick to point out that the mill did not represent “the long-promised birth of a Southern newsprint industry” but instead placed Union alongside a growing number of American companies that waged their bets by making “coarse, dark Kraft paper for bags and wrapping.” Experts in the paper trade, the chemical industry, and even media outlets by this time had long-discussed Herty's attempts at a newsprint Renaissance in Georgia pine. There is a sense, in the manner that they reported the mill ground-breaking, that those in-the-know felt as though Southern innovation had been passed up for more of the same, at least industrially-speaking. Nevertheless, the Union mill received the “blessing” of the Dearborn Conference of Agriculture, Industry, and Science (a group organized in Georgia for the purpose of promoting the use of farm products in industry) as well as Herty himself. After all, new industry was new industry. By the time the deal went through, this was the going narrative in national media: that the man “who titillated shady, moss-hung Savannah with an expansion program” and moved into the “white, colonnaded Hermitage mansion”--Sandy Calder—was growing his assets by one-half.<sup>19</sup>

In the heat of summer, 1935, Union Bag and Paper held a conference in the downtown Marshall Hotel's main gallery, a day replete with fine cigars and briefcases full of shiny speeches; it was days like this one that put the manly, sophisticated face on an industry that was (at its literal core) actually quite dirty. Nearly every business agency in town sent a representative. The bankers were there, alongside shop owners and real estate developers. Prominent citizens sat in the front rows of metal chairs, twitching and eager to hear the news of a ground-breaking.

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<sup>18</sup>*Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Georgia Forestry Association*, Athens, Georgia, May 19-20, 1937, p. 47. (Special Collections, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia).

<sup>19</sup>“Pines and Pioneers,” *Time* 1 July 1935.



The buzz was, without a doubt, one of positive unison. A local Savannah reporter in the room that day called the gathering nothing less than a “fine example of concerted cooperations on the part of a community.”<sup>20</sup>

But the meeting was more a symbolic gesture that it was even an official forum. It signified the finalization of a formal city contract with Alexander Calder, the company's iconic president, and an informal contract with the southern booster organizations that had helped to facilitate the process—like the Industrial Committee, of which Herty had been the most publicized participant. Since the Savannah Port Authority held the deed to part of the mill property beforehand, legally this was also a physical changing of the guard. For Calder, it signified the beginning of a mill network—if not- quite-yet-imagined *empire*—in the South.

In October of 1936, the company stood atop this culmination of enthusiasm for a new forest products industry that would, by all accounts, reinvigorate and modernize the Southeast. Locals printed postcards of the new mill. The odor of sulphur began to seep off the new plant immediately, down West Lanthrop Avenue, following the river and touching the outer stretches of the city. Some people said it smelled akin to rotting eggs. But some people said it also “smelled like money.”<sup>21</sup> Calder made plenty of appearances for the unveiling events, which served as ceremonial moments for the cooperation of these financial forces, North and South. At a gala event celebrating the opening of the mill, Calder floated around in a tuxedo with his wife on his arm, chatting on and off with Savannah mayor Thomas Gamble about the possible futures of this grand development. Gamble had spent much of his career as an amateur historian, compiling documents and essays on the naval stores and lumber industries in the state. He was

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<sup>20</sup>“Building Activity in Savannah Area Shows Big Rise,” *New York Times* July 7, 1935, pg. 6A; W.H. Steiner, “Changing Composition of the Savannah Business Community, 1900-1940,” *Southern Economic Journal* Vol. 10, No. 4 (April 1944), 303-310.

<sup>21</sup> “What's Left in the Bag?” *Savannah Morning News* 28 April 2002.

well-versed in the ways of forest growth and depletion alike. Gamble made a speech that night in which he offered that no one “could safely limit the possibilities which center in the pine trees and its various possible products.”<sup>22</sup> By this he meant that the paper industry was potentially an unstoppable comer; but the statement also revealed the risk involved in opening the land to such industrial endeavors.

Homer Vilas, who would serve on the board of Union from 1934 until well into the 1970s, remembers traveling with Calder down to Savannah on the eve of the physical ground-breaking. According to him, Sandy Calder had been a hot commodity among many paper entities attempting to gain a foothold in the South. Apparently St. Regis tried to scoop him up for its Vice-President's position just as he assumed the Presidency of Union. Ironically, the President that Calder replaced, a man named Charles McMillan, went on to take the post with St. Regis. Vilas, telling the story some forty years later, remembered the transaction this way: that it was the moment that Calder was “given the land by the city of Savannah.” Despite the involvement of southern capital, truly this is the way Union's executives viewed the move. It would be Vilas and Calder who stood together in their suits atop a mound of dirt along the Savannah River and “watched the first pieces of steel being put up.”<sup>23</sup> It is no wonder that on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mill's opening, in 2011, that a Savannah reporter would mistakenly claim that *Calder* founded the company in 1936.<sup>24</sup>

If Calder traded in charm, it worked. After five years under his leadership, in 1936 Union did thirteen percent of the U.S. gross business in paper bags. His legacy within the company would become one of unprecedented growth, at least for the first two decades of his reign, but according to a public relations release he was, most of all, known “for his unpretentiousness, a

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<sup>22</sup>*Savannah Morning News*, October 1 1936, “Bright Future for Industry”

<sup>23</sup>Interview with Homer Vilas, property of FHS, 8.

<sup>24</sup>“IP Mill Celebrates 75 Years,” *Savannah Tribune* October 2, 2011.

human attribute that makes it fitting for all who know him to speak of him familiarly as Sandy.”<sup>25</sup> Vilas called him a friend and a most-treasured, “terrific salesman.” While other paper companies suffered losses so great in the 1930s that they purportedly would not give their employees new boxes of pencils until they turned in a set of nubs, Union dominated Kraft production in the South. Vilas recalls buying up 90,000 shares of Union for his friends at St. Regis in the mid-1930s in the hopes of a successful merger between the two paper goliaths (one at the top of its game, the other suffering a torn Achilles heel). Calder wanted “nothing to do” with the merger and vocally communicated that he would purposefully, quote, “lose the situation” because he did not want any dead weight hanging from Union during the triumphant move to Savannah.<sup>26</sup>

By 1937, the Savannah site had four paper machines and a bag plant that produced 1,000 tons of paper products per day—bags, boxes, container board, and processing chemicals. Calder called 1938, two years after the mill began full operation, an “acid-test year,” a triumph of the success of “low-cost” manufacturing facilities of South.<sup>27</sup> In two years, the Savannah mill had become Calder’s particular pet and had proved the determining factor in the company’s growing and increasingly-global profits. By 1941, Union’s net sales would grow by almost 400 percent and its overall production by the same.<sup>28</sup> More bag plants were added in 1943 and 1947, as well as a box plant in the latter. By 1952, Union had added its sixth paper machine to one of the world’s largest paper-making meccas.<sup>29</sup> The physical plant along the Savannah River could claim for many decades the title of *largest* solitary paper mill, under one roof, in the world.

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<sup>25</sup> *Papermaker Magazine*, “Honors to These Men: Alexander Calder,” August 1938. (All *Papermaker* files accessed in the “Paper” files of the Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina).

<sup>26</sup> Vilas interview, 34.

<sup>27</sup> “Union Bag Plant in Georgia Praised,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* March 27, 1939, 2.

<sup>28</sup> This figure is based on a “rounding” of figures from 1932 (the earliest I could find their financial records) to 1940. Union Bag and Paper Financial Analysis, Haskins and Sells, CPAs (New York): summary figures published January, 1955. Accessed in Forest History Society vertical files, Durham, North Carolina.

<sup>29</sup> *New Georgia Encyclopedia* online, “Union Camp” entry.

Sketches and photographs of it graced the pages of everything from small trade journals to *Time* Magazine. The once “big, fat, dumb Union” had erected a veritable “paper dream in Dixie.”<sup>30</sup>

Union's move to the South was *the* grand event, the creation moment, in the growth of southern paper-making, for two reasons. One, it was the first large-scale industrial relocation of a paper company from the North to the South; it would be the first in a long line, but in 1935 very few foresters or industry experts might have placed bets on that fact. (It was also the first major relocation southward of *any* company that would utilize forest products so heavily.) Two, it was the first recorded use of *southern* capital in the seduction of industrial relocation to the South. Calder struck a deal with the Citizens Southern Bank in Savannah that made *locals* an indirect but active financial partner in the ground-breaking. So while Union would not be the only paper company to move to the piney woods South, that is almost exactly the point. They were the very first, and then the first to prove that the second-growth forests held a parallel *second-chance* for the Southern economy.

In the fall of 1937, Calder and Union Bag celebrated their first full year in operation along the banks of the Savannah River. *Papermaker Magazine* featured Calder in its August issue. Under the heading of “Bouquets of Honor,” Calder offered his readers a calm and self-satisfied smile from the bottom of the page—which was, incidentally and fittingly, printed on thick, brown Kraft paper. The magazine was a classy affair, less a trade journal and more an attempt to convince both deep-pocketed investors and the American public at large that striking a balance between the fancier attributes of paper and the planned obsolescence *of* paper was the answer to all of life's little first-world questions.

Most of the content of *Papermaker* functioned as an advertisement for the “paper man's” way of life. A 1936 issue included a full-page sketch of a man leaning against a wall in rugged

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<sup>30</sup> “Paper Profits,” *Time*, 27 Sept. 1937.

striped clothing, looking off into the distance, described as “pretty tough.” “And almost as tough,” the rest of it reads at the bottom of the page, “is *this* strong Kraft wrapping paper.”<sup>31</sup> Another full-page drawing in August of 1937 depicted an attractive woman, vaguely resembling a very young Lucille Ball, in a revealing bikini, looking at an older man to her side. “I feel so conspicuous,” she says, “I guess because it's new.” The viewer supposes she means the new fashion of the swimsuit itself, but she is also drawing the reader’s attention to the newness of her brazen willingness to meet the male gaze. She is a coy pinup, to be sure, but she is far from ashamed. Such images were intended to convey the modernity, the prerogatives, and the self-satisfactions of being an industry man. In this sense, Calder’s photo acted as a pinup and an advertisement too—he had become a model of what it meant to be a Paper Man in the South.

*Papermaker* called Calder “a four-letter man” during his college days “who had since remained one”; lower-level Union employees were constantly fed this image of him as well. It seems impossible now to reconstruct a summary of the truths behind the man who defined *himself* so much through public image and charm and sought to be seen as a “Superman” of the paper industry, or perhaps, rather, a “Joe DiMaggio” of Kraft production. Descriptions of Calder made it seem as though he dined regularly with Hollywood bachelors or Middle Eastern diplomats. He was an avid, even “rabid,” world-class golfer who “liked the rumba *and* paper bag selling.”<sup>32</sup> Hard to believe he had time for both, rather, all of this.

Under Calder's direction, Union's Savannah mill would pride itself foremost on achievements in management, organization, and cleanliness. Such ideals echoed a sense of purity; and they were a projection of its executives’ dreams, a companion image to the sophisticated ease of a paper man's lifestyle—that there was nothing more “natural,” indeed more

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<sup>31</sup> *Papermaker* advertisements, from Summer 1934-Summer 1938, vertical files, FHS.

<sup>32</sup> “Alexander Calder,” *Papermaker*, August 1937, 24.

“beautiful” than a mill nestled among the trees that gave it life. That Union picked the site of the old Hermitage Plantation was no fluke. Henry McAlpin, the Scotsman who had turned the land into a thriving brick-making plantation, became another character, another publicity ploy, in Union's attempt to become part of the Savannah community. Calder began to claim that the cart McAlpin designed to shuffle back and forth between his kilns was actually the country's first operational “railroad.”<sup>33</sup> McAlpin's immaculate organization, his very modernity, seemed ahead of his time. In this vision, the land along the Savannah was a place actually *prone* to grand innovation. Union also claimed that the Hermitage was a meeting place for prestigious Georgians and that the last occupants were soldiers who accompanied Sherman in his March to the Sea. Whether Oglethorpe's theoretical ghost wandered about is left up to debate; the General would have never supported the idea of trees *as* an industry.

But the company also insinuated that even though there was much to marvel at in terms of industrial capacity, what southerners should be most impressed with were the jobs and the influx of new money into their town.<sup>34</sup> The plant's 375 acres, 43 covered by buildings, included a nine-hole golf course named after Mary (Sandy's wife) Calder, a place “for the employees” to enjoy the land as something other than workers.<sup>35</sup> The 52 original slave huts were eventually shipped to a museum in Dearborn, Michigan. Henry Ford took the McAlpin home to his mansion at Richmond Hill Plantation on the Ogeechee River, just 25 miles away. What remained for Union was the legend of the land itself. The most immediate reminders of its plantation past were long gone.

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<sup>33</sup> Union-Bag Plant Guide, Self-published by the company in 1954, accessed in the “Paper” files of the Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina, 3; the Guide appears to have changed very little year to year. The page numbers shown in these citations reference a statistic or specific detail and come from the 1954 edition; however, some larger commentary on the guides are a composite from browsing through several of them.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

In elite and upper-middle class culture, the seemingly fresh and graceful new relationship with industry in Savannah could perhaps best be illustrated by a series of photographs and descriptives printed with a *Papermaker* article from 1937, the year after Union moved in. The photo and essay in question highlighted a tour that TAPPI—the Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry, a not-for-profit organization unassociated with the government—took to Savannah and the Sea Islands of Georgia (where Calder built a palatial home) that summer for an overview of industrial and agricultural developments in the area. This was by no means an event for mill workers. Much of the activity took place on Sea Island's Cloister patios, with free-flowing cocktails and swimming in October.

But before the group (full primarily of Northern businessmen and their wives) left Savannah for the island, they feasted on a “southern” breakfast of ham, eggs, and corn bread before touring the city's squares and a few outdoor bars. TAPPI gifted samples of rosin and pine tree oils to their guests en lieu of flowers or chocolates. It was nightfall before the bus finally pulled back onto the highway. “With a silvery southern moon shining down and to the swing music of its colored orchestra,” the author wrote, “the Hercules Special slid away from Savannah towards Brunswick.” Hercules was, of course, the company that had revolutionized the southern turpentine industry. Originally a powder company that dabbled in military-grade chemicals, they bought the Yaryan Turpentine Company in 1919, and by 1921—with little to no previous experience in the field—became the country's largest turpentine producer. They had fallen behind in profits during the Depression era, just like Union had, but it a rogue marketing campaign in the 1930s made them a household name.

Hercules was another Northern company that saved itself by moving southward *and* by employing an advertising campaign that appealed to consumers and workers. They even created

cartoon characters for their packaging, two Claymation figures called “Turp” and “Tine.” They hosted a series of elaborate dance productions in the 1940s. They wooed jobbers with better margins and hardware and paint retailers (the heaviest users of commercial-grade turpentine and related chemicals) with jazzed-up labels and live-action ads. In the 1930s they invested in a rosin-grading program that made their turpentine light in color; as mentioned before, a lighter color was always preferred. That development then allowed them to supply new customers in the varnish, soapmaking, and paper industries.<sup>36</sup> And so the TAPPI contingency toured not just the Union mill in Savannah but also the turpentine plant in Brunswick. The ladies in attendance went on a “historical tour” while the men met at the Hercules Naval Stores Plant to watch the new distillation processes first hand. But the main events had been moved from the plant in Savannah and then the resin-grading in Brunswick, away from the smokestacks and the hauling of lumber, removed just enough so that the press could witness a celebration more evocative of an older South than of a newer industrial one. The night at the Cloister a TAPPI Board member posed for *Papermaker's* photographer alongside his wife, who was wearing a wide-brimmed and flower-adorned hat. One arm is around her. The other hand is holding a drink, and in the background are the lights from the stage—where a black jazz musician (and Savannah native) named Al Cutter played for the duration under the “Southern silvery moon.” For paper industry executives and boosters, many of them northerners who visited the new southern station as outsiders, these were dream times.<sup>37</sup>

And *in* the mill, white workers sustained these images of a jovial sterility. Chosen locals (the mill received many more applications than it had jobs) could view the plant as something

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<sup>36</sup>David Dyer and David B. Sicilia, “From Commodity to Specialty Chemicals: Cellulose Products and Naval Stores at the Hercules Powder Company, 1919-1939 *Business and Economic History, Second Series*, Volume 18 (1989), p. 59-71.

<sup>37</sup>“Tappi Takes Brunswick,” from *Papermaker Magazine*, August 1937, 22-27, FHS “Paper” files.



beautiful as well, in the sense that it provided a new opportunity for employment in a decade dominated by desolation and poverty. Old money in Savannah had tended to stay old money. Racially-charged job categorizations in the plant would prevent African-Americans from making inroads for decades to come, but there was a new industrial order emerging that allowed for training and specialization for willing white workers.<sup>38</sup> White male workers developed a sense of comfort in the new mill jobs. Sixty years later, it would be these white workers who claimed that the “plant still feels like family” in Savannah. One of these was a man named Robert Grant, Jr., who originally started as a “broke beaterman,” taking reels of rejected paper and recycling them on-site back into pulp. Grant eventually worked his way up to a shift manager of finished products, with the charge of three machines and two shipping departments. Grant's sons “still work there during the summer on breaks from school,” but the mill is certainly not where they visualize their professional futures.<sup>39</sup> From the 1930s through to the 1960s, though, mill work became a respectable white career path.

Grant began there in an era of progressive promotion, when mill salaries were competitive and made “The Bag” appear to Savannah men not just as *a* career option but one of their *best* options. Union's promotional materials recruited only white workers for skilled and managerial posts; it became clear to black residents in Savannah (many of whom had moved into the more urban region for the purpose of finding better work) that the company's progressive image did not carry over into issues of race. Jobs in the Southern paper industry were typically organized into “lines of progression,” which kept black workers on a completely different

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<sup>38</sup> Timothy Minchin, *The Color of Work: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Southern Paper Industry, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 38. For more information on lines of progression within the paper industry, see Minchin, *The Color of Work*, 8-9, 140-42.

<sup>39</sup> David Charles Donald, “It surrounds us and defines us,” *Savannah Morning News*, June 8, 2002.

promotion track.<sup>40</sup> African American lines tended to cover a small quantity of low-paying, undesirable positions in the wood yard, while the white lines led to skilled and management positions within the mills. The mill doors were the railroad tracks of old, so to speak.

African American workers throughout the Southern paper industry were responsible for handling, loading, and unloading wood as well as operating small equipment. The onset of mechanization, a gradual process which began in roughly the late 1940s, replaced human labor in the wood yard with mechanical saws, large equipment and log transport systems.<sup>41</sup> During the first part of the twentieth century, though, the Southern paper industry remained a major employer of African American men. As of 1940, African Americans made up nineteen percent of the paper industry workforce in the South. At the same time, seventy-five percent of all African Americans in the paper industry lived and worked in the South. These percentages would decrease rapidly during the 1950s as automated technologies replaced many of the manual-labor positions commonly occupied by African American men, and in some places like Savannah even earlier—a result of female entrance into the paper arena during World War II. But in the 1930s and 1940s, Union Bag made it a point to delegate the most unclean tasks, the most chaotic ones, to black workers.<sup>42</sup>

In order to get logs into the mill, Union utilized still barges that floated, stable, on the river on one side of the plant. Life on the barges was not the clean world of the mill. In 1940, nine barge workers filed a total of three continuous lawsuits against Union Bag as employer. The

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<sup>40</sup> Timothy Minchin defines “lines of progression” officially as “collections of related jobs that were theoretically ranked according to the skill and experience necessary to perform each job.” Minchin, *The Color of Work*.

<sup>41</sup> For more information see, Herbert R. Northrup, et al., *Negro Employment in Southern Industry* (Philadelphia, 1970), 47-8.

<sup>42</sup> William P. Jones, *Tribe of Black Ulysses* Jones defines the “family wage system” as an egalitarian pact in which all members of a family, adults and children alike, performed work together to benefit the survival of the home unit. This system, adds Jones, remained relatively intact throughout the early twentieth century in the South, primarily among African Americans but also with whites, but largely disappeared in the wake of full industrialization and the permanent move toward wage labor.

suits were to recover, quote, “wages for overtime, damages, and attorney fees”; the workers in question had been regularly pulling workweeks well over sixty hours. And the general malaise they claimed was a product of what they saw as the company's negligence and negative attitude toward their welfare. The Georgia court ruled in favor of Union without much debate, though, for one reason: they classified the nine employees as “seamen,” not “laborers.”

The barges parked outside the Union mill were considered ships, both because they floated on water and because they carried cargo and were responsible for the movement of that cargo into the mill. But the barges were not motive—they could never sail independently of their support from the docks—and those involved in the lawsuit believed that this fact qualified them as traditional workers, not seaman. They were responsible for managing lines, anchors, and the pumping of excess water—among many other laborious tasks. Again, the courts believed that these maritime tasks easily identified them as seaman. What was indisputable is that the workers were required to sleep a certain number of nights per week, each week, on the barges because the shipments coming in by boat were consistently unpredictable; when they were not sleeping there, they were often on call from their homes. Ultimately, the ruling specified that their classification as seaman did not entitle them to forty-hour work week restrictions. Because their presence was required for the very safety of the barges themselves, they were officially live-in seafarers instead of mill laborers.

The race of the workers remained undocumented. It can be safely assumed, however, that these men were black. In either case—whether white or black—this was a situation where the first stirrings of labor discontent showed its face at the shiny new Savannah mill. If they were white, then this is still important if only because they were decidedly working-class resistors. And if they were black, then on both counts this incident is more than extraordinary in

1940. It is extraordinary because in this era, few southerners openly protested working environments, and through the government no less. And the general population of workers—white and black—had little to offer in the larger “paper debate” because to them, industrial order meant job security. It would be another three decades or so before activism at the employee-level became so common—in fact, so in demand—that workers began to understand the larger ecological processes that had been in place all along.<sup>43</sup>

Setting up these work lines cemented not only racial categorizations but also production values. Union managers came down hard on the mill's employees. In its first year of operation in 1936, the new plant already produced around 150 tons per day. “Its very bigness,” plant managers behooved, and its highly complex operations, marked the plant as an industrial “point of interest.”<sup>44</sup> Union prided itself on its superior organization, a model based around the concepts of scientific management. Symbolically, the image of paper-making in such a sterile and permanent environment spoke volumes. It was as if the “problem” of the woods, the bedlam of the past's mismanagement and clear-cutting, had been purified and streamlined.<sup>45</sup>

The every-day output of the plant depended upon the proper functioning of the Pulp and Paper Division, which included: the wood yard (where logs arrived via rail from Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina and were unloaded by black laborers), barking drums, wood drums, chip storage, digesters, and the pulp rooms.<sup>46</sup> Union considered its Southern Bag Division the special cash cow in a generally lucrative collective of plant products in the early- to mid- twentieth century. Because the term was part of their name, and also because the company's original

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<sup>43</sup> *Gale V. Union Bag and Paper Company*, 1940.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>45</sup> “Calder Predicts Favorable Climate,” *Pulp and Paper* Vol. 39, Archives--Issues 23-29 (Miller Freeman Publications, 1965).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*; Information regarding the paper making and conversion processes also pulled largely from: Chas W. Stilwell, “Paper Converting,” University of Maine Lectures on Paper and Pulp Manufacturing, Series II, *Lockwood Trade Journal*, New York, 1953.

business had been bag-making machinery, Union saw its own history and culture woven in tightly with the history and culture of the bags. “Grocers themselves made the first paper bags by rolling sheets of paper into funnel shapes,” the plant guide read well into the 1950s, and it was, of course, the customer's “tough luck” in the archaic-bag-era if said makeshift “bag” happened to spring a leak.<sup>47</sup> Union prided itself on making an everyday life easier than it had been—chiefly with a sturdy bag made by rolling Kraft paper. Paper bags are largely still made this way. The roll is formed into a continuous tube, and then the tube is cut into uniform lengths by a rotating knife. Individual small tubes enter the bottoming device on the bag machine, which forms and pastes the bottom of the bag and delivers the completed bag to the operator. In 1936, finished bags apparently then passed through “at least” two inspection points. Many of these machines were of Union's own design.

From the beginning, the Savannah plant had three manufacturing units—standard grocery bags its most prominent. These are retail-store styles in a wide range of sizes, single wall and some printed with customer's name. Union maintained a daily productive capacity of 30 million bags, and some machines were even capable of producing 1,600 bags per minute. Specialty bags were for specific uses, under special orders from customers, a category that also included garment bags, laundry bags, case liners, sugar and rice retail bags--filled and sealed on automatic packaging equipment. Lastly, the Multiwall Department used more complicated machines to layer walls for the product, one sheet often laminated with asphalt (Scutan). These were used for packaging limes, cement, fertilizers, sugar, flour, etc. and can withstand salt water immersion, tropical rain, or the freezing temperatures “of the Arctic.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>*Savannah News Press*, April 29, 1956, quoted in *Water Lords*, 155.  
*New York Times*, February 8, 1970.

<sup>48</sup> Union Plant Guide, 16-17

The Box Division, added in 1947, made corrugated shipping containers for nationally known manufacturers as well as smaller concerns. Union remained exceptionally proud of a product they had developed themselves—something called “Kemkor”—“Kraft linerboard and semi-chemical corrugating medium.”<sup>49</sup> The plant's early chemical products also included tall oil, which was made from soaps recovered via the spent-cooking chemicals used in making pulp. This is a mixture of rosin similar to gum or wood rosin and fatty acids comparable to cotton seed or soya fatty acids; it was often refined by treatment with sulfuric acid or high-vacuum steam distillation. The Union Bag by-products plant produced 25,000 tons of refined tall oil products per year by the 1950s, and became “the only tall oil operations which produce both acid refined tall oils and distilled tall oil products.”<sup>50</sup>

Thus, one of their major products became Unitols—Union Bag, trademarked, refined tall oil products (acid refined tall oil, tall oil fatty acids, tall oil rosin, and distilled tall oils) used in paints, varnishes, emulsifiers, soaps, detergents, and linoleum. Sulfate turpentine—recovered from gases discharged from the pulp digesters—also produced 1.5 million gallons of crude turpentine annually. This was sold without further processing, and when filtered and treated by companies like Hercules became an important source of raw materials used for insecticides and other chemicals. And when refined, it could be used as a solvent for paint and varnish materials.

The Chemicals Department became a huge part of the clinical image Union executives embraced and was depicted in one exceptionally joyful brochure by a picture of three men, two mill workers and one executive in a suit, standing next to a chemical railroad car, briefly entitled “the refining of pulp.”<sup>51</sup> On the next page an older gentlemen gazes fondly upon a huge cement

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 22; photograph, 8.

container of pulp with a clipboard in his hand.<sup>52</sup> All of the men were wearing pressed linen. Their hair was gelled. This image was not, of course, representative of the men who carried those chemical refining processes out in a physical sense. Those workers were left from the photographs.

Pulpwood processing was at the plant's beating center, its sanctum. In its innermost rooms, wood from the wood yard entered chip storage—one for hard woods, one for pines—and then left for filtering in a series of bins. The chips cooked in digester tanks for about two hours at a time, producing raw unwashed pulp, before it was rinsed and separated. This material was later laid out on wire screen supported by rolls (called the Fourdrinier). “Forty-five seconds from the time the heavily-watered pulp sheet leaves the Fourdrinier wire and makes its way through presses,” Union boasted, “and then dryers and calendars, it comes out at paper.”

Men provided the “proper handling,” according to Union's pamphlets, of 1,800 tons of product daily.<sup>53</sup> In a new industrial order, *working white* men would become the pillars on which industrial processes could depend. Twenty years prior, the USFS had proclaimed with a bittersweet pen that for American paper companies to survive and thrive they would have to arouse a new labor force—and in the South it came cheaper than anywhere else. Psychologically, the idea of industrial order was the perfect way to rally Savannah's laborers. The press releases and employment booklets are full of photographs in which very confident white men are only slightly-humbled by the massive machines resting next to them. They climb ladders in three-piece suits; they walk around with clipboards and run through checkpoints of efficiency and output. There are no women anywhere--only harmless-looking, thirty-something men who look calm and relatively happy. Women *would work* at Union in years to come, but as late as 1955 all

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 9-10.

<sup>53</sup> Plant Guide, 19.

of the company's southern publicity material spotlighted only one woman—the mother of a young family perched on the steps of the plant, ready to lead her two eager children in for an afternoon tour followed by soda and cookies in the commissary.<sup>54</sup>

If the Savannah mill was the clean body that Calder imagined it as, then the Woodlands Division—in charge of its reach into the hinterlands—was the food, the energy. Without timber for pulp, Union Bag's industrial order was nothing but an empty container. The Woodlands Division, employing more than sixty graduate and professional foresters at any given time, consisted of five major departments –Land Management, Wood Procurement, Conservation, Research and Technical Control. From the get-go it was the company's most important arm--in charge of fire prevention, giving “free” advice to land owners, ecological research, and the management of burgeoning “tree farms” in South Georgia and parts of South Carolina. And its most important function was to recruit leases with southern landowners. It would be almost thirty years in some places before the conservation-minded Wood Procurement Department would be allowed to harvest leased trees.

In the 1930s, Union's task was twofold in the countryside: to buy the second-growth timber that was old enough to take and, second, to convince landowners (even the ones that would not lease outright) to plant more trees on top of cutover lands. The plant was “nurtured on fast-growing Southern pine,” and according to industry analysts, the new paper center immediately “mushroomed into one of the principal mainstays of the region's economy,” in a land once almost entirely dedicated to cash crop agriculture. In fact, at this point it is a safe analogy to suppose that paper was *becoming* Georgia's new cash crop. Forester Frank Heyward

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<sup>54</sup>Union Bag and Paper Plant Guides and Pamphlets, 1958 pamphlet, 1-2



called the development of southern industrial forestry the single most “significant event in the South since the invention by Eli Whitney of the cotton gin.”<sup>55</sup>

Such was a heavy burden—creating a brand new agricultural legacy on top of the cotton and rice empires and the scars they had each left. This new empire of trees required a resurrection of the centuries-old “lumber man,” who would also have to become a “paper man.” In 1937, a *New York Times* reporter had called for an era of timely re-imagination for the southern lumber man. “Historically the lumber man is a despoiler of the woodlands,” he decried, “and on his head is heaped the blame for fires and floods, for impoverished land and destitute tenants.”<sup>56</sup> But the dawn of an age within which lumbermen might be considered more sophisticated harbingers of progress was suddenly upon the country, he went on to claim. Foresters and tree farmers had absorbed the lessons of conservation, at least in part, by the 1930s. Paper executives like Calder entered an era within which they would be required to trust and *depend* on the ways that the conservation efforts of their suppliers would translate into practical business. The Woodlands Division could initiate and manage leases, and then provide advice on growth and regeneration, but bringing rural Georgians on board with the industry's pristine image would prove much more trying.

Thus, in rural areas, Union Bag's messages to residents (potential growers) were more blunt. Georgia hinterlanders often became even more joyous at the moment of contact with industry than city-dwellers and mill workers. They drove down old highways that bore brand new signs—things like “Trees are Jobs!” and “Grow Trees, Get Cash.” Ninety miles northwest of Savannah, the town of Swainsboro had long been a stronghold for lumber production and would quickly become a hinterland town crucial to Union Bag's timber supply. The wealthiest

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<sup>55</sup>Frank Heyward, “The History of Industrial Forestry,” in “Part Three: Tree Farming—Southern Style,” published in the *W.B. Greeley Lectures, Number Two*, College of Forestry, University of Washington.

<sup>56</sup>“From Pines to Paper: A New Industrial Boom in the South,” *New York Times* Feb. 7, 1937, 158.

landowners and merchants there were mostly named Coleman—an important lineage of men who had built a small lumber empire in a rather sleepy southern town. James and John Coleman, brothers born in the 1840s and both Confederate veterans, were “reared on the farm” of their youth (just outside of Swainsboro's Emmanuel County) and possessed, according to fellow citizens, an old-country sensibility that positively influenced their business acumen. James, the younger sibling, operated a sawmill at the town's railroad junction until 1904. His older brother, John, eventually owned an upwards of 30,000 acres in the area; Coleman Lumber Company became the successful beacon and financial center of an otherwise nondescript Georgia community.<sup>57</sup> After around 1920, though, the cutover period hit Swainsboro hard. If the Colemans' little lumber empire represented an older-South climax for the town, then it remained unclear moving forward what a new one might be. Tree farming for pulp would start to look very promising there.

Swainsboro and other towns like it are important for two (if not many more) reasons. First, it was a town perfectly representative of the inhabited hinterlands which fed lumber to the new Union mill. Its proximity made transport relatively easy, just as was the case for many small sawmill and lumber towns sprinkled throughout a roughly-hundred-mile radius spreading from Savannah and the coast. Second, Swainsboro had been the site of a classic pre-industrial debate over the use of the region's trees. Sawmillers in the area, many quite vocal, thought turpentine would stunt overall tree growth, but their counterpart naval stores producers thought Georgia's turpentine and resin glut needed to be exploited properly and often. The work of conservationists like Herbert Kayton had infiltrated the turpentine industry's practices in rural Georgia by the 1930s, but there still existed an overall sentiment of production—and even, in

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<sup>57</sup>*Georgia Sketches of Counties, Towns, Events, Institutions, and Persons*, Volume II, by Candler & Evans (1906), transcribed by Renae Davidson.

places like Swainsboro, one of competition with other growing industries. Local pulpwood advocates saw a distinct probability of domination in the country's larger pulp and paper industry, so long the domain of Canada and the Pacific Northwest. These paper men—local working-class southerners that defy the typical booster stereotype—eventually won out. Swainsboro became a hinterland hub for the Georgia pulpwood industry, cashing in on Union's (and other mills') need for trees. In Emmanuel County, slash pines truly became cash cows. But there, as in other parts of rural Georgia, rampant and arbitrary forest fires still consumed more pines than conservation- and industry-minded entrepreneurs would have liked.

These problems continued for decades. In May of 1946 the county would host the area's first annual Pine Tree Festival to help finally solve the fire frenzy once and for all—again, through publicity. A local attorney named I.L. Price (admired by many as a “man of the local people”) oversaw the planning process—as he envisioned it, a more-modern answer to old-school fire problems. Price believed the practical answer to rampant fires was a heightened sense of civic duty and camaraderie. On the committee with Price also sat W. Kirk (William Kirkland) Sutlive, a Public Relations Manager from Union Bag who would go on to achieve some amount of fame in Georgia as a regional newspaper man. Slogans from the festival unsurprisingly mirrored those of Union Bag's recruitment posters: over the first few years they ranged from “Stop Forest Fires” and “Keep Georgia Green” to the awkwardly-transparent “Dollars Grow on Pine Trees.”

Sutlive was surely a paper man in Savannah, committed to the growth of Georgia-based manufacture throughout the 1930s and 1940s. He served as Union Bag's ambassador to the countryside for years, bridging the physical and ideological gaps between the company and its rural feeders. He was a walking representation of the growing comfort of life in Savannah—that

safe, white world of the mill and its potential to make Georgians into a modern middle-class. His sense of confidence, and of good humor, both shine through the pages written about his events. A writer named Mike Benton reported for *Billboard* in 1949 that Sutlive's inaugural “Made in Georgia” Exposition at Atlanta's 35th Annual Southeastern Fair did nothing less than “open the door for industrial involvement” in community events and the like. Sutlive was president of the Associated Industries of Georgia at the time and sent a series of letters urging other members to participate in 1948. Sutlive noted in his script that industry had become directly responsible for three billion dollars of revenue and roughly 275,000 Georgia jobs each year. The fair, hosted at Atlanta's Lakewood Park, eventually hosted 57,000 square feet of show space that year—for manufacturers, processors, and fabricating firms. All of this was a huge development in the profiling of industrial development in Georgia, but for it to seem less boring and most digestible to a fair's crowd, Sutlive and his organizers added one more twist to their new expo. At the end of showing, they crowned a “Made-in-Georgia Expo Queen” who then floated around the expo in a dress made of Georgia products.<sup>58</sup>

Publicity stunts may have helped build an image, but logistically Union's life in the woods had to be managed scientifically so that patterns of industrial growing, cutting, and reforestation could come to fruition. The Woodlands Division's “free service to any landowner interested in properly thinning his standing timber for pulpwood, or who might desire professional advice,” proved both a service of its dozens of professional foresters and a way for the company to make inroads with new growers. Union reached deep into the hinterlands with both their initial and subsequent public relations efforts, sponsoring forestry camps in rural areas as well as forestry scholarships for Savannah's schools and those schools in places like Swainsboro, Baxley, and Waycross. The company also bought timber land where they could.

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<sup>58</sup>Mike Benton, “Made in Georgia Expo Suggests Similar Shows at Other Annuals,” *Billboard* Nov. 26, 1949.

By 1955, Union would boast 900,000 acres of company forest lands.<sup>59</sup> In places where stands were allowed to prosper over several growing cycles, Union often took photographs of new pines and touted their age. Some had even made it to “27 years old.” To eager executives and managers, that was ancient.

Union saw their public relations task as two-fold. The first object was to make their mill workers, at least the white ones, feel comfortable. This particular task bled into efforts of community outreach—from public meetings to simple tasks such as planting seedlings of pine in empty corners and along square thoroughfares in the city. The second part—finding and nurturing a harmonious relationship with its tree growers in the countryside--was arguably even more important. The Union Woodlands Division prided itself on promoting a “sustained fire prevention program” as well each year “as a part of its overall conservation program” distributing “free of charge” five million pine seedlings to private landowners. The sheer reality, though, is that legally the company *had* to do *at least* these things.

As will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, the leases that Union fostered with area growers were as exclusive as they were iron-clad. These aforementioned concessions to landowners were the only leg that the leasers had to stand on, for periods of six to twelve years. When Union bragged that it planted “each year from 10 to 15 million seedlings on its own land,” what they were actually doing was a restock-process on the lands they had leased and were contractually obligated to plant on. A historian of Georgia forestry offered as early as the 1960s that perhaps this process was best described as the Woodlands Department having “turned loose” their public relations managers and materials on owners that felt simultaneously overwhelmed and excited by the idea of growing for such a large business.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Plant Guide, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Pikel, *History of Georgia Forestry*, 55.

And there were Georgia natives who purposefully entered the paper debate *because* they saw an opportunity to participate in industrial growth within their own region. Marcus Rawls, who spoke with a long drawl and openly identified with a passionate sense of Southern “place,” was in charge of Union's timber acquisitions from 1936 until the mid-1940s, when he joined the military and took a brief hiatus from his forestry career. Rawls had been a young boy working the woods of the Osceola National Forest when “Old Doc” Austin Cary took it on as a pet project. So Rawls was involved not only with Herbert Kayton's turpentine endeavors but was also on the ground floor of the paper boom and its desperate need for forestry expertise. He had been involved as a young forester in the turpentine conservation projects in Florida. Naval stores was an industry that, according to Rawls, was simply “worn out” by the time the paper mills moved to the South. Companies like Hercules had streamlined the manufacturing process, and smaller growers had been all but pushed out. Albert Ernst, the Woodlands Manager at Union in its opening days, recruited Rawls to Savannah because of successful collaborations they had working together on the Forest Survey. Ernst eventually acquired over a million of Union's leased acres, and probably would have a million more had he not left in 1942 to open his own private consulting firm. This was a strategy used by many trained foresters heading into the 1940s; once the war-time boom proved that paper was not a litmus-test industry but instead a grower, many of its executives and managers struck out their own to take advantage of land-leasing and timber-dealing.<sup>61</sup>

As the country began to deal with the realities of World War II, Rawls offered, the place he so familiarly called the “southland” was “coming into its own” in droves. It was evident, in those early years, that paper was doing the “greatest for reconstruction in the South than any

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<sup>61</sup> L.D. Post, “Pulp Situation Favorable to Union Bag and Paper Company,” *The Paper Mill and Wood Pulp News* Vol. 63, Issue 15 (1940).

other industry.” It is this use of the lower-case “R” in his version of southern “reconstruction” that drives this paper story through the bulk of the twentieth century.<sup>62</sup> Capital “R” Reconstruction was without a doubt the most simultaneously promising and disappointing period in Southern history; it was, in short, a series of moments during which politicians stepped halfway into the doorways of racial progressivism before shutting out black southerners in the 1870s and 1880s. During Radical Reconstruction, the promises of a new order were left unfulfilled on the land, in city re-building, and in progressive politics. To conceptualize the industrialization of the South in the early and mid-twentieth century as a second attempt at a “reconstruction” makes perfect sense, and particularly in light of what remained at stake for ordinary southerners. What Rawls' analysis left out was, ironically, the racial hierarchy still heavily at play in southern industries.

The excitement that Savannah's residents exerted in 1935 at the stirring of Union's ground-breaking—some were so excited that they sent out sketch postcards of the plant to loved ones in other parts of the country--was a sign not that they wanted to be “saved” by something or someone but more that they knew something had to change. The days of uninhibited resource use were gone. The day of the small farmer was gone. “King Cotton is dead in Savannah,” one forester declared, in “the most famous of the Old South's cotton ports, and the stately pine tree is the new ruler.”<sup>63</sup> The paper industry was a new business in the South, but it still drew on the traditional relationship between the countryside, the farmer, and the scientific manager to thrive. This was a collective paper dream in Dixie.

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with Marcus Rawls, Property of the Forest History Society

<sup>63</sup> J.B. Woods, National Lumber Manufacturers Association, “Why Forest Fires,” published in *American Forests Magazine* and accessed as a typed draft in letter form to Ovid Butler, editor of the magazine (vertical files of the Forest History Society), 1935, 1.

People like Kayton remained in the debate into the 1930s and 1940s. He saw a correlation between life and culture in the city and ecology in the hinterlands. The trees were the ideological bridges for him. “I can show you here in Savannah w[h]ere thousands of seedlings have been planted around in new sub-divisions,” he said in 1959, “which was something unheard of before because we had no pine trees in the city.”<sup>64</sup> The pines in the cityscape, according to Kayton, made citizens more aware of the ecological connections between themselves and the country roads spanning out. But that was more decorative than anything else, truth be told. Savannah residents still believed themselves to be just as special, just as isolated, just as protected as before. In fact, they may have believed themselves to be even *more* of all of these things because of the success of the new industry in their midst.

Union's southern station would produce a bevy of copycats in the subsequent decades. Between 1935 and 1945 at least one new, large-scale pulp and paper mill opened in each of the nine deep-South states. An executive with St. Regis Pulp and Paper—long a competitor of Union, long begging for a merger as well—liked to claim that his company waited to push southward until the southern pine sulphate process had been “perfected” for Kraft paper. Charles Woodcock, who started as an office boy in July of 1936 (the very summer Union commenced operations in Savannah) at St. Regis, professed as late as 1975 that his “people” had access to the best multiwall bags and the best pulp. He thought Union's Kraft was “never up to performance” and that St. Regis would not even consider dealing in southern pine until the “Kraft got better.” When cornered in an oral history interview, Woodcock could not pinpoint a moment or a scientific development that made it happen. That is because, of course, it never did. The

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<sup>64</sup>Kayton interview, 3.



sulphate process that brought Union down was the same in 1935 as it was in 1946, when St. Regis finally succumbed and bought out Florida Pulp and Paper.<sup>65</sup>

Paper-making was a business that still drew on the countryside and the farmer, but it was the mill—as well as the offices in Savannah and in New York—where the success felt not only palpable but very modern to those involved. All that said, farmers were making more money than they ever had before. Pine had officially become the new cash crop in coastal Georgia (and in many areas of the Piney Woods South). This did not mean that coastal Georgians were unaware of the possible consequences of such exponential growth.

When proceedings of the Georgia Forestry Association's (GFA) Sixteenth Annual Meeting commenced on May 19, 1937, in Athens, Georgia, Union had already celebrated almost one full year of operation on the banks of the Savannah River. Having perhaps underestimated the availability of timber in the area, Union's mill in Savannah increased its production capacity twice-over during the first year. Union and other Northeastern paper corporations realized not only the intensity of speed by which slash pines could be harvested, cut, and processed, but also the country's--and the world's--voracious appetite for paper. No one could make it fast enough. Not surprisingly, paper became the order of the day for the GFA's annual meeting.<sup>66</sup>

Not one address that weekend in Athens failed to mention the state's newly burgeoning paper industry. Expert researchers and forest agents from across the state, as well as from the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) national and regional office, weighed in on the industrial development. These experts sought to conserve timber stands in coastal Georgia not necessarily because of a philanthropic aim to "save the trees" in the way we understand that phrase today but

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with Charles A. Woodcock, conducted by John B. Ross, New York, 24 September 1975, property of the Forest History Society, 17-18.

<sup>66</sup> Joseph C. Kircher, "Pulpwood and Forestry in Georgia," *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Georgia Forestry Association*, University of Georgia Libraries Special Collection, Manuscript 25522, Box 50, Folder 1, 31.

instead to ensure that timber would remain in steady supply for the paper industry for decades to come. Regional foresters as well as visitors from the USFS headquarters in Washington sang a praise song for the industry's employment opportunities and skyrocketing revenues but seemed conflicted about one issue--how to handle the native Georgians who made timber-harvesting their personal livelihoods. As Union and other corporations like it began to lease private lands to fill up to a third of its timber needs, forest officials wondered in public ownership of timberland made more sense for ensuring that the land would stay diversified. In other words, the blessed paper industry could easily turn into a curse without proper land management.<sup>67</sup>

But one of the key proponents of this theory was precisely the type of official Savannah foresters openly spited--a federal official whose claims seemed to come from atop a very shaky pedestal. F. A. Silcox, Chief of the USFS in Washington, rained down upon the Athens audience with a grand and sweeping oration that came off as nothing short of a eulogy for the old agricultural South. The "South of song and story is not primarily a land of cotton, corn, tobacco, and cane," he insisted, but had quickly become a "forest economy" in which the happy equilibrium between humans and nature would be increasingly threatened.<sup>68</sup> Silcox spoke as though he knew the plight of Georgians well, knew of the complex dynamics of land use, but certainly many attendees must have wondered how someone who lived and worked hundreds of miles away could make such summations.

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<sup>67</sup> Merle Prunty, Jr., "Recent Expansions in the Southern Pulp-Paper Industries," *Economic Geography*: 32:1 (Jan. 1956), 51-57.

<sup>68</sup> F.A. Silcox, "Forests and Human Welfare," *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Georgia Forestry Association*, University of Georgia Libraries Special Collection, Manuscript 25522, Box 50, Folder 1, page 34. Issues of forest management tie into a massive literature on the American conservation movement of the early twentieth century and beyond. This work maneuvers within that to connect local struggles over land use in coastal Georgia to debates over public and private land use. Most environmental historians agree that the transfer of lands into public hands during the twentieth century usually coincided with government fear (sometimes unfounded) that private citizens' agricultural or land management techniques would result in destruction or ecological homogenization of a given area. That these men use the word "conservation" proves useful in my quest to find and define a language of environmental awareness in Georgia. However, ultimately I see within these pages that forest officials did to Savannah residents and Georgians more broadly precisely what I would like to stop historians from doing to them—accusing locals of possessing no sense of conservation or environmental awareness whatsoever.

What the convention lacked overall, of course, were voices from those who lived and worked among the gathering timber stands in and around Savannah. Silcox spoke directly over Georgians' heads when he hijacked the region's history to prove a fiery point. Oglethorpe's original colony, he claimed, had been "richly endowed by nature with climate and soils favorable to forest growth"--a condition, according to Silcox, certainly threatened in the twentieth century.<sup>69</sup> Never mind that the colony had failed miserably, that Georgians had subsequently practiced slavery on the same land, or that myriad crops had rotated in and out of coastal fields for centuries. Never mind that local foresters had done their best to educate farmers and independent timber-men on the practices of proper land management, had even gone into their elementary schools to reinforce the same ideals with the area's children. For Silcox, forestry was an elite practice, and bad forestry was an unforgivable crime. Silcox did provide commentary on the paper and turpentine corporations operating in the area that Georgians should have perhaps opened their ears to. The companies, Silcox observed, seemed to be too "merrily clipping the trees," overstaying their welcome on land that they had committed to preserving sustainability.<sup>70</sup> But slashing pines, pardon the play on words, meant jobs for a lot of Georgians.

It was clear from the start, in 1935, that Union would take great pains to establish a functioning and (mostly) mutually beneficial relationship with the forests and timber growers around them in Georgia. They realized that the forest was linked to their future, and, as Fallows would write a few decades later—the paper industry had “been careful in its handling on its woody resources.”<sup>71</sup> And so the story of Union, and paper-making in the South as a whole, became a story of the woods.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>71</sup> Fallows, *The Water Lords*, 59.

## CHAPTER 4: FROM THESE TREES

*“Paper consumption has become such a fixture of American life that it is easy to forget where paper came from, and at what cost.”*

(Jim Fallows, *The Water Lords*, 1971)<sup>1</sup>

*“Fancy cutting down all those beautiful trees...to make pulp for those bloody newspapers, and calling it civilisation.”*

(Winston Churchill, remarking to his son during a visit to Canada, 1929)<sup>2</sup>

In 1940, the Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association celebrated their first year as a paper booster organization with a pamphlet spotlighting Alexander Calder's prized Savannah mill. The accompanying sketch perfectly summed up the burgeoning relationship between the ideas of industrial order and the preservation of the woods. It is a mural-esque portrait—one resembling something like a New Deal-era poster—of the Savannah paper plant saddling the river. Entitled “From These Trees,” it is painted from the perspective of a viewer kneeling behind a bush in the distance; the branches of nearby pines hold in the smokestacks like a picture frame. In a newly structured forest, the mill had become the fruit, and the forest was the seed.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s the SPCA slogan read in short but decorative script: “Prevent fires, cut conservatively, and grow more timber.” This was a perfect summary judgment on the efforts of foresters, scientific managers, and private business to resurrect the South's forests. The message was peaking. The overarching ideal *of* industrial order in the South, at least to the growing paper industry, was that the industrialization process would build a

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>2</sup> Quote extracted from John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness, and Greed* (Random House, 2006), 21.

permanent future for the previously under-privileged, poverty-stricken or unworldly. This same idea had motivated the SFEP to film movies about young Georgia men rising from dismal, rural lows by growing new trees, and the APPA to proclaim over and over that their organization made great men. “Green and growing forests brighten the future of the South,” the SPCA claimed. Georgians, southerners, and now Sun-Belters, had gotten their futures tied up inextricably with the futures of the trees.

Many southerners believed that the paper industry had “saved the South”—ironic given that the glut of southern pine had likely “saved” companies like Union Bag. “Companies take part in community affairs,” the SPCA boasted, becoming not just businesses but philanthropic vessels. The organization regularly mailed out photographs of foresters in high school classrooms, the games of mill baseball teams, community planning meetings, and YMCA activities and buildings.<sup>3</sup> “Future planning,” Union-Camp Vice President Donald Hardenbrook wrote, was “by no means a new function for industrial companies” in the 1940s and 1950s. He was right. Industry had always—when it had access to marketing funds, anyway—attached itself to the promises of better futures. It would always fight the stereotype of the “dark, Satanic mills” that William Blake has introduced to the world in 1804.<sup>4</sup> It would always fight what Thoreau had defined as a loss of a perceived solitude, a loss of natural innocence and reverence. And so Union went as far as to call their paper era a “world of tomorrow.” For them, that world was a Disneyland of paperboard houses, disposable bed linens, multi-wall bags, floral wall papers

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<sup>3</sup>Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association Pamphlet, “Paper: Your Fabulous Friend,” Forest History Society, Box F21; W.B. Greeley, “A Rational Approach to Forest Practices on Private Lands,” Annual Meeting of the APPA, February 1950, published in *American Forests Magazine* May 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Quote extracted from: W.H. Stevenson, *Blake: The Complete Poems* (Longman Press, 1989), 25.

and—more than anything—an insatiable demand for the persistently replaceable. There existed, for the paper men, a sense of real permanency in that kind of consistency.<sup>5</sup>

Tree-harvesting became a business practice *and* a social network; timber revival was, in essence, a new welfare program in the South (at least as companies like Union Bag would lead their customers and their leasers to believe). The SPCA went as far as to point out that even African-American men—openly banned from higher paying jobs by the industry—increased their quality of life through tree-harvesting.<sup>6</sup> In this new forest vision, permanency and scientific management would promote egalitarianism. This happened, of course, over two-hundred years after General James Oglethorpe decided that trees would be of no use to anything but ship-making and fire-building in the home's hearth. And now they were the most tangible symbol of perceived industrial permanency in all of the South.

In the 1940s, Union-Bag became a major American corporate player, and the South was quickly becoming what many would come to call this “paper complex” of the country. Every one of the Deep South states housed at *least two* large-scale pulpwood and/or paper-making mills by 1940, and most of them dozens. In June of 1945, the *New York Times* declared pine the “new cash crop in Dixie.” In that year, the southern paper industry already boasted a ten million dollar payroll and upwards of 10,000 employees.<sup>7</sup> Industrial growers and new forestry organizations, some public and some private, ushered in a completely new “era” of southern forestry.<sup>8</sup> In the decades to follow, the largest environmental complaints against the paper industry (by scholars, activists, and ecologists alike) involved the development of this now-malicious-sounding idea of a “paper complex”—i.e. the belt of paper-producing regions across the southeastern states that

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<sup>5</sup> Hardenbrook, “Coming Age of Paper,” 135.

<sup>6</sup> SPCA Pamphlets

<sup>7</sup> John N. Pophams, “Pine Ousts Cotton in Savannah Area,” *New York Times* 29 June 1947.

<sup>8</sup> Pikel, *History of Georgia Forestry*, 45.

thrived off the proliferation of monocultural tree plantations and farms, often at the expense of native ecosystems. But from 1936 to 1945, paper companies had erected this chain of facilities very purposefully. And Union-Bag stood at the impassioned forefront of an unprecedented corporate restructuring of the southern landscape.

A combined network of paper companies, booster organizations, and foresters also became a place for market innovation and progressive forestry. A 1953 survey by the USFS revealed an opinion that “paper lands” had, over just fifteen years, become the best-managed of any industry in the South.<sup>9</sup> To the naked eye, companies operating in the region had begun to perfect the conservation-minded cutting and replanting processes; the journey that timber made from Georgia's increasingly industrially-controlled hinterlands into a barge on the Savannah River, for example, and a few hours later into pulp mush for Kraft, had become a well-oiled machine. The overall image proved quite pleasing to most workers and consumers alike: that nature's managed bounty (the growing tree farms) travelled smoothly from county to city and in a short amount of time could be on its ways to American homes in the form of grocery bags, wallpaper, and notepads. It was a modern process—streamlined, clean, and, most importantly, scientific.

In Georgia, this was the first large-scale gearing of a reproducible raw material directly to industrial operations—for example, there had been no connection between the production-side of the cotton textile industry and cotton raising itself.<sup>10</sup> Union Bag championed the balance of self-interest, then, while becoming strong proponents of reforestation and conservation. The latter *had* to become increasingly important, as Union Bag's acquisition of leased land only increased

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Earl Porter, conducted by Elwood Maunder and Joe Miller for the Forest History Society, October 1963, 70.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, in the cotton industry, picking and manufacturing the cotton were such different jobs that they constituted a marked class difference.

during and after the 1940s. Industrial tree farms would transcend in size and scope any commercial farming ever in residence in Georgia. This was the process of literally “making” trees. It was what one executive called “growth through internal efforts.”<sup>11</sup>

If the industry was making trees, foresters became their foot soldiers. In 1939, the industry had employed only 54 professional foresters across the entire South; by 1953, that number had increased exponentially to 753 foresters. These foresters and their activities were monitored heavily by the APPA, which professed that their “objective was and is to interest the owner in growing maximum crops of trees regardless of the end product grown.” Between 1948 and 1953, when the APPA published much of its information, the number of southern landowners “receiving forester assistance” would grow over ten times—from just over 400 to well over 5,000.<sup>12</sup>

Foresters became symbols of the new order. But the most insistent purveyor of the “industrial order” message would be the SPCA, founded to police the speculative pricing of timber and pulpwood as well as lobby for groups of larger growers accumulating across the region. In 1941, alleged monopolization in the southern forests had become so dire a national issue that the 77<sup>th</sup> Congress addressed it via an investigation in January and February of 1941. The southern paper concerns, chief among them Union-Bag, pushed down the price of lumber and wood cords by managing many of its lands, but on the flipside they were selling processed papers for the highest prices in history.<sup>13</sup>

Union Bag, a grower of trees through their leases in the countryside, became a member company of the SPCA almost immediately, and their burgeoning relationship with the

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<sup>11</sup> Hardenbrook, “Coming Age of Paper,” 141.

<sup>12</sup> Records of the APPA, FHS; The professionalization of forestry had become complete by this era. State universities began to produce students from their forestry programs in droves. Industries across the country, as well as the federal and state government, employed them for field work, consulting, etc.

<sup>13</sup> 77<sup>th</sup> Congress, Resolution Report Number 145, January 3, 1941 and February 24, 1941.



organization would turn many experts and many foresters into public relations men *as well as* paper men.<sup>14</sup> The SPCA often wrote of reforestation as if they had actually invented its southern incarnation. The pulp and paper industry, one of its pamphlets proclaimed, had finally made a science of "learning to work with nature." The SPCA also credited its industry with making it "practical and profitable" for the average landowner in the South to grow "scientifically." The illusion was that a pre-World War II South had no inclination and no skills in the matter--Herbert Kayton and the work of the GFA to the contrary. Their narrative fits better with a postwar story in America. If consumerism and ideas for the future of the American century were in a climax only after the war, then so was the management and understanding of resources and their future.<sup>15</sup> The paper industry was building a "forest of tomorrow."<sup>16</sup>

It is important to conceptualize Union and the SPCA as not necessarily the *same* entity but at least as two entities so closely-woven together that they often acted as two arms on a single body. According to forester Earl Porter—southern Kraft manager for International Paper during this same period—the SPCA was set up “on the principle of maintaining and increasing the supply of timber in the South”; it was not, as its name implied, simply about conservation or promoting that ethic.<sup>17</sup> The organization was partly responsible, he recalled, for coming up with new wood and pulp products that there “had been no use in particular for” previously.<sup>18</sup> This is

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<sup>14</sup>“Public relations men”--term taken from Porter Interview with FHS, 71.

<sup>15</sup> SPCA Pamphlet; A 1950s America had already immersed itself in a “world of tomorrow,” so Union's strategies made perfect sense. But the South was changing just as America changed; a heightened era of consumerism would then give way to consumer awareness, group identity and activism, and increased expectations on the part of the public when it came to advertising.

<sup>16</sup> Paper companies in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest were embracing similar “forest of tomorrow” propaganda at this time. In 1959, for example, The Rotary Club spotlighted Wisconsin's “Trees for Tomorrow” program. North and South, the message was similar: private industry wanted trees growing everywhere for the benefit of everyone. This made them seem quite altruistic despite the fact that most of these “trees for tomorrow” would turn into their paper and stay under their legal dominion. *The Rotarian* May 1959, accessed through their online archive.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Earl Porter, 66.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

one of main reasons Union rallied to work alongside them, despite the SPCA's function of increasing wood prices.

Founded in February of 1940, the Southern Pine Inspection Bureau's main purpose was also to protect smaller lumber and paper firms—the ones that might be pushed and pulled by price changes and industrial expansion instead of helped by them. It also made lumber grading processes less monopolistic, which opened up avenues for the smaller growers to compete with larger ones all over the South.<sup>19</sup> The SPCA and SPIB worked in tandem with Agricultural Extension Services, the USFS, and the Georgia Forestry Commission to wage a veritable “war” on forest mismanagement in the 1940s and early 1950s. The organizations created a collective model of what they believed to be “an ideal management” and subsequently set up “pilot forests” in locations throughout the Piney Woods to demonstrate innovative management practices to smaller growers in mock-up situations.<sup>20</sup> The SPCA produced a film in the early 1950s entitled “Care of the Forests Helps Paper Have its Day.” Civic clubs screened it throughout the South, including 146 of them in Georgia alone. An SPCA press release announced that the region's welcoming attitude and understanding of timber urgency had put it “truly in the mainstream of America's modern marketing economy.”<sup>21</sup>

Some other booster sentiments also made sense. The SPCA's contention that the paper industry's connection with southern farm decline “has been a good one” is palatable even within more modern logic—it facilitated the reopening of railroad depots, made work for displaced laborers, and reinvigorated tree farming in all the ways previously discussed in this work. But their wider and thinner claims that the “forests of tomorrow are the seedlings of today” in a

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<sup>19</sup>Pikl, *History of Georgia Forestry*, 45.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, 54-55.

<sup>21</sup> Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association Pamphlets, Box F21, Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina; L.T. Stevenson, “The Significance of Growth Factors to the Paper Industry,” *Paper Trade Journal*, New York, February 20, 1953.

“surging South” require further unpacking and investigation.<sup>22</sup> In 1970, journalist Jim Fallows would make the comment that resulting pine plantations near Savannah tended to “bear about as much resemblance to natural forests as chickens in mechanized coops do to flocks of wild herons.”<sup>23</sup> Ecologists like Janisse Ray have made eerily-similar claims. Were these the “forests of tomorrow?”

The forests were already not without controversy. These organizations fought, above all else, to prevent what they saw as unnecessary federal dominion and regulation over southern lands. In 1942, Frank Heyward had begun working with the SPCA and remained in close communication with other foresters still out in the field. In a letter dated March 12 of that year, a forester with the National Lumber Manufacturers Association, G.H. Collingwood reminded Heyward that it was “essential that we encourage interested timber land owners and others to write to their congressmen setting forth as clearly and forcefully as possible” against such regulation. Collingwood was convinced that the government believed the South was “on the verge of a timber famine”; but in his mind, it was important to impress upon the public that the exact opposite was true. Collingwood's call that southern paper and lumber experts must “keep constantly on the alert” conveys the anxiety some industrial foresters felt, and the fear they held that all of their management practices might be for naught. Just two years earlier, Collingwood had received a series of desperate letters from a Winslow Gooch—a forester with the Chesapeake Corporation in West Point, Virginia. Gooch begged his colleagues to show that they were not in “collusion” with other paper companies to control the prices of pulpwood.<sup>24</sup> The SPCA and

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<sup>22</sup>“In the South, the Woods are Full of Prosperity,” Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association Papers, Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina; this mentality was incredibly pervasive in all sorts of commercial and academic media concerning the paper industry in the 1940s and 1950s; Robert Canfield, “The Paper Industry,” *Think Magazine*, May 1947.

<sup>23</sup> Fallows, *The Water Lords*, 59.

<sup>24</sup> Misc. letters from the National Forest Products Association, Box 39, FHS.

other organizations remained in constant anticipation of government intervention. In 1947, despite being made well-aware of pulp and paper's frenetic growth, forester Inman Eldredge confessed publicly that he believed the state should buy up more of the cutover lands in the South for the sake of preservation.<sup>25</sup> The SPCA, in conjunction with companies like Union-Bag, began to believe more vehemently than ever that theirs was a quest to prove that the “forest of tomorrow” would be the triumph of private industry.

The demand for paper made this debate more relevant than ever. A National Forest Products Association study from 1953 revealed that it had expanded into thirty-eight states and employed almost 300,000 people in the 1950 Census (two percent of the country's total industrial workforce). Most of those employees lived in the South, and most of them lived in towns with well less than 100,000 people. Forty-one “paper towns,” in fact, had a population less than five hundred. For all intents and purposes, these were essentially company towns. The NFPA also found that 159 paper towns had become communities that were fifty percent “commercially-dependent” upon the industry. In Georgia alone, pulp and paper workers number almost 10,000 by 1950; in the state there were seven towns that the NFPA labeled “paper towns.”<sup>26</sup>

Some companies even made attempts at constructing true company paper towns. Prior to Union's earning the distinction of the world's largest paper mill at one site, a lumber company in Bogalusa, Louisiana, held the record for largest sawmill in one place. The Great Southern Lumber Company mill opened there in 1906, and the Goodyear interests of New York built a city

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<sup>25</sup>Reference to Eldredge from: Address by Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver, Jr., the Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, 1962, 2.

<sup>26</sup> National Forest Products Association, “A Study of Commercial Dependency on the Pulp and Paper Industry,” 1953 (NFPA: New York City, NY), Box 39, Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina. Populations of Georgia towns at this time (for perspective): Atlanta—331,314; Brunswick—17, 954; St. Mary's—1,348; and Savannah—119, 638.

around it later that same year, exclusively to house workers for their sawmill.<sup>27</sup> Bogalusa was the most ambitious project of its kind anywhere in the state or in the South. William H. Sullivan, the sawmill manager in the service of the Goodyears, served as “town boss” when the city was built throughout 1906 and 1907, and then mayor until he died in 1929. The city, built from nothing in less than a year, with several hotels, a YMCA and YWCA, churches of all faiths, and company houses for the workers and supervisors, was called the “Magic City” because it seemed to have come from nowhere. The sawmill closed in 1938 but was replaced as the city's main industry by a paper mill and a chemical plant run by Gaylord Container Corporation. The Gaylord move South would come in the immediate wave of relocation's following Union's lead. According to an International Paper executive from the same era, Bogalusa was also the first lumber company to launch a heavy planting program.<sup>28</sup> It was one of the only paper locations to attempt functioning as a company town, but it was certainly not the only one to tout the benefits of industrial order and scientific management—of resources and of people. Many of these companies believed they were at the forefront of the modern postwar era.

After all, the modern business world relied on a vast network made of paper. The United States already led the world in paper consumption in 1950. Per capita, it increased five times over in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> The American Pulp and Paper Association claimed in 1947 that the “paper trade may be taken as a measure of success of the general business of the country.”<sup>30</sup> If Americans consumed the most paper, this reasoning dictated, then

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<sup>27</sup> Historians are very familiar with company towns in the cotton textile industries, but there has been significantly less illuminated about the villages that sprung up next to sawmills. Social labor histories of cotton textile company towns have been well-documented, most notably by Jacquelyn Down Hall and a collective of scholars at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Porter Interview, 49; SPCA Pamphlet

<sup>29</sup> Cola Parker, “A Young Man's Industry: A Career in Paper Manufacturing,” National Paper Trade Association, New York, 1953.

<sup>30</sup> APPA, “New Horizons,” 10.

they must be the most prosperous of all. In 1947, the average American consumed about 382.5 pounds per capita, versus a paltry 58 pounds in 1899, 144.6 pounds in 1920, and 254 in 1940. World War II had occurred in between, of course, and it was a woods-labor shortage during the war that prompted the industry to pay their workers better. Prior to the war, a woods-worker could expect to make about forty cents an hour; this almost doubled by 1950. By then, a mill worker in Savannah could anticipate a yearly income of about five thousand dollars; in turn, that phenomenon prompted white workers to move into Savannah's growing suburbs. Many of Union Bag's executives did the same. The paper industry was, then, also transparently contributing to the growth of a middle class.

In January of 1955 T.W. Earle, then-president of Gair Woodlands Corporation, proclaimed that the “use of paper” had ceremoniously become an “excellent index to standards of living” in America. Disposability signified disposable income. He delivered the address in front of a small crowd of businessmen at the Savannah Bank and Trust Building with a wall of reporters at the back; the purpose of the meeting was to celebrate fifteen successful years of operation for the SPCA. But Earle presented a series of paper consumption facts and figures that were already known by many of those in attendance.<sup>31</sup> Union and other companies *knew* how much paper Americans were using. They monitored it closely.

In the mid-'50s, the Director of Union gave a speech in front of an organization of business analysts in which he argued *again*, forty years after the cooking bag fiasco, that paper would become the “emancipator” of the housewife.<sup>32</sup> This time, it would do so by replacing the laundering of household items like bed sheets and aprons with paper equivalents. The middle

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<sup>31</sup>Address by T.W. Earle, Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association

<sup>32</sup>Donald J. Hardenbrook, “Union Bag-Camp Looks at the Coming Age of Paper and Wood,” *The Analysts Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Proceedings, Tenth Annual Convention, National Federation of Financial Analysts Societies, May 20 to 23, 1957 (Jun., 1957), 135-141, 136.

class no longer lived in the city, though, and the mill in Savannah was quickly coming to symbolize something completely different to lower income residents. A neighborhood named Hudson Hill, just four blocks from the mill entrance, saw a mass exodus of white residents starting in 1940. The smell—the one some had called the “money” smell—was so pungent from up close that property values dropped dramatically and quickly. Black families moved into the area, which caused more white flight; it was a cycle familiar to scholars of American suburbanization. At least one Hudson Hill resident remembers picking blackberries at the fence of the Mary Calder golf course, fingers sticking through the steel twining; the paper industry may have been creating a middle class, but the actual mill reminded some people every day what they did not have.<sup>33</sup>

Union could hide Hudson Hills easily. Their PR material told a different story. Americans could not see the paper process happen—the tree into paper into home necessities—but companies like Union convinced them to believe fiercely in the finished product. Out in the woodlands, the process remained more direct—which is why organizations like the SPCA also had to promote an ideological narrative of the tree-grower as creator and manager. By the mid-1950s, forty percent of America's forestland stood in the following states, most of them southern: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma. With the proper scientific management and “with reasonable care” (a phrase with slippery meanings), the “huge southern pine forests could be made self-perpetuating.”<sup>34</sup> Earle's hypothesis that “thousands of southerners are learning each year that it's smart business to treat their trees as a crop” would never have surprised anyone in Savannah. Kraft had won “Dixie” over, ceremoniously in 1935 and practically in the years since,

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<sup>33</sup> From Weslynn M Allen, *Trace: Connections to the Past* (Tate, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> SPCA Pamphlets.

and tree farmers branching out in wide circles from Savannah began to understand that their timber was synonymous with the growing global reach of paper manufacturing.

Meanwhile, their land was beginning to look different than it had before, but more uniform. Rows and rows of trees began to, literally and for the first time, resemble pine plantations. Paper-makers prefer trees close together, because cutting them down is much easier that way. Imagine the mechanisms of a cotton-picker but with a longer wing-span, and with much mightier blades attached. But pines do not naturally choose to huddle so close, and when planted in these neat, tidy, crop-like rows, what suffers is the bottom growth where insects, plants, and small animals now end up in total darkness. None of this was public knowledge. One of St. Regis' executives—who participated in a similar planting expansion for his company in the early 1950s—suggested that “a lack of public knowledge” regarding exactly how the pulp and paper industry operated may have been a “direct function” of the industry's very wish.<sup>35</sup> Statements regarding reforestation remained triumphant, and basic. The Union Bag Annual Reports boasted that the company had been practicing what they viewed as successful re-generation for years, replacing worn-out patches of cut-over pine with a “superior stock” of new trees. The company's foresters reported that newer areas of Union trees produced a greater wood fiber yield and consistently proved more resistant to disease. They believed, in all sincerity, that they had produced a “super tree” and a superior method of planting and harvesting it in the South.<sup>36</sup>

The 1950s was also a period of development of modernized machinery, new capital, and mergers and acquisitions within the paper industry (mostly vertical)--basically a consolidation period for the paper men. Weyerhaeuser expanded with its paper division, then spread into

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with James E. Kussman, Conducted by Elwood Maunder for the Forest History Society, New York, 1975, 52 and 79.

<sup>36</sup> Union-Camp Corporation, “Annual Report,” Year 1969, FHS.



newsprint, but most companies went in the opposite direction during this time.<sup>37</sup> By 1955, paper became the top industrial growth leader in the country. Its executives were lauded—an older generation of men bred not by universities but by sales experience, a former generation siphoning cream from the top of the postwar boom. Calder achieved so much notoriety in the 1950s, in fact, that he began to endorse an elite whiskey brand called Lord Calvert. In May of 1951, a full page ad of Calder appeared in *Life* magazine; he stood in his New York office, crisp and silver-haired, holding the “whiskey of distinction.” On the bottom of the page, Lord Calvert's copywriters summarized Calder's career in a few sentences, concluding that he'd created “largest company in his field” out of basically nothing.<sup>38</sup>

And in 1956, in the spirit of consolidation and bottom line growth, the aging Sandy Calder finally came around to the idea of a merger. The elder Calder swore off earlier merger offers in the 1930s and 1940s, most notably from St. Regis Paper Company. It would be a native southern firm, Camp Manufacturing, that finally wooed Union into consolidation—the same Camp that fed St. Regis its Kraft supply from a plant next door in Franklin, Virginia.<sup>39</sup> Camp was originally founded in 1887, in Franklin, by the three Camp Brothers: James, Paul, and Robert. It was that year that they purchased a steam sawmill in Isle of Wight County—where, for most of the nineteenth century, a confluence of forces had made Eastern Virginia a miniature Mecca of lumber production. Timber from the region arrived by rail and by water (the Blackwater River), and finished products were sent out to growing cities in both the Mid-Atlantic states and the South. As they had in Georgia, sawmill towns in Virginia were often vital

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<sup>37</sup>“Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Problems: Organizational Capabilities and Strategy and Structure of Large Pulp and Paper Firms, 1950-1980,” Center for Paper Business and Industrial Studies, a Sloan Foundation Industry Center.

<sup>38</sup> *Life* Advertisements accessed in their online archive; “Lord Calvert: Whiskey of Distinction,” May 14, 1951.

<sup>39</sup> Financial data from report by Haskins and Sells, CPAs (New York), Union Bag and Paper Company Annual Report, 1954, FHS.

but then brittle—dependent upon materials from the hinterlands, weak in the sense that any market fluctuations could spell disaster. The brothers, already knee-deep in the lumber industry, imagined earlier than others did in the South that timber might be best managed as a crop—and not just a resource. In an age when most companies simply bought timber *rights* to avoid land taxes, the Camps thought more of the value of the land itself and its powers of regeneration. In 1907, *American Lumberman* magazine called the brothers a cadre of “virile Virginians” and exclaimed with some pomp that they were “household names throughout the Atlantic Coast states from Pensacola to Boston.”<sup>40</sup>

Camp began production of Kraft paper in 1936 after a merger with Chesapeake Corporation of Virginia. Not long after, the company came under the direction of Hugh Camp—James' son. He was, by all accounts, the complete opposite of Alex Calder. He was a man of very few words, but known for a soft kind of compassion and a calm demeanor even in the most stressful of situations. Under his hand, Camp expanded its market reach with the production of a bleach plant at the Franklin site. This is the moment that Union had been waiting for. They had long searched for the opportunity to enter the bleached (i.e. white) paper market, and Camp had been on the lookout for the chance to merge with the capacities and resources of a larger company. Fifty-two percent of Camp's output was bleached paper. They also owned a converting plant at Richmond and almost 240,000 acres of timberland in Virginia and the surrounding states.

But Camp typically sold its products within 350 miles of its operations; the company would benefit in the merger by gaining a greater sales reach.<sup>41</sup> Hugh Camp and Sox Calder, both

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<sup>40</sup>Entry from *American Lumberman* Magazine, June 15, 1907, Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina; Also see: Parke Rouse, Jr., *The Timber Tycoons: The Camp Families of Virginia and Florida, 1887-1987* (The William Byrd Press, 1988).

<sup>41</sup>Hardenbrook, “Coming Age of Paper,” 138.

second generation paper-men at the helms of companies handed down from their fathers, reportedly struck up a friendship that aided in the speed and efficiency of life after the merger. The joining of the two “Dixie Kraft” giants created in 1956 a combined sales of \$163 million. By 1976, that figure would reach the billion dollar mark.<sup>42</sup> Sox's main goals as he assumed the helm of a newly-minted Union-Camp Corporation would involve maintaining the “future” ideal that his father and the SPCA had so carefully put into place. He felt emboldened to do so by the acquisition of Camp—a “southern” company that would boost their overall image and provide for them the level of vertical integration to breed more and more growth.

Union-Camp had to talk about the southerner a lot. It was no secret that its executives were mostly in New York, sipping on Lord Calvert's whiskey in mahogany offices. So supporting the other side of that image—the one of southern booster—required a lot of direct communication with Georgians. The company's message to the landowners from whom they needed consistent leases? “Your woodland is a permanent part of the forests of the South.” Individual landowners continued to possess seventy-four percent of all the forest land in the South, and pulp mills (Union-Camp's included) bought eighty percent of their wood from these private landowners. Many of the leases Union entered into in the 1930s and 1940s were active, but the timber had to sit for dozens of years, in some cases, before it would be considered mature enough to cut by conservationist standards. Even when company lands peaked in the decades to come, experts realized, they would still be growing only half of their own wood for production. A new breed of “PR foresters” stood at the helm of a new form of eco-progressivism, one based

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<sup>42</sup>McClelland, “Union-Camp History,” 21-22.

in conservation ethic but also business growth. They managed forests, and they managed people, both in the hope of a lucrative future.<sup>43</sup>

In a post-war America, gluttony seemed less a sin for middle class (and mostly white) Americans.<sup>44</sup> By the late 1950s, Union-Camp had an upward of four thousand accounts that represented a decent cross-section of American commerce and industry.<sup>45</sup> According to the National Industrial Conference Board's 1952 study, the pulp and paper industry had experienced the most rapid relative annual growth rate from 1899 to 1950—at three and a half percent. Paperboard on its own had seen a four percent growth rate. By 1956, Americans consumed over 36 million tons of disposable paper annually.<sup>46</sup>

Making trees, and then making them into paper, required more and more workers as paper demand increased worldwide. The American Pulp and Paper Association launched a public relations campaign in 1954, insisting that the paper industry offered dozens of unique career opportunities not for the “wage earning” set but instead for those (white) Americans interested in investing their intellectual capabilities in a globally-reaching, ever-growing industry. By 1953, the industry employed at least 268,000 Americans—and probably more considering many woods workers remained undocumented.<sup>47</sup> One of the APPA pamphlets—entitled “A Guide to Career Opportunities in the Paper Industry”—suggested on no fewer than seven separate pages that women were “welcome” to apply for positions of all kinds; no similar efforts were made to extend offers to African-Americans or other minorities. The stark reality of the industry

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<sup>43</sup>The leasing system in the southern pine plantations is well-known but had been little-documented or contextualized in works of American social history. However, it has been explored in works on other parts of the world where industrial giants have swooped into underdeveloped countries and initiated similar program—the Tropics and Indonesia, for example. For one example, see: Julian Evans, *Plantation Forestry in the Tropics: Tree Planting for Industrial, Social, and Environmental Purposes* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>44</sup>Max K. Gilstrap, “Savannah Puts History Behind,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 7, 1957.

<sup>45</sup> Hardenbrook, “Coming Age of Paper,” 139.

<sup>46</sup> National Industrial Conference Board, “Growth Patterns in the Paper Industry,” 1952.

<sup>47</sup> Statistics on the industry in the 1950s from: American Pulp and Paper Association, “Study of Community Dependency on the Paper and Pulp Industry,” Published 1953.

is that although it did employ 500,000 workers by 1953, this number included foresters, woodlands managers, mill employees *and loggers*—the two latter of which were, despite the APPA's sugar-sweet claims, primarily still wage-earning (and low ones, at that) positions.<sup>48</sup> And despite the material presented very blatantly that it was not to be read by the “wage-earning set,” the sketched illustration on the same page depicted a lumber man walking with an axe out into nearby high woods.<sup>49</sup>

The American Pulp and Paper Association also policed the idea that paper mills actually helped to *make* middle-class communities. If this illusion became dented on any grand scale, then the industry's precarious place as a harbinger of economic prosperity would be all but gone. “Most pulp or paper mills are located in small towns,” the APPA promised, “which means that management can easily feel the pulse of the community's [needs].” Savannah did not fit that mold—the site of the country's largest paper mill—but the APPA skirted that obvious realization somehow. They wanted potential tree-growers to believe that the paper industry made model communities. What was also heavily implied was that timber owners might make enough money from the industry to move into more urban communities, live the American dream in a more sedentary fashion—with a suburban home and a grocery store nearby.<sup>50</sup>

In turn, Georgia had become, in Earle's words, a “natural tree farm.” Earle was a promoter, an organizational booster, but he did get the grander parts of the historical narrative correct when he said that the: “industrial and agricultural expansion drama involving the South has featured principally the region's shift from a one-crop cotton economy to diversified [including tree] farming, livestock production, new factories, and a growing chemical

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<sup>48</sup> American Pulp and Paper Association, “A Guide to Career Opportunities in the Paper Industry,” Prepared by Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin, Published in New York City, 1954, Forest History Society, Durham, North Carolina (Misc. Vertical Files), 5-9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> APPA, “A Guide to Careers,” 23.

industry.”<sup>51</sup> A web of financial, for-profit, non-profit, and corporate institutions made this new order possible. This was a South where banks underwrote plans for distributing seedlings and loans for tree farming.<sup>52</sup> This was a South where seedlings were also grown and nurtured at the state universities, like UGA. Earle's exuberant summation that “with the new paper mills came cash!” made it all seem so simple an equation. Many Americans, many southerners, wanted to believe that a post-World War II world was just better. And that the “better” would stick around for a very long time. The paper men, in turn, had officially bought into the very illusions about the industry that they had been crafting so carefully for their workers and timber farmers.

It would be this period—between the mid-1950s and the early 1970s—that Union and other large-scale manufacturers could still sell southerners the *idea* that unhindered growth in industry was at its core an inherently *good*, unconnected to broader concerns of environmental awareness. But within this same frame, those illusions of the paper industry's inherent progressivism, of its dedication to conservation and melodious land management, began to fray at the outer edges. Thus, it was also during this period that paper-industry promotional materials shifted even more to a focus on the *trees* themselves, in an attempt to make them seem somewhat inspirational. The SPCA released a pamphlet in the 1960s that sought to do nothing but define them. A tree?: “You can climb it, get cool under it, make a bow and arrow out of it, build a house in it; but did you know you can drive on it, take a picture with it, blow your nose in it, drink from it, and go into orbit because of it?” In other words, trees were both a natural thing and a usable thing. When trees remained crops, according to the SPCA, they remained endless possibilities. The “forest of tomorrow” was both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>John N. Popham, “Pulp, Paper Output Expanding in South--\$100 million Facilities within Next Few Years,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1951, 28.

According to Union-Camp's Head Director during this period, those goals for the future would be achieved with the help of advertising and marketing firms; continued industrial success meant advertising it just right—and, in this case, as if the fantasized future might have already happened.<sup>53</sup> Union-Camp needed Americans planting trees—but not in cities, and not for shade; for landowners unwilling to live out the practices themselves, the company offered to take over those lands through leases. This was a crucial moment in the professionalization of the tree. As more and more of them were removed to pine plantations, fewer southerners lived *with* them. In possession of these plantations—often through 99-year, iron-clad leases, Union-Camp held the keys to the kingdom.

It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that many of the rural Georgia lands originally purchased by the Union Bag incarnation were ready for harvesting by Union Camp; this fact is partially-responsible for a delayed reaction by smaller landowners to the accumulation of pine plantations, and for why they so readily bought into the idea of the pristine forest future. And since part of the standard lease agreement read that Union must replenish any timber they cut, much of the Woodlands Department's efforts had been invested in conservation efforts as well as “tree priming” tactics and mixed-use strategies like hunting rentals and water recreation on the rivers.

Union-Camp and the SPCA both maintained an image of “helpers” to area land owners, even as signs of environmental damage began to multiply. The SPCA's photos showed pulp and paper company foresters giving landowners “advice” on tree farming. Typically meetings were a part of the Pilot Forest programs, scheduled and purposefully connected with related public relations events. With a stamp of seeming authority, the pamphlets also explained cycles of tree growth, as well as the more technical processes of thinning and marking seed trees. Here were

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<sup>53</sup> Hardenbrook, “Coming Age of Paper,” 135.

the basic methods that the SPCA and other organizations included in a “managed planting plan”:

One—larger trees should be cut—particularly if they're nearly stopped growing; they could be turned very easily into saw logs and replaced with seedling-planting. Two, crowded stands of younger and smaller pine needed to be thinned for pulpwood to prevent overall loss of wood growth in the future. And three, rapid-growing, well-spaced trees should be left to grow for the time being. The land would reach a kind of climax when it bore a great number of “seed trees”—healthy, well-formed pines at least ten inches in diameter at breast height; there could be left in places to perpetuate reforestation. The SPCA told its timber owning “students” that they could “lend Mother Nature a hand” by following these prescriptions.<sup>54</sup>

Once Union-Camp began to cut, Georgians involved in the leasing system began to suspect that they would not benefit as much from them as they had originally been told. It is at this juncture that southern tree-growers began to look a lot more like employees than “forest managers.” According to foresters Eldredge and Heyward—often responsible for surveying lands—local residents commonly torched small patches of Union-Camp trees in what could be seen as an act of protest—most likely motivated by a local fear of loss of control of land use. One must not be quick, however, to throw away these incidents as juvenile expressions of control. While the local timber men obviously preferred for the trees to be in their physical and economic control, their actions do bear the signs of protest against Union Camp as a corporate power.<sup>55</sup>

The idea that paper production became synonymous with stability, comfort, and permanence then became an increasingly difficult image to maintain. The solid contrarian voice came, ironically, via the paper industry's own paycheck. In 1957, a University of Georgia report on paper mills found that “tree farming is large scale and relatively impersonal for the workers.”

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<sup>54</sup>SPCA Pamphlets, Box F21, Forest History Society: “Paper: Your Fabulous Friend” and “Cutting Woodlands.”

<sup>55</sup> Incidents discussed in: Heyward Interview, FHS, Eldredge Interviews, FHS.



The “Report on the Place of the Pulp and Paper Industry in the Georgia Economy,” prepared at the behest of fourteen Georgia paper mills (and financed by them through the university's business school), gives us a glimpse into the self-preservation processes of the southern paper complex in the face of challenges to it. Until the 2000s, this document was kept confidential. And while it would be impossible to *prove* that the newly-formed Union-Camp participated in the anonymous project, it would be perhaps even more unimaginable to try and suggest that it did not.

The report cemented the idea that growth in the paper sector was never and would never be just about manufacturing growth. The “epochal shift” in the southern economy—the diversification of agriculture, expansion of manufacturing, and use of forest resources all combined—had created a singular and extraordinary connection between paper and forestry—the “natural tree farm” of Earle's imagination.<sup>56</sup> Back in the 1920s, forestry experts like Herbert Kayton fought for the prevention of fires in states like Georgia as well as for a conviviality from tree-growers about the potential financial boon on their properties. This 1957 report found that a “general apathy on the part of woodland owners to the tree-growing possibilities of their properties” continued well into the second part of the century; it had not, as industry experts and executives imagined, disappeared into the ether with the onset of postwar prosperity.<sup>57</sup> Unlike earlier rural life and cultural folkways in mill towns of the nineteenth and early-twentieth South, it claimed, tree-farming did “not constitute a way of life, as does traditional American farming, where the operation is usually both a home and a means of earning a living.”<sup>58</sup> Historians have, as previously mentioned, thoroughly de-bunked the myth that harmony existed wherever home

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<sup>56</sup> University of Georgia, School of Business, “Report on the Place of the Pulp and Paper Industry in the Georgia Economy,” 1957, 1.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

and work coincided; it was, in contrast, these situations that often made for the most difficult roads to subsistence. Yet, in the 1950s, the rural ideal had been put on perhaps a higher-than-ever pedestal as suburbs seeped out of American towns and southern cities like Atlanta became bastions of technological and industrial growth and a generally quickened pace of life. This was the dawn of the freeway in America, both physically and symbolically, and many people began to romanticize rural life for its perceived silence and quaintness, as well as for the ease of space and distance between work and the home. Historians have done a stellar job of dissecting where and how this nostalgia develops.<sup>59</sup> The report—though technical in nature—did address that all of this doubt constituted a “vague psychological factor in the problems which gave rise to [the] study.” This sentiment suggests that Georgia's own farmers might have expected a recreation of an idyllic rural life they themselves knew never truly existed.

The study then recommended that the fourteen pulp and paper companies might give ample thought to such psychological need in their public relations materials and in their land acquisition policies.<sup>60</sup> It would be best to not approach forest practices on private lands in the way that APPA representative W.B. Greeley set out in 1950, for example. He said that southern farmers would have to be trained “by teacher, or by policeman.” Some like Greeley believed that policemen could dress up as the teachers, so to speak.<sup>61</sup> Companies like Union-Camp—and other types of manufacturers in residence along the Savannah River—became quite sure of their own image of community involvement and good farming practices. They viewed helpfulness and cheerfulness as a currency that would allow them to cruise through decades of dependence

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<sup>59</sup> Jeremy Burchardt, *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change in England Since 1800* (I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2002); Michael Thompson, *Fleeing the City: Studies in the Culture and Politics of Anti-Urbanism* (Macmillan, 2009); M.F. Bunce and Michael Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape* (Psychology Press, 1994); Greg Logsdon, *The Mother of All Arts: Agrarianism and the Creative Impulse* (University Press of Kentucky, 2007); Jane Marie Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality: Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870-1970* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

<sup>60</sup> Report, 6.

<sup>61</sup> Greeley, “A Rational Approach to Forest Practices.”

on private growers. But they were battling these “psychological needs” of the very people growing their trees. Psychology did not fit comfortably into the “forest of tomorrow” vision. For Union-Camp's “empire” of pine plantations to function properly, growers had to act as machines.

In a modern city, the idea of healthy trees was just as crucial an image as clean hospitals or paved roads. But rural residents who leased to companies like Union-Camp saw another side of paper production that made them question the inspirational or holistic factors of the land. The reality of their situation was a loss of control. And control—in the southern woods—was often the only thing some of these landowners had ever possessed. Complaints related to these more abstract concerns were slow to emerge against the paper companies, if only because between 1930 and around 1955 the “trees are jobs” and “trees are cash” mentalities remained so firmly in place that to speak out against them was social and economic blasphemy. So even as all of these illusions of a permanent and egalitarian industry came tumbling down, many Georgians and other southerners remained simultaneously grateful to and intimidated by the industry. All these competing images made for a confusing task for public relations experts. They were being instructed to bow to a “psychological need” that may have not actually existed *without* their presence.

The report also suggested that further purchases of land should be limited by legislative action. In fact, the main point of this study seems to have been to investigate for the fourteen companies what the best practices might be in acquiring *more* land while accumulating decidedly *fewer* lawsuits. Its findings perpetuated the long-fermenting idea that the “cycle of cutting and replacing [could] go on indefinitely” if lands were managed properly. What this psychological angle added was the necessity of treating leasers well; the indefinite timeline of the pines in the

South would also be dependent on the companies' treatment of those rural dwellers that they did business with. It would also be necessary, the NLMA reminded its members, to embrace the concept of industrial forestry as directly equivalent to public forestry. This meant that private enterprise “provided the most effective management” for forests but that the importance of state agencies could never be underestimated. The paper industry would often be picked apart over allegations of monopolistic price fixing, but its balance of private and public endeavors cannot be overlooked.<sup>62</sup>

In 1961, a forestry student at Duke University recognized that little had been done to explore southerners' reactions to and attitudes toward the paper industry. Even then, fifty years ago, there existed a sense that in the South this particular industry had been given a “free pass” because it had the reputation of “saving” a land and its people. Charles Miller's main problem—the study is fearfully short—was that without sources from the forestry records or the plant owners, he relied too heavily on the base reactions from North Carolina land owners. He asked them only a few questions apiece. He did find that public relations teams—and foresters in the Woodlands Divisions were often part and parcel of this group—were often timber owners' only source of real ecological information. Of the timber owners in the state who came into contact with paper industry promoters, fifty-three percent thought favorably of planting for them. Of the North Carolinians who did not have any interaction with the industry, only twenty-five percent expressed any interest in participating. Clearly the personalized interactions were necessary for the leasing programs to make inroads, but even as late as the 1960s many rural southerners

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<sup>62</sup> Program of Forest Conservation, National Lumber Manufacturers Association, Washington D.C., Box 93, FHS.

continued to avoid those interactions, both purposefully (the “apathy”) and accidentally). They were quickly, however, becoming a minority among rural Georgians.<sup>63</sup>

The SPCA could not hide from these concerns either, and particularly when, in late 1962, the Assistant Secretary of the Interior brought the issues of land management and rural quality of life to their own annual meeting in Atlanta. John Carver traveled down from Washington to bestow upon the South a combination of praise and confusion over the industrial ownership of timber lands. In the journey from wasted resource to crop, the southern pine had emerged triumphant over trees in other parts of the country. “Trees as a crop...is still a slogan in the Northwest,” Carver offered, “but in the South it is already a way of life.” He also complimented the SPCA on the ubiquity of their pilot forest and public school programs. But the main concern he (and, via observations, the federal government) had pertained to the mixed-management that industrial and corporate tenants had begun to practice on the timber land they leased.

For a large company like Union-Camp, it made sense to rent out part of a massive land-area to hunting clubs, for example. If there were lands that had to sit idle for more than a few years, the company (and others like it) looked for ways to diversify the commodification of them. However, the smaller owners, Carver passionately argued, could not conceptualize periods of idleness or mixed-use. Without the infrastructure and capital to back up conservation-related strategies, smaller tree-farmers simply sat on lands without profit for long periods of time. Carver insisted that timber is every bit about class. And it was, indeed. The paper men had paced themselves, invested themselves, stacked up leases so that their profits would continue to swell even under the guise of conservation. Carver begged the SPCA (and, in turn, the pulp and paper industrialists) for a better definition of “good citizenship” when it came to trees. For the

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<sup>63</sup>Charles R. Miller, *Reactions and Attitudes of Private Forest Landowners in North Carolina Toward the Pulp and Paper Industry*, Master’s Thesis, Duke University, Department of Forestry, submitted August 1961.

“old boy out on the farm,” he concluded, simply cutting in the traditional ways still made the most sense for immediate profit. The ultimate irony of Carver's 1962 plea is that within it he made weaker calls for water conservation and the establishment of riparian rights. Both issues would be addressed via environmentalists in two decades to come.<sup>64</sup> More crucial pieces were falling off the image of the industry's progressivism.

Union's sheer size also began to attract legislation—just as the UGA study had predicted. In the late 1960s, a series of Supreme Court cases helped to resolve the question of leasing and cutting on lands that Union “borrowed” from local growers. Most of them addressed issues of control—namely, who controlled all the parts of the land that did *not* have to do with the trees themselves. An owner named Dyal had signed a lease with Union for the rights to his land (near Waycross) for a period of 99 years; this was rather common. Union, as lessee, was required to pay the standard annual five percent of the value of the land and promised no cutting on the land for the first seven years. Dyal took the lease payments as capital gains on his income taxes, categorized as rents receivable. But Dyal also wanted to use the market value of timber—which was increasing, obviously—as gain as well, even though Union claimed that he had given up all economic interest in the land for the duration of the lease period. The court ruled against Dyal for one main reason—because Union promised that they would replenish any timber they took within that 99 years, there would be no actual timber gains on the land. This ruling took place in 1963. Two years later, the case was reopened. A re-investigation found in favor of Dyal, because “conservation could not legally prevent income.” In addition, it was found that Union could reasonably carry on a naval stores or turpentine industry on the property because it

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<sup>64</sup> Carver, SPCA speech, 2-6.

possessed full rights; in turn, Dyal could also come back and oversee those processes himself, while paying a fee.<sup>65</sup>

The debates over land values in leasing and cutting continued throughout the 1960s. In *Union Bag-Camp Paper Corporation Vs. U.S.* (1966), the court held for the company as a taxpayer with all rights—including mining, cutting, farming, hunting, subletting, road building, and the like. The basic question was whether the taxpayer (Union, in this case) could deduct lands as a business expense or if they were, because they were producing money-making trees, a form of capital. The definition of “true lease” remained in question. Most of the lease agreements held for the seven-year waiting period for cutting. And the removal of trees was restricted to the annual growth of pulpwood-size timber. The rental agreements gave back five percent of the annual value of the leased lands to the owner. Five to ten cents per acre were allotted for a forestry fund that continued the work of fire prevention programs. As mentioned in previous chapters, Union had a penchant for using the last two clauses as feathers in their cap of the promotion of industrial order. They touted their Woodlands Division for providing “free” advisement to the owners of leased hinterlands. In reality, these legal contracts required them to do so, as part of the longer-term management of the timber land.<sup>66</sup>

The key point in these lawsuits was one of exclusivity. Just as the boosters in Savannah government had handed over a legal situation to Union in 1936 that allowed for exclusive rights to the environment along the Savannah River, these lease agreements gave the company a full-ranging power to utilize the land—its water, its soil, of course its trees—in any way they “saw fit.” These were blind pacts. But this is not to insinuate that southerners involved in the dealings were ignorant, or uninformed. Union had become a company to trust, in the view of many,

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<sup>65</sup> *Dyal Versus United States*, 1963, 1965.

<sup>66</sup> *Union Bag-Camp Paper Corporation V. United States*, 1963 and 1966.

because their business practices were so intimately tied to new job creation, progressive tree-farming, and community “growth.”<sup>67</sup>

In 1969, the New York courts finally recognized the worsening problem of disparity in economic consequence near Savannah. A man named Whalen challenged Union-Camp that year—not about timber leasing, but instead about riparian rights. It would prove a nice activist prelude to Fallows' and Nader's' arrival in Savannah the following summer. But no one knew that yet. Whalen owned a small bit of land downstream from the Savannah mill's point of contact with the river—rather, its point of pollution with the river. His fishing rights became threatened, he claimed, because not only were the fish disappearing, but the water quality also frightened those around him from purchasing his lot. The court identified Whalen as a “lower riparian owner” and eventually sided with him. The judge's reasoning? That a small amount of damage is still damage. The precedents the judge pulled from had established that as long as damage is “not unsubstantial,” then it is eligible for the calling forth of an injunction. In other words, damages of one hundred dollars to a riparian owner could be the equivalent of damages in thousands of dollars; in both cases, the owner's livelihood had been affected.<sup>68</sup>

The younger Calder had to address all of these concerns and many more as his company physically expanded in exponential fashion. It expanded without much care given to the plight of its workers and its leasers, mostly because it wielded so much economic power. The “modern” history of the company (from 1960 forward) became a frenetic era of new mills, new machines, the aforementioned “aggressive acquisition program,” and a move into the housing sector. These were boom times in the American economy—boom times built on ideas of progress, order, science. Viewed in isolation, separated from the ecological questions and the questions of

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> *Whalen Versus Union Bag and Paper Company* (208 N.Y. 1), 1969.



fairness in leasing, Union-Camp's growth patterns appear nothing less than impressive.<sup>69</sup> In quick succession, the company acquired Allied Container Company (from Boston), Universal Bag Company (based in Pennsylvania), Miller and Miller (out of Atlanta), and Eastern Box Company (in Baltimore). 1960 brought a focus on the opening of Midwest markets. The following year, Calder bought Write Right—Union-Camp's entre into school supplies, notably paper tablets. In 1965, the company increased its global reach with the purchase of Cartonajes Herrero—a corrugated box company in Barcelona, Spain.

In 1965, Union-Camp opened its third mill at Prattville, Alabama. In 1984 Union would invest \$485 million in a state-of-the-art mill at Eastover, South Carolina—run by John Munford, which, they claimed, ran at the “peak of environmental standards.” Its employees would all be salaried. Executives proclaimed that a “Southern empire” had finally taken root—one built on the back of a less-ideal past. Union-Camp did brag, during this later period, that the Savannah mill had managed to go “60 years without a single labor disruption.” This was the most self-perpetuating myth of the paper industry. In the 1940s, the APPA wrote that its member-mills had been blissfully “free of labor troubles because of the friendly spirit which generally existed between employer and employee” (except, to note, for several violent episodes starting in 1903 at Holyoke).<sup>70</sup> Somehow the paper giants had convinced the American mind that it was a sector free of labor union strife. One, that was not entirely true. And two, in the South it *was* true because unionization was scarce, discouraged, and often violently dangerous if attempted.

The larger marketing image had to stay afloat to support this kind of growth, though. In 1967, Union Camp launched a massive new (and costly) advertising campaign in *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Business Week*, highlighting the “newer” roles of paper in American life—most “exciting”

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<sup>69</sup>McClelland, “Union Camp,” 22.

<sup>70</sup> APPA, “New Horizons,” 12.

among them perfume and the general “ingredients for romance.” They wanted Americans to identify them alongside companies like Coca-Cola or Playtex—part of the home, part of daily life. All of this signified an attempt on the part of Calder to keep alive his father's vision of a paper “world of tomorrow.” For a while, the company seemed convinced they might be able to make the concept of paperboard housing as believable and successful as automatic washing machines or cloth seats in affordable sedans. In one print ad, a nauseatingly-happy family looks upon their new house and exclaims: “We bought out house at the Union Camp store!” In press conferences, the company called itself a “progressive enterprise.”<sup>71</sup> The food industry remained its largest customer (because of that industry's consistent packaging needs), and it is largely because of that fact that Union-Camp embraced saving and conservation in its public relations material. They claimed to “use all of the tree”--perhaps true, but at what cost?<sup>72</sup>

The 1960s, meanwhile, was a tumultuous time along the Savannah River corridor. In 1967, Union-Camp finally purchased the 440-acre tract of land their mill sat on. The original contract with the city allowed them up to 99 years of graduated rent of the space—which, as previously mentioned, was as low as three hundred dollars in the first decade of residence. They purchased a convenient three years before the rent would actually flip over into the territory of the land's practical value—by the 1960s a quarter of a million dollars. By this point, though, the mill itself was worth almost four million dollars, if not more. In July of 1968, one year after Union-Camp became owners en lieu of tenants, a treatment pond at Savannah's American Cyanamid mill exploded, shooting 30 million gallons of waste directly into nearby water sources. In response the company only built a larger dyke. The Water Board ordered them to clean up the infected area, but enforcement of regulations like this was wafer-thin in the 1960s. American

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<sup>71</sup> Fallows, *The Water Lords*, 54.

<sup>72</sup> Union Camp, “Annual Report,” 1965, 1967, FHS.

Cyanamid, Savannah Sugar, and Continental Can would complete the industrial picture of the Savannah River by the late 1960s. American Cyanamid was considered a “late-comer” to the area and remained throughout its occupation of the river much more concerned with its relationship to corporate headquarters than its relationship with Savannah.<sup>73</sup> It employed 500 people locally to make things like titanium dioxide—the white dye that makes the “M’s” on M and M’s. It was responsible for much of the acid pollution that Savannah would deal with in the following decades.

Calder spent more and more time in New York, surveying his “empire” from afar. Union Camp headquarters moved from Manhattan to Wayne, New York, in 1969; the move seemed to signify the company's fall from an innovation-maker to a more comfortable outfit—comfortable with its wealth, loosening its belt at Thanksgiving dinners so to speak. A *Times* reporter visited the new buildings in February of 1970 and called it “light and airy.” The new offices were “surrounded by woods, lawns, ponds, and a scattering of transplanted Southern pines trees that have helped to make the company what it is.” It was as if Union Camp could sit back and take a breath, after nearly one hundred years of rat-racing with other paper companies to gain an adequate share of the market. By 1970, Union made one-third of its money from non-paper profits. Just ten years earlier, the company had been virtually made of paper. The newer inroads in chemicals, plastics, minerals, and land development had paid for the new headquarters in Wayne—where Calder's office overlooked a serene pond and a little patch of young pine.<sup>74</sup>

Four months after Sox Calder broke in his new office chair, Jim Fallows would weave his way down from Harvard to Savannah on a grimy bus and turn Union-Camp's newfound comfort upside down. But it was certainly not that Savannah residents and other coastal Georgians had

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<sup>73</sup> Fallows, *The Water Lords*, 46.

<sup>74</sup> “More than Scenery Changed at Union Camp,” *The New York Times* 8 February 1970.

not been exposed to environmental activism prior to the summer of 1970. There had already been a series of Water Conferences in the city—the resulting corrective mandates of which Union-Camp had yet to put into place when Fallows and the team arrived. Also, TAPPI had hosted a paper re-use symposium in Savannah in 1969. The concepts of recycling were new in American business, but not unexplored.<sup>75</sup> TAPPI was an organization that had evolved on the wave of activism and government reform—both of which will be analyzed in detail in the next, and final, chapter. Participation in the conference was so low that it barely made a mention in the local or the trade papers.<sup>76</sup> Thus, on the cusp of the 1970s, the Savannah plants were still able to live in a bit of a dream world—one in which their brute strength as strongholds in the community (not necessarily culturally, but in the form of paychecks and revenues) allowed them to continually skim the milk when it came to new environmental regulations. No one was beating anyone's door down to change things. Union-Camp was still in a metaphorical bed with city employees. And those in the hinterlands had signed off of thousands of acres of their own land for periods of up to 99 years. As of 1970, the United States had six percent of the world's population inside its borders but consumed forty-five percent of the world's paper.

As the 1970s approached, Calder moved beyond the paper, lumber and plywood games to a seventy-five percent interest in the Chicago-based Branigar Organization, with vested interest in residential developments like The Landings (near Savannah—at Skidaway Island), Champion Hills (in Hendersonville, North Carolina), and the Galina Territory (Galina, Illinois). Calder was, in this sense, waging his company's future on a permanent sense of comfort—a suburban comfort that, in turn, relied on the consistency of safe and clean things like drinking water, city sanitation,

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<sup>75</sup> Carl A. Zimring, *Cash for Your Trash: Scrap Recycling in America* (Rutgers University Press, 2009); Martin Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Finn Arne Jorgensen, *Making a Green Machine: The Infrastructure of Beverage Container Recycling* (Rutgers University Press, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> *Pulp and Paper*, 1969.

and pollution-free air. That modern Savannah and its growing suburbs would continue to have these things seemed as much of a given as it did in most American cities—before the environmental movement sprouted its full wings, and before the average American (or southerner) began to comprehend that there were long-term consequences to industrial growth and suburbanization. Still, the paper industry was new enough to trick some folks into believing that it actually *represented* modernity somehow. In May of 1970, a reporter at *Harper's Magazine* named Marshall Frady commented that when a [Union-Camp] paper mill was constructed in a little Alabama town,” (and this was Prattville, of course) it tinged everything “with a vague reek.” And Frady claimed that the state's governor would comment on these mornings, when the sulphur took over: “Yeah, that's the smell of money. She does smell sweet, don't she?”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Quotes from Marshall Frady, “The View From Hilton Head,” *Harper's Magazine* May 1970, 103-112.

## CHAPTER 5: THE WATER LORDS

*“It can always be left to industry to tout the benefits of its operation of the community.”*

(Ralph Nader, in the Forward to *The Water Lords*, 1971)<sup>1</sup>

*“Strolling through Savannah on a summer night when the wind is not blowing from the direction of Union-Camp, it is easy to become sentimental about the southern way of life.”*

(Harrison Wellford, in the Preface to *The Water Lords*, 1971)<sup>2</sup>

By the late 1960s, Union-Camp could no longer reasonably expect Savannahans to ignore environmental consequences of the city's major industry. On October 31, 1966, a freighter navigating waters near the mill on the Savannah River found itself engulfed by a gray-ish fog that its captain took, not surprisingly, for weather-related phenomena. He ran into a leg-section of a nearby railroad bridge, and while no one was harmed, the ship sustained considerable damage. After the incident, it was discovered that the “fog” was nothing more than a pocket of pollution, thick as a sandstorm and as dark as an oilcloth, that had escaped from the mill. Just a few months later, a woman driving down a highway on the outskirts of Savannah claimed she lost all visibility in a mile-long haze of smoke. While backing out of the scary cloud, she crashed her car into a guard-rail. The company settled privately in both cases, both after threatened lawsuits, and local media failed to publicize either of them. But an increasing number of residents, including the mill's five thousand workers, were beginning to have difficulty resolving all the stench, sludges, and mysterious fogs into their former understanding of Union

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Fallows, *The Water Lords: Ralph Nader's Study Group on Industry and Environmental Crisis in Savannah, Georgia* (New York: Grossman, 1971), ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

as a mutual and mutually-beneficial arrangement—that beautiful but elusive idea of a “world of tomorrow.”

What finally opened up the southern paper industry to sustained criticism was not what it was doing to the southern forests but to the southern waterways. The paper industry's relationship with the woods had been, for decades, politically and morally managed to great success—at least on the surface. A study conducted by the American Pulpwood Association in the early 1970s confirmed that Union-Camp's pine plantations were mono-cultural habitats but also a scene of consistency in logging, cutting, and regeneration.<sup>3</sup> But Union's use and abuse of Savannah's water supply had never really needed defending; it was a consequence *all* had been blind to, and it was a national debate none had expected. In early 1970, Union-Camp's Technical Director Richard Chase admitted that the mill had “only the faintest curiosity about the damage it [was] doing” to the area's water.<sup>4</sup>

To understand the indisputable ties between water and conservation, one must only look into the frequent depths of the marshland in coastal Georgia. Wetland marshes are places where the brambly mess of organic matter paints a clear but delicate picture of what plants and water accomplish together ecologically. Marshes that line Savannah's creeks and islands are part of a larger continuous belt that stretches from the Carolinas down into Florida. Between Savannah and nearby St. Mary's (only 110 miles by road and site of another paper concern) lie over two-thousand miles of shoreline. The South's marshes have always held a mystical allure. They are the dominion of the heron and the egret, waters that turn bright blue or muggy green under different moons.

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<sup>3</sup> Dennis Thomas Curtin, American Pulpwood Association, Harvesting Research Projects, “Cooperative testing of a longwood harvesting system owned by Union Camp Corporation operating in hardwood and pine stands,” published by the APA in 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 95

Marshes are also like an ecological mood ring—fragile ecosystems that predict the biological health of their environment. The paper industry had for two generations moved between denial and ignorance of what was happening to Savannah’s shoreline. The Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association released a pamphlet on paper-making in 1969 that equated a mill’s use of water with that of the average American household. “A pulp mill uses water for many of the same reasons a housewife does,” it read, “for cooking, for washing, and for carrying away wastes [from the home].”<sup>5</sup> This was outright propaganda. The SPCA had admitted in their 1950s promotional material that the industry was using four billion gallons of water per day.<sup>6</sup> Mills along the Savannah River—one of them Union-Camp—dumped *at least* 30,000 gallons of polluted water in every few hours, depending on the production cycle. And unless the average American “housewife” (not a term many woman favored in the '60s) regularly digested pulpwood in her backyard or disposed of gallons of chemicals at a time down her sink drain, were outlandishly unlike, and by 1970 this kind of propagandistic band-aid was utterly inadequate to obscure what was becoming an open sore in the American environment.<sup>7</sup>

By 1970, water was on the media’s collective brain. An August 1971 piece by Leonard Ross in the *New York Times* reviewed a set of six environmental study group reports (including one about Savannah) sponsored by consumer activist Ralph Nader and his cadre of youthful political helpmates, part of the Center for the Study of Responsive Law and by then ceremoniously christened “Nader’s Raiders.” A grainy black-and-white Francois Colos sketch

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<sup>5</sup> Southern Pulpwood Conservation Association Pamphlet, “Water,” 1969, p.4-5, State of Georgia Archives.

<sup>6</sup> SPCA Woodlands Pamphlets.

<sup>7</sup>Water was becoming a regional problem in the 1960s and 1970s—just as Americans had come to realize that trees were something that bound the rural and the urban together, they were also realizing that water flowed in and out of their homes and bodies all day long. That water came from everywhere. So water anywhere was everyone’s business. Mark Fiege and William Cronon, *Irrigated Eden The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (University of Washington Press, 2000); Nancy Langston and William Cronon, *Where Land and Water Meet: A Western Landscape Transformed* (University of Washington Press, 2005); Donald Pisani, *Water and American Government: The Reclamation Bureau, National Water Policy, and the West, 1902-1935* (University of California Press, 2002).



accompanied the review. In it, Nader stands like a lone wolf in a checkered suit, holding a glass of water, his body half-buried beneath a smattering of tiny pointed images—clouds labeled “DDT,” smokestacks, oil derricks, automobiles spewing fuel, and even several human bodies in various states of agony and convulsion.

The *New York Times* took up the water cause in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with one columnist suggesting that the country had reached a point at which sewage became the “inevitable question that confronts all growing cities.” In 1965, Lyndon Johnson called for a new era of environmental control on the federal level, sponsoring the Federal Water Quality Act and articulating its primary purpose as a federal move to both stop water pollution and find its “cure.” In the interest of all citizens, no single entity had the right to use the country’s rivers as its own personal sewer. Officials in the Johnson administration were aware that without the cooperation and understanding of powerful industrial corporations, progress would be slow. “Unless American industry really adjusts to the fact that pollution control is a regular part of overhead,” offered Assistant Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare James Quigley in 1965, “we’re not going to get the kind of action we need.”<sup>8</sup>

Thick in the national air as they might have been in the 1960s, environmental concerns never made it to the top of Richard Nixon’s priority list. Nixon vetoed the Clean Water Act vehemently and believed that the zero emissions pacts, mandatory municipal water treatments plans, and punishments for violators (i.e. corporations like Union Camp) that it delineated would hurt taxpayers and interfere with industry on a national level. He established the Environmental Protection Agency en lieu of a more broad-based agency that environmental groups vociferously

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<sup>8</sup> James T. Wooten, “In River City of Savannah, Old-Timers Recall Pollution-Free Days,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1971, 16.  
Gladwin Hills, “New U.S. Agency and New Policy to Enter Fight Against Water Pollution,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1965, 27.

preferred. Nixon openly suggested that waste management issues should be dealt with on a local or state level rather than federal. Congress overrode his concerns and passed the Clean Water Act in 1972, but Nixon's conservative take on the environment would cast a wrench into the large-scale movement.<sup>9</sup>

The uncertainty over supplies of clean, usable water in industrial regions became a common theme throughout the country in the mid-twentieth century. In the 1960s, the Lake Erie crisis made national headlines. Blue green algae blooms clogged the Potomac River. Wetlands were disappearing at an alarming rate across the southern and eastern coasts. Government officials deemed the Buffalo River a fire hazard because it possessed such high levels of oil pollution. Rivers all over the U.S. flowed heavy with industrial runoff. The Clean Water Act sets its sights on eliminating all additional point-source pollution by 1985 as well as making all American waters safe for sport and recreation by 1983. It also gave each state the power to standardize its Total Maximum Daily Load (TDML) of water pollutants, which was the sum of allowable loads of a single pollutant. These were high hopes.<sup>10</sup> After 1962, Washington D.C. became the center of the environmental movement, as legislators moved--sometimes haltingly, sometimes headlong--to catch up with Americans' growing discord over pollution.<sup>11</sup>

By the summer of 1970, Nader had taken his place as the outspoken but surprisingly unassuming head of what many called the "consumer activist movement"—the *New York Times*

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<sup>9</sup> See Schulman, *Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 30-32.

<sup>10</sup> The first Earth Day, held in April of 1970, followed a growing trend of eco-activism in the 1960s and then—as is generally accepted—helped to spearhead a national trend of "environmentalism" within which grassroots organization became crucial. However, it is a bit misleading to date "environmentalism" only to the 1960s. Environmental awareness, many historians argue, actually started in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the advent of the conservation movement, backed by the U.S. Forest Service (founded in 1905) and groups like the Sierra Club (1892). Many saw the early conservation movement, however, as a white middle-class phenomenon only. The broad-based "environmental movement," though is generally dated to 1962, when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* jumpstarted a shift in environmental awareness from a focus on wildlife conservation to conservation of the human species.

<sup>11</sup> For this discussion, see Sale, *The Green Revolution*, 1-5.

designated him the "unofficial inspector general of the United States" that year—in an America still reeling from the political and cultural turmoil of the 1960s. A *Washington Post* reporter perhaps best summed up the reaction to Nader's work when he said, in 1969: “To some this intense man with a cause is a saint; to others he is a dangerous threat to the comfortable, profitable status quo.”<sup>12</sup>

Much has been written about Ralph Nader and his ascent to "America's watchdog" in politics and public policy law in the 1960s and 1970s, but little has been done among scholars to historicize him or his public efforts. Born in 1934 in Connecticut to Lebanese immigrant parents, including a mother who worked at a textile mill, Nader worked his way through Princeton and Harvard in the 1950s. He burst on the scene for the first big time when he clashed with the automotive industry over car safety issues in a 1958 issue of *The Nation*. Nader then founded the Center for the Study of Responsive Law with funding from the New World Foundation and the New York Foundation, subsidized by his own private money. His efforts made a huge splash again in the summer of 1968 when he sponsored a study of the Federal Trade Commission in Washington, D.C. to uncover abuses with the organization. "His next step," Fallows muses, "was to energize and mobilize a broader movement, starting with students." In the late 1960s, Nader became widely known for organizing groups of college-aged youth from around the country. Nader wanted to invigorate the most promising group of Americans he could find—bright-eyed students who had grown up in industrial and urban centers and were ready to use their gifts of education for some kind of greater good. Nader was actively promoting what one writer called the "mutually profitable cooperation" between politicians and the nation's students.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Nader's Raiders,” *Washington Post* 8 June 1969, 38.

<sup>13</sup> See Nader, *Unsafe at any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972) [expanded edition].  
Interview, Jim Fallows, with the author, 23 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author.

Observers wavered on Nader's approach, and reviews were mixed. In 1969, a writer from the *Washington Post* touted Nader's ways as the "best means to shake the lethargy of government and industry." Others called him a "true revolutionary," "inflexible in his aims and relentless in his determination," but others—and particularly those in the conservative administration of Richard Nixon in the early 1970s—saw him as somewhat of a leech, quietly working to suck the blood from the industrial heart of America's economy as well as the common sense from the country's youth.<sup>14</sup>

That Nader held a glass of water in the *Times* sketch also effectively symbolized one of Nader's most important causes in the early 1970s—a quest to clean up the country's waterways.<sup>15</sup> In Savannah, the issue of water pollution was as transparent as the map that Jim Fallows drew for the front cover of the paperback edition of *The Water Lords*, the case study he penned after a summer in the city: along the Savannah River corridor sat four points of interest—Union Camp, American Cyanide, Continental Can, and the Savannah Sugar Company. All four of these industrial plants spewed chemicals into the river, and by 1970 those chemicals had been building uninhibited for decades. Secondly, it was well known by that point that southerners lived everyday with thirty to fifty percent more DDT in their body tissue than other Americans. In Savannah, chemicals were coming, in large part, up from the soil and out of faucets.<sup>16</sup> And it

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David S. Broder, "New Pragmatism on Campus is a Hopeful Sign for Nation," *Washington Post*, Dec. 6, 1969, A15.

<sup>14</sup> "Nader's Raiders Scheduling Pollution Probe This Summer," *Washington Post*, March 22, 1969; *New York Times*, August 23, 1970, E5.; "Nader to Examine Pulp Industry," *Washington Post* June 10, 1970; "New Pragmatism on Campus a Hopeful Sign for Nation," *Washington Post* December 16, 1969.

<sup>15</sup> Leonard Ross, "The Chemical Feast," *New York Times*, Aug. 8, 1971, p. BR1.

<sup>16</sup> In 1962, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* changed Americans' relationship with the natural world forever and stirred a wave of environmental consciousness that cannot ever be historiographically underestimated—even in a study that is not primarily about the American environmental movement. For the purposes of this dissertation, Carson's message that Americans were slowly being poisoned (and, in turn, poisoning themselves) with chemical pesticides directly relates to my exploration of Georgians' relationship to Union-Camp. For Americans in general, and for those in Savannah in 1970, the realization that these pollution processes had been set in motion decades before was nothing short of a social revolution. Books consulted for Carson's impact: Linda Lear, *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009); Mark H. Lytle, *The Gentle Subversive: Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, and the Rise of the Environmental Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

would be in this humid place, during a summer that might have seemed to many residents the same as any other, that the confluence of corporation, ecology, taxation, and government were brought to a head for Union Camp.

That Nader sent a dozen college-aged students down to Georgia in the summer of 1970 reflected not only his personal quest to invigorate consumer activism but also a more general political awakening.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the best way to understand young adult involvement in Nader's activist campaign during the summer of 1970 is to compare it to the likes of the "freedom summers" of the 1960s. Nader's group's traveled the country that summer to provide aid and information to places that they had no personal connections to. Nearly two hundred graduate students, aided by an additional plethora of undergraduate assistants—in fields ranging from law and English to science and medicine—took on ten projects throughout the country that summer. One might compare all of them to "freedom riders" not just because they lived in and researched one place for a summer with the intense goal of enacting social justice but also because, particularly in the case of the Savannah River Project, they were perceived as "special outsiders" who possessed the knowledge and skills to literally change a place. "When any significant number of today's youth [is] ready to spend a fun-filled vacation in Ralph Nader's summer camp," wrote one *Washington Post* observer, "there is hope."<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, scholars have created two relatively constrictive categories for environmental "activists." One is that of local residents who act less out of political awareness

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<sup>17</sup> Interview, Jim Fallows, with the author, 23 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author.

Other books published by Ralph Nader and his "Raiders" in 1971 as a result of the 1970 summer projects: James S. Turner, *The Chemical Feast: The Food and Drug Administration* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971); Robert Fellmeth, *The Interstate Commerce Omission* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971); John C. Esposito, *Vanishing Air: Air Pollution* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971); Claire Townsend, *Old Age: The Last Segregation: Study Group Report on Nursing Homes* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971); Dr. Robert McCleery, *One Life—One Physician: The Medical Profession's Performance in Self-Regulation* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1971).

<sup>18</sup> "Nader's Raiders," *Washington Post*, June 8, 1969, 38.

William V. Shannon, "The Man Who Beat the System," *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1970, E12.

than economic interest against an entity that has created negative externalities—lower water quality in their home, incursions against trees and crops on their property, or a reduction in fish and game populations on which their livelihood depends. The other category is the "wise outsider," whose environmental awareness feeds off a moral desire to improve the natural world. Such outsiders are typically free of economic self-interest, this narrative dictates, because they have no personal investments in the communities they aim to help. This argument often rings alarmingly true, in that many Americans believe that environmental "activists" must practice economic disinterest and must work only from a pure and noble "love of nature" and a desire to preserve it.<sup>19</sup>

Nader prided himself on this "orderly" and highly-managed activism, as did his colleagues. At an Atlanta symposium in 1971, William Osborne illuminated the ways by which he and his environmental- and consumer-activist cohorts (like Nader) viewed the political and cultural climate of the 1970s in America. The "hippies" of the 1960s, Osborne argued, had been "not so communal as transient" and, thus, never offered the proper model for community action. In turn, white affluent liberals, Osborne went on to say, disseminated the "most damaging liberal affirmation"—the "priority of the individual over the group." Grassroots group activism, therefore, provided the best model for the "authentic modification" of urban or industrial societies.<sup>20</sup>

In turn, the Savannah project defies the disinterested/too-interested dichotomy.

Nader's "Raiders," though "outsiders," were two-minded--intent on helping the

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<sup>19</sup> Historians have yet to settle on a simple definition of "environmentalism." Most, however, agree that it, above all else, implies a group's collective sense of concern for changes in or damages to the environment and some sort of active movement to improve it. For a basic introduction to "environmentalism" and the many ways it has manifested in the twentieth century in America, see Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) and Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945* (Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> William Osborne, transcript from *The Rape of the Powerless: A Symposium at the Atlanta University Center* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1971), 195, 197, 200.

Savannah community reach some sort of equilibrium between economic stability—i.e. keeping industry there—and environmental awareness. Industrial water pollution by no means embodied an exclusively southern issue, but the ecological scars of industry were perhaps more visible in the South because industrialization had occurred there so rapidly and so mercilessly. And in the South, industry had brought with it a certain amount of economic comfort that some could not imagine giving up.

Nevertheless, by 1970, the booster Southerners who had advertised their region with banners that all but screamed “CHEAP LABOR,” “TAX INCENTIVES,” and “LOTS OF LAND AND WATER” suddenly found themselves no longer behind the technology curve but at the forefront and flashpoint of an industrial/ecological disaster. The South had gone from being the poster-boy of industrial backwardness to the poster-boy of industrialization run amok in surprisingly short order. In a sense, the South had never stopped being backward—or at least this is how it continued to be seen, and to a degree how it continued to see itself. Fearing that industry would “flee” the South again, the region could not see that they had saved industries like Union Bag, and that still held a lot of the cards.<sup>21</sup>

This understanding of Southern “backwardness” pervaded even among the Raiders. Nader proclaimed that the Savannah Project, and others like it, revealed the cavernous “vacuums of citizen power which lead to victimization by business, government, or other arbitrary power centers.”<sup>22</sup> Project Director (and Nader's Executive Director in Washington, D.C.) Harrison Wellford pointed out the tangible artifacts of the monolithic South of song and story were all

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<sup>21</sup> For the “selling of the South,” see James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development* (Urbana and Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1993). In this seminal work on industrial development in the South, Cobb argues that southern boosters—i.e. white males in Chambers of Commerce and similar local organizations—pursued industry in an attempt to invigorate the region's lethargic economy. Southern boosters wooed Northeastern and Midwestern corporations, notably, with the South's abundance of cheap land, cheap land, and—most importantly—tax incentives.

<sup>22</sup> Fallows, *The Water Lords*, x.

gone, all chewed up, by 1970. Gone were “one party politics, one race voters, one crop agriculture, and one industry towns.” His point? That if the South did not intervene in the destruction of its air, land, and water by industrial corporations who were not paying their “environmental taxes,” then there would be absolutely nothing that distinguished the South from any other part of the country. The South, which, as a region, had traditionally prided itself “on its open spaces and natural beauty in contrast to the congested and polluted North,” was by that time “being polluted at a faster rate than any section of the nation.” Perhaps in Savannah, Wellford feared, those images of famed histories and an isolated “southern-ness” would continue to contribute to the ignorance of such pollution if not curtailed by a new and blunt reality.<sup>23</sup> If there were distinctly “southern” rituals that made a place like Savannah unique, he added, they were tied up in a sense of place, a continuity with the slower pace of the past, and attachments to the land—all of these things “distilled from a collective memory of defeat.”<sup>24</sup>

These rituals remained palpable. Fallows recalls that during his first few weeks in residence “Savannah seem[ed] part of another century.” He could not help but believe some of the Old South romance—or at least believe in the pull it still had on some people there—as he experienced for the first time the, in his own words, nights “hot and thick” with “hundreds of tiny insects scrambling” and biting all about him, all as he wandered the ruins of the river's “Factor's Walk” battling persistent insomnia.<sup>25</sup> At the end of this introductory period, Fallows wrote, he surfaced from that shallow, muggy magic to see that “Savannah's casual admission that

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<sup>23</sup> James M. Fallows, *The Water Lords: Industry and Environmental Crisis in Savannah, Georgia* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971), xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Harrison Wellford in Fallows, *The Water Lords*, xi and xv.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 2-3.



its river is polluted” was actually everywhere, on everything, just harder to see behind the tourist boards and the drinks on an endless parade of patios.<sup>26</sup>

According to Wellford and Fallows, Savannah battled the reputation of buying into “some brands of progress which it would better shun.”<sup>27</sup> It was evident in the summer of 1970 that Fallows and his team believed that southerners had fallen prey to a blind kind of boosterism from the 1930s and then again in the post-war era. These two men could not peek through the layers of environmental damage to see the natural industrial dreams of men like Herbert Kayton or Charles Herty. To Fallows and Wellford, the boosterism had been all but malicious in its negligence. That the “forests of tomorrow” image was failing made sense to them in hindsight. It was a “runaway bulldozer mentality” familiar because they themselves had been raised in the empty suburbs of the Northeast.<sup>28</sup> But the findings of 1970 can exist separate from any ideas that the researchers might have had about southerners and their culture or their backwardness.

Fallows remained convinced that the Northern company had actively colonized Georgia. He also pointed out repeatedly that the marketing philosophies of industrial corporations like Union Camp were key factors in the development of Savannah. Fallows was and is not a historian, but as a journalist he was trained to look for the loopholes that companies looked for—the least-resistant ways they could pull light wool over the eyes of citizens who probably wanted to look the other way anyway. Thus, as a journalist and essayist he produced a historiographical reality that no one in the academy had really ever produced: that corporations who moved into

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> This concept lifted directly from Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2001); Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *City, Country, Empire: Landscapes in Environmental History* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005); Jeffrey C. Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

the South were witty in their marketing behaviors, purposefully both responsible and conniving so that, in the end, the common citizen might view them as more good than bad.

With the Atlantic Ocean to the East, the Florida Aquifer directly below, and the Savannah River coursing directly through the middle, Savannah is a wet, humid southern oasis. Savannah is also surrounded by the eleven counties in Georgia where the average income of residents was, into the late twentieth century, almost half that of the national average—in other words, way below the poverty line. So it was a region, as this work has shown, seemingly full of land, water, and people yearning to make a buck. Coastal Georgia and North Carolina have often been compared to Appalachia in terms of sheer rural poverty. Starting in 1935, companies like Union Bag had begun to pull that cheap labor force from towns all around Savannah. Nearby, in places like Baxley, Townsend, Swainsboro, and Midway, crews lived and worked among the trees, cutting, planting, and delivering lumber to the new processing plant that hovered close to the river. Union Camp sponsored the planting of so many trees, in fact, that the region boasted more pineland after 1935 than ever before, albeit most of it lay on pine plantations.<sup>29</sup> The company had trumpeted these numbers for years. But they had almost nothing to say about the local waterways.

Continental Can and American Cyanamid sealed themselves off early in the process. It proved impossible for Fallows or any member of the team to interview personnel of rank at either places. Both were smaller plants, with around 500 employees apiece, and seemed much more concerned with keeping headquarters happy in the Northeast than appearing cooperative to the community around them. Union *had* to appear open to the research because it considered

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<sup>29</sup>Ben Werner, “A Landscape Changed,” *Savannah Morning News*, October 6, 2002. Donald Holley, *Second Great Emancipation* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 59. The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal agricultural program, was intended to aid in the relief of southern farmers, many of whom lived in extreme poverty as cotton prices fell in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

itself Savannah's "chief citizen"; so much of the company's reputation depended on a marketing strategy that wove paper-making into the fabric of everyday life in the city, the South, even the world.

Establishing the South as a place of environmental battle means acknowledging a direct connection between the foci of the mainstream American media and the Savannah project. Leonard Ross, again writing for the *New York Times*, asked in 1971: "Who regulates the regulator?" His answer, in short, was that the "regulated" themselves could.<sup>30</sup> Emerging from the fog of industrial growth, communities like Savannah became potential hotbeds for environmental awareness that crossed racial and socio-economic lines. That working-class citizens voiced concerns over their immediate environment--no matter their motivations--works decisively against the belief that "environmentalism" was only a white middle-class affair.

As "dark, coffee-colored waste" steeped in the rivers and the smells of sulfuric acid and human excrement began to permeate the humid air, the population of coastal Georgia certainly began to realize that even if Union had been right that trees might become a renewable resource (and renewable source of prosperity), the waters had actually reached a real limit.<sup>31</sup> One crucial example: oxygen-consuming wastes make it nearly impossible for the river's fish to breathe, and Union-Camp was responsible for eighty percent of this waste material. The Georgia Water Quality Board had been pestering the company since 1965, requesting a new sewage treatment plant, or several; in 1970 they had failed to even break ground. Savannah's 113,000 residents braced themselves each day for the stench that would flow downwind from the river and the murky red color of the water that dripped from their faucets at home. Many of them were still employed by the mills, some entering as second and third generations of industrial workers.

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<sup>30</sup> The most striking weakness of existing work on the 1970s is an absence of inquiry into the significance of public interest or consumer reform as a mode of political action.

<sup>31</sup> Ben Werner, "A Landscape Changed," *Savannah Morning News*, October 6, 2002; Fallows, *Water Lords*, 7.

Aside from the immediate health concerns posed by pollution, Savannah residents were also concerned about their town's image as a quaint southern retreat. Industrial jobs, and the money they pumped into the local economy, had allowed for the funding of a restoration and beautification projects in and around the town. In the 1960s, renovators worked meticulously at restoring the houses and buildings downtown, particularly those around the main square, in an overt attempt at re-gentrification.<sup>32</sup> Fallows, reflecting on the river project some thirty years removed from it, summed up the myriad social forces at play in Savannah: "The image of Savannah is city historic, city romantic," he mused, but "it's also city industrial."

The "mood of Savannah is one thing," Fallows added, "[but] the atmosphere is another."<sup>33</sup> Besides serving as a prototypical example of how dirty an industry could make a once-healthy river, Savannah's political climate proved conducive to a Nader-style investigation of abuse of power. Union Camp men controlled, by 1970, the Savannah City Council, County Commission, Port Authority, Chamber of Commerce, its bank boards, and the Metropolitan Planning Commission. Like an "octopus whose tentacles reach into every facet of community life," one commentator wrote, Union's presence in local government organizations helped to ensure that industrial concerns would override any existing or future environment or land-use concerns among ordinary citizens.<sup>34</sup>

On an average day, Union's pulp mill equipment let out three times more water pollution, in the form of woods sugars, cellulose, and wood adhesives called "lignins," than all of the other local mills combined. Studies by the Georgia Department of Health also confirmed that the mill

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<sup>32</sup> For the gentrification of Savannah and its relationship with the tourism industry, See Roberta Brandes Gratz, *The Living City* (John Wiley and Sons, 1994), pp. 32-76; Gregory John Ashworth, *The Tourist-Historic City: Retrospect and Prospect of Managing the Heritage City* (Routledge, 2000), throughout.

<sup>33</sup> *Savannah Morning News*, August 23, 2003; Fallows, *Water Lords*, 128.

See John Berendt, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> James T. Wooten, "In River City of Savannah, Old-Timers Recall Pollution-Free Days," *New York Times*, January 28, 1971, 16.

was responsible for the release of almost 100,000 tons per year in carbon monoxide gases, as well as 16,000 tons per year in hydrocarbons. The Chatham County Health Department shed even greater light on the pollution flowing from the mill, but their reach and scope in terms of enforcement was weakest among any of the governmental organizations discussed here. Industry standards in 1970 categorized pollutants as “particulates” in a general sense, and anything less than fifty micrograms per cubic meter of particulates was considered clean. The fifty to one hundred range was moderate; anything other one hundred would be considered dangerous. Between 1967 and 1970, the Union-Camp mill experienced radical spikes in particulate levels but consistently stayed well-above the one hundred mark—143 in 1967, 190 in 1968, and back down to 161 in January of 1970. What is perhaps most enlightening is that the loads of particulates remained highest right next to the mill, where the primary readings took place. Readings spreading outward from there decreased dramatically.

It had been the case for almost two hundred years in coastal Georgia that awareness of ecological processes ebbed and flowed in concentric circles out of the Savannah. While hinterland Georgians were inherently more aware of the realities of the landscape and how it was used (or misused), it was typically urban experts who disseminated information—such as Union's Woodlands Department or the SPCA from Atlanta, in both cases the champions of public relations programs which heightened rural residents' understanding of business and industrial practices. And although the paper mill would never have existed without timber from almost twenty counties surrounding Savannah, and some into South Carolina, often Savannah city-dwellers saw it as the feather in their collective caps. When it came to pollution, living further away from the mill site proved the most beneficial. Inner-city folk were exposed to the most potent dose of chemicals in their air. When the particulate count read at 161 for the mill's

immediate vicinity, just a few miles away in the town squares of Savannah that number dropped to eighty. In a residential neighborhood out a few more miles, 70. And in a suburb called “Windsor Forest”—what had been a white flight community in the 1950s and remained almost exclusively so in 1970—the count came in at 50 (a reading, according to the state health department, that qualified as relatively harmless).<sup>35</sup>

Union’s 1970 slogan was simple and telling: “The Name of the Game: Profitability.” Union employed over 5,000 Savannah residents directly at the mill—five times as many it had in the 1930s. The first group of residents to voice concerns over the company’s water pollution, though, was not composed of Union Camp workers but instead of independent farmers from the surrounding lands. Farmers whose livelihood depended largely on the availability and usability of local groundwater found their wells literally running dry as early as the 1940s and 1950s. Savannah had ample groundwater—quantity had never been the problem. In the 1950s, local officials like Mayor Lee Mingledorff still touted the “abundant free water” of the area. Union and the other companies on the Savannah River, however, began pumping so much at one time, through their large industrial pumping stations, that in 1970 the area found itself in what Fallows called a “water famine.” Enough water could have been sustained, perhaps, if the water flow from the aquifer had not been disrupted as well. By 1965, private landowners realized that the pumps caused salt water to flow in the wrong direction—directly into their wells, which then dried out.<sup>36</sup>

Kept under the radar, Chatham County Commissioners had recognized problems with groundwater contamination as early as 1943. In a report dated that year, the Commission agreed

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<sup>35</sup> Specific data from Reports of the Chatham County Health Department 1967-1970; information regarding particulate counts also garnered from: Robert F. Phalen, *The Particulate Air Pollution Controversy: A Case Study and Lessons Learned* (Springer Press, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.  
*Ibid.*, 155.

that the “water supply in and around the county is being seriously affected by the boring of artesian wells” and set out to establish a well-drilling permit system. The permit system failed, however, for precisely the same reason that no environmental problems made headlines in local media or came close to resolution in the mid-twentieth century. Union’s cushioned financial status made it easy for them to pay for the new permits and then simply go about their business. And—as many Savannah residents and workers no doubt realized—without Union Camp money, the area’s economy would look quite different than it currently did, with its officials in charge of decisions regarding everything from municipal improvements to bank deals to local education.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of 1970, another local group—fishermen whose livelihoods depended heavily upon the river’s water quality—began to complain about the effects of industrial runoff on the product they caught and sold.<sup>38</sup> “Dirty” pollution “gets on my trout lines and in my fish traps,” one fisherman reported in 1970, “and it costs me heaps of money.” Local fish-buyers also noted in 1970 that the catfish, mudfish, carp, and shad that they purchased from their fishermen-neighbors tasted increasingly oily and, in some extreme cases, were covered in “festering sores.” Thirty years later, two elderly male Savannah residents mused about the “old” conditions of the river--namely, its plethora of healthy porpoises that jumped up and down through the clean water. In the same interview, though, these residents admitted that job cuts at Union during the last two decades of the twentieth century hurt the Savannah economy significantly. All of this begs the question: Were these men, and other residents like them, “environmentalists”? One could easily

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<sup>37</sup> Commission Report, as revealed in *Water Lords*.

<sup>38</sup> As early as 1937, a civic committee in Savannah recommended it would be “advisable that a study be made of the problem of industrial waste pollution” and that Union, though beloved by many already, could prove a “potential menace.” This particular committee met in Chatham County to discuss ongoing developments in the area's fishing industry, and it would in the water that coastal Georgia's spotted the first real signs of environmental change at the hands of the new mill. Savannah had already long-battled the precarious positioning of its sewage flow, much of it diverted to the ocean and the rest to area stream and swamps, and the added chemical output of Union looked small and abstract at first. These concerns would prove a haunting harbinger of Savannah sewage problems to come in the following decades. 1937 Report of the East Georgia Planning Council, “Commercial Fisheries of Georgia,” GHS.

argue that their main concerns--and particularly those of the local fishermen--were economic in nature. Surely they bore the brunt of the river's demise most poignantly inside their pocketbooks. But perhaps labeling them "environmentalists" is precisely what environmental historians must do to broaden the air-tight definition of "environmentalist" as someone who possesses no economic investment in the environment around them. Most important, though, is that they became increasingly aware of what industry was doing to their river, as well as to their everyday lives, and then vocally participated in the regional and national dialogues of industrial pollution and its effects on human communities.<sup>39</sup>

Savannah residents, in Fallows' words, certainly "did not need us to tell them" that pine plantations disturb ecosystems or chemicals pollute water-- or that such pollution caused physiological harm. But they needed someone to show them that something could be done about it.<sup>40</sup> One may even argue that the summer in Savannah, and all of Nader's localized projects for that matter, serve as a shining example of how successful grassroots environmental organization can be when the outside comes to teach and learn about communities already struggling to reconcile industry, modernity, and their connections to the environment around them.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Arthur Ruffin, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 8, 1970, NP. James T. Wooten, "In River City of Savannah, Old-Timers Recall Pollution-Free Days," *New York Times*, January 28, 1971, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Ross, "The Chemical Feast," BR1.

Fallows, *Water Lords*, xx.

<sup>41</sup> That connection—between environmental awareness and modern southern history—remains largely a missing piece of the puzzle in historical scholarship up to this point. Historians have only recently crossed the metaphorical bridge that once existed between environmental history as a field and the massive amount of scholarly literature on the South. However, a recent wave of environmentally-oriented scholarship aims to demonstrate the myriad ways which urban industrial pollution has affected workers and citizens depending on their race, class, or residential patterns. Historian Andrew Hurley, a pioneering scholar working in this vein, conducted a case study of Gary, Indiana—a notoriously-polluted steel town—that now begs to be emulated for industrial towns throughout the South. Historian Steve Lerner has been one of the first to do so, exploring the growth of a grassroots environmental justice movement among an African-American population of workers in rural southern Louisiana who ultimately won a fearful battle against Shell Chemical Company. *Water Lords* and other Nader projects like it serve as the prototypical case studies of southern industrial towns, but their limitations as works of historical scholarship—namely that they lack proper citations and any sense of real historical context—have sadly resulted in their ultimate obscurity as sources for modern historians.



These are the “Raiders” that followed Fallows into Savannah: Deborah Zerad, an undergraduate at Radcliffe who had recently agreed to marry him. Dirk Schenkkan had yet to finish his undergraduate degree at the University of Texas. Some members of the team, however, had received undergraduate degrees already, like Fallows; a few had already started fruitful careers in their respective fields. John Williams was set to enter Vanderbilt Law the next fall, and J. Owens Smith, South Carolina University Law School. Neil McBride had earned a J.D. from the University of Virginia Law School and worked as Southern Director for the Law Students Civil Rights Research Council in Atlanta. Dick Miksad received a doctorate in oceanography the past Spring and went on the next fall to work as a research assistant at Imperial College in London. Robert Finch, Terence Seyden, and Melanie Mason rounded out the group, all three in some stage of their undergraduate education. The group was also assisted by a local Savannah high school student named Mary Adams. "In retrospect," Fallows recently recalled, "it is amazing that, as a bunch of kids, we were able to get as relatively organized as we did." The team also went completely unpaid that summer, although the costs of housing and food were underwritten by Nader.<sup>42</sup>

As the team settled down in Savannah that June, Schenkkan remembers, “we were all motivated by the prevailing sixties spirit of political activism and change.” Yet Schenkkan

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See Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

To historicize the Savannah River Project and Nader’s brand of outreach activism in the 1970s serves a much-needed dual historical purpose. First, such a contextualization offers historians a chance to situate the South within the modern environmental movement, certainly not to insinuate that it was a uniquely southern phenomenon or even played out more significantly in the South than in other places but to ensure that the South is adequately represented. Second, reconstructing the summer of the 1970 in Savannah by illuminating the historical process of industrialization and pollution as well as analyzing the effects of that process on local residents creates a window through which to view the convergence of myriad social forces in the South of the 1970s.

See Steve Lerner, *Diamond: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana’s Chemical Corridor* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Interview, Dirk Schenkkan, with the author, 25 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author.

Interview, Jim Fallows, with the author, 25 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author.

Herbert Mitgang, "Ralph Nader Parts the Waters," *New York Times* Aug. 6, 1971, 29.

admits that he headed into the project without much precise knowledge about the environmental conditions in Georgia, why Savannah had been chosen for the case study, or even specifically what his presence there might amount to. He had simply seen “a note in my college paper that Nader was looking to recruit college students,” interviewed with project coordinator Harrison Wellford, and packed his bags—knowing, undoubtedly by the same innate sense that many “Raiders” felt that summer, that his contributions would “tell a consciousness-raising story” for many Americans.<sup>43</sup>

By all accounts, Fallows, Schenkkan, and the other students received a fairly warm welcome from the residents of Savannah—in other words, plenty of food was set before them, friendly banter ensued on the square downtown, and the “southern hospitality” that the locals prided themselves on remained in full supply. But, as Fallows recalls, many citizens voiced a fair amount of loyalty toward Union Camp and used social occasions with the students to question them about their purpose in town. Some citizens even communicated certain “defensiveness about outside critics.” For some residents, however, the students’ presence might have meant more than the opportunity to entertain young visitors or defend their town against “outsiders,” “carpetbaggers,” and “tree huggers.” Some were “motivated by real concern about the pollution in the river,” Schenkkan remembers. Savannah had been the site of several clean water conferences in the late 1960s—all sponsored by the federal government, and all of which had ultimately failed to move Union-Camp or any industrial corporation in the area to decrease their pollutant levels.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Interview, Dirk Schenkkan, with the author, 25 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, Jim Fallows, with the author, 23 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author; Interview, Dirk Schenkkan, with the author, 25 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author; U.S. Study Commission from 1963: “Savannah River Basin”; Conference in the Matter of Pollution of the Lower Savannah and its Tributaries, October 1969, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Fallows and his team had to conduct a program of “reverse public relations.” They had to expose the issues the company's PR men had worked for years to gloss over. When the Air Quality Control Board required (as part of the Air Quality Act) that any industrial entities simply *register* their output levels, Union-Camp was the only company along the Savannah River that did not.<sup>45</sup> The company's own environmental specialist, Glenn Kimble, had ironically been the one to propose the air quality bill in 1966; many believed, in turn, that Union-Camp had planned this just so they could skate by when it came time to put their real cards on the table.

By July, Fallows realized that his group's most pressing “job” was to rummage through musty archives and old newspaper piles. The city's history-making subsidy to Calder (*permanent* tax breaks, not the five or ten-year incentives typical in other industrializing southern towns) lay obscured in a celebratory haze, and Union-Camp had worked hard to present itself as Savannah's symbiote—organic and necessary to the city's prosperity—not its parasite. Few remembered that Savannah had offered up four million dollars—of combined public and private money—at a time when Union had not a single pulp mill to its name. The contract included two other specifications that most modern Savannah residents had never been privy to. In 1935, for the sake of “disclosure,” the first part of the contract had been published in the newspaper alongside a small editorial by Mayor Thomas Gamble. But the second part, cloaked in secrecy, was omitted and never addressed publicly. One stipulation forbade Savannah from bringing in any similar plants. Union would be the city's only pulp, paper, or lumber manufactures producer. The second, and the most pertinent to Fallows' mission, required that the city “use their best efforts to secure the necessary action and if possible litigation...to protect and save Union Bag harmless from any claims, demands, or suits for the pollution of air and water caused by

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<sup>45</sup> Fallows, *Water Lords*, 139.

operations of the plant.” In a single sentence, Union had admitted not only that it fully expected to pollute the area, but that it expected Savannah itself to pick up the tab when it inevitably did.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps the most compelling work that Fallows and his team conducted that summer involved Union’s dusty ledgers and boxes full of “musty city files.” Union officials handed them over willingly at first, and a few men in management at the mill even consented to interviews for the project—telltale signs that the company felt unthreatened by the presence of ten skinny college kids—but later in the summer Union Camp shut its doors completely. Even so, Fallows and company gradually pieced together a fuller picture of just how important Savannah had been to Union. The company, they learned, had been in tremendous debt prior to 1935. But after its move to southern production, Union’s profits grew exponentially enough as to make it the world’s number one Kraft paper manufacturer.<sup>47</sup>

Union-Camp’s vocal (and oft-gruff) Executive Vice President John Ray proclaimed as late as July of 1970 that he “had [his] lawyers in Virginia research the question” of water usage and environmental law, and “they told us we could suck the state of Virginia out through the hole in the ground and was nothing anyone could do about it.”<sup>48</sup> But, as Fallows research showed, a fix might have been as easy as the relatively-inexpensive addition of clarifier tanks to clean out

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<sup>46</sup> Contract between Savannah and Union-Bag Paper Corporation, signed March 11, 1935.

<sup>47</sup> Namely, these were actions of the USGS.

Fallows, *Water Lords*, 154; *Ibid*, 218; Joe Purvis, *Savannah Bits and Pieces* (Savannah, Georgia: Kennickell Printing Company, 1976), 31. Because controversy over use of forested lands had taken up so much of the company’s energy—both in investment and through public relations efforts—one might imagine that they expected more trouble in the woods than in the water. But those debates of ownership would transfer easily into ideas of air and water. Fallows observed that there seemed to be a “peculiar schizophrenia” in ideas about property—specifically that more abstract components of the environment, such as air and water, “get protection from none of us.” Those who controlled the trees, it seemed, had all the power, but—as many residents and workers may have seen it—at least there were trees. “Men are like trees,” Savannah resident and local newspaper columnist Joe Purvis wrote in 1976, “[because] when one is cut down, there is another to take its place.” Forestry practices, of course, are not quite so ecologically simple. Union’s “working” loblolly forests only mimicked natural forests and created, ultimately, a homogenized, mono-cultural habitat in which animal populations became increasingly disoriented. For more on the concept of forest homogenization, see Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

<sup>48</sup> Ray interview, July 16, 1970.

free sediments and biologically re-stabilize the water before it reached the river. Other companies acted before Union-Camp, some of them larger, some of them smaller. International Paper announced in 1969 that it would spend one-hundred million dollars on pollution clean-up. Kimberly-Clark also announced a comprehensive environmental program around this time.<sup>49</sup>

Fallows' summation on Union-Camp's opportunity to be a trend-setter was crystal clear: “If any mill could [effectively] take the lead, this is it”<sup>50</sup> Union-Camp manager James Lientz announced in July of 1970—in the midst of the Project—that the company “recognized the need” for increased water quality.<sup>51</sup> But it would several more years before it took any action on a large scale. Prior to the release of the Nader case study, John Ray took the podium at the Savannah Rotary Club to defend his company's honor in the wake of the summer's uproar. For a second, he channeled Oglethorpe. “If by pollution we mean using nature's bounty and leaving it less pure,” he began with, “then, yes, we are polluters.” Ray hailed from a farm in Virginia and bilked his “southern-ness” for all it was worth—which, in a wealthy Savannah crowd, is a decent amount. He appealed to residents' sense of Union-Camp as a person within their midst—again, no different than “the housewife who does her weekly wash.” He did finally admit to the company's guilt in the oil spills of 1969, begged forgiveness for them, and then offered that there were quite a few chemicals that the plant did not emit at all—chief among them the fearful mercury. And Ray did make one indisputable point—that his company had been the first to install a black liquor oxidation system, which treats odor-producing compounds. But in the same breath he also blamed the sensitivity of the “human nose” for the paper industry's bad reputation.

Ray's public admission that the industry was “far from glamorous” perhaps rang truer than any statement a Union official had made in decades. For so long they had been touting that

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 71-72.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>51</sup> *Savannah News-Press*, July 11, 1970.

glamorous “world of tomorrow.” To be fair, his claim that “together” Savannah and the company had grown was also arguably correct. Ray's speech, line by line, is the digestion of the realization that with progress in a New South Savannah came irreversible environmental change with a very human face. He ended the night at the Rotary Club by reminding his audience why Union-Bag had moved to Savannah in the first place—to “make paper and grow trees.” Simple. True. It had never been a secret to anyone, that the company's major successes were sewn up out in the woods.<sup>52</sup> He spoke fire and brimstone of his company's success at marketing creativity, its innovation as a product *maker*. Ray seemed to be both lauding the company's history and shouting “gotcha!” at the southerners (and Americans) who had devoured its wares in amounts building by the millions each year. The 1970s, that was still a paper age. Ray still believed that preventative spending was akin to throwing money down a drain. “We are not going to spend our stockholders' money foolishly,” he told Fallows that summer.<sup>53</sup>

The students’ “raid” on information in Savannah created a moment—a visible window—in which the industrialization of the South and modern environmental concerns clashed head-on, all in front of its residents and all in real time. Although project team members such as Fallows and Schenckan vividly remember fielding verbalized concerns from Savannah citizens regarding the quality of their water and what it meant for the image of their town as well as for their personal well-being, there was no real precedent for legal action in the area regarding water. The team acted quickly to try and remedy the situation that summer by filing a trial lawsuit under the guise of a nearly-century old Georgia Refuse Act. But a year later, as *Water Lords* went to press, the summer lawsuit was still tied up in the court system.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> John Ray III, transcript of a Speech to the Savannah Rotary Club, October 19, 1970.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with John E. Ray III, conducted by Jim Fallows, 1970.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, Jim Fallows, with the author, 25 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author. Interview, Dirk Schenckan, with the author, 25 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author.

In January of 1971, in fact, Union Camp officials acknowledged that Nader's work had gotten their attention, if in a negative way at first. A press release from the company called the entire river project “erroneous, exaggerated, distorted and petty.”<sup>55</sup> But when the book's national release made waves the following summer, the company had very little choice but to recognize that there were environmental problems in Savannah that could be at least partly credited to the paper mill, if not largely so. And ad for the set of Nader studies released in September touted “More trouble!” for “the people who corrupt America.”<sup>56</sup> Union realized quickly that if they had any chance of saving face in Savannah and beyond, any chance of *not* becoming categorized as a “big evil corporation,” they would have to consent to huge changes.

That same year, 1971, a group of residents in the nearby town of Vernonburg--an upper-middle class suburb where many Union Camp officials actually lived--filed a lawsuit against the city of Savannah because of effluent flowing from two city sewage plants. Although already-existing facilities "treated" the water, it still flowed through the small creeks and rivers of Vernonburg, which lay just ten miles south of the Savannah city limits. The townspeople had moved to Vernonburg, according to Fallows, in order to "enjoy a scenic location" away from industry along the Savannah River. Again, this included many Union executives who had moved their families into the suburbs. Residents complained that their water was generally filthier and more pungent than the water in Savannah. The city's waste had been diverted to many smaller streams and outlets; this was one of them. Some who had picked the spot because of fishing and swimming opportunities became infuriated that the overwhelming “stench” prevented any of that. But there was another issue at play. Vernonburg's own sewage had to go somewhere as well. The town operated off a series of septic tanks that emptied in the direction of Savannah and other

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Display Ad 318, *The New York Times* 19 September 1971; *The Water Lords* was published alongside another Nader study—*Old Age: The Last Segregation: Ralph Nader's Study Group Report on Nursing Homes*.

surroundings suburbs. So its residents wanted Savannah's waste (including Union's) out of their backyards, but they were sending their own into someone else's.<sup>57</sup>

Vernonburg won its suit, and the courts ordered the city of Savannah to add an additional water treatment plant that would redirect the effluent, ironically enough, back into the Savannah River and away from the suburb in question. The solution included tax increases for everyone involved in the form of pollution abatement surcharges on water bills. The septic tanks in Vernonburg were found to pollute the Savannah River indirectly, so no legal action could be taken against them through the Water Quality Control Act. While the suit proved an undeniable triumph against water pollution in the area and its effects on citizens' everyday lives, it also caused quite a bit controversy because Savannah taxpayers--a group dealing with their own pollution problems--bore the brunt of its verdict.<sup>58</sup> It also marked the triumph of an *upper-middle-class* group, and the losers in this situation were arguably poorer residents who lived in the older parts of the city. Thus it entered an ongoing dialogue (still so today) of environmental racism—those times when pollution, in this case in the water, ends up in the poorest or minority-heavy portions of a city for reasons that are, at the very least, questionable. Class has always been a keystone point of contention in Savannah, as has been discussed throughout previous chapters, but in the late-twentieth century a wholly-new categorization developed. The “cultural rich”--those steeped in the ancestry of the Antebellum South who traded in images of Old South nostalgia—found themselves at metaphorical odds with those they referred to as the “Elks Club rich”--the newly-monied folks who had nice things but perhaps not as much “sophistication.”

The Vernonburg suit also challenges the ways in which we define "environmentalism." Historian Samuel P. Hays has posited that environmental suits like it arose from the ranks of the

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<sup>57</sup> Fallows, *The Water Lords*, 27.

<sup>58</sup> Fallows, *Water Lords*, 28.



American white middle class as a general symptom of post-World War II "affluenza." Once a family was well-off enough financially to move away from a city, or in this case from industry, Hays argues, they had also had enough time, space, and money to concern themselves with quality of life and standard of living issues. In other words, Hays has helped to create a prevalent historiography in which "environmentalism" is characterized once again as a white middle class phenomenon. It would be easy to categorize the Vernonburg incident--which involved mostly white, middle class families--as direct evidence for Hays' line of thinking, or even to go one step further and argue that, once again, the environmental activism of wealthier Americans resulted in the suffering of its poorer citizens. But one cannot assume that the Vernonburg residents knew that the ruling in their favor would result in more pollution and suffering for Savannah residents. Nor can one deny the importance of such a suit in creating a legal precedent for future suits by less-advantaged groups or its timely correlation to the students' presence in the Savannah area.<sup>59</sup>

The students, minus Fallows, unveiled the report at a small motel in Savannah to a crowd of 400 people in early 1971—some younger residents chanting “Right on!” and some older ones looking on with quiet nods. Upon the release of the book, Savannah officials spoke out against Union Camp more openly than ever before, as if Nader has provided the permission slip they had been waiting for. Chatham County's Director of Metropolitan Planning Commission, a man named Robert Savadge, compared Union to “an octopus whose tentacles reach into every facet of community life.” Union men still held positions on the Savannah City Council, the County Commission, the Port Authority, the Chamber of Commerce, local bank boards, and on his own board. In a special to the *Times*, within the wake of the motel release, a Savannah reporter spent time interviewing older residents who had seen the evolution of Union's relationship with the city.

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<sup>59</sup> See Hays' work, notably *Beauty, Health, and Permanence* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

That the company, combined with other plants along the Chatham corridor, was dumping at least 30 million gallons of raw waste in the Savannah River? “That,” answered one 72-year-old, a retired painter, “is the price of progress.”

Not everyone felt that way. Another 70-year-old Savannah native, a man named Homer Ray who served on many a city planning board in the 1950s and 1960s, called the culmination of pollution a “damned shame”—and one that action should and could have been taken against before 1970. When he worked for the city, Ray recalled, he used to look out his office window and see dozens of porpoises jumping up from the depths of the river, splashing up and down in quick succession. The reporter sensed, however, that for all the talk of porpoise nostalgia, Ray had never been impressed by the alleged “quaint charm” of his city. Of course that attitude flies in face of decades of image-building on the part of Savannah's society boosters. For Ray, the filth of industry and the aesthetic “quaintness” of the city proper had somehow found a way to co-exist and thrive together but detached, as if each part of Savannah had agreed to keep to itself, fill its pockets without looking over to see what its activities were doing to the other world nearby. When Homer Ray looked at the water in 1971, the water that was once his solace in the middle of a city he had mixed feelings about, what he saw was simply: “just dump and oil and garbage, that's all.”<sup>60</sup>

Savadge was then asked to explain his criticisms further. He offered that local politicians (many of whom he counted as friends) seemed averse to a pollution overhaul because it would mean more taxes for their constituents. And more taxes would mean that the animosity could be re-directed at local elected officials. Besides, Savadge added, he thought “too much had been done” to the river already. His calls for help were more equivalent to concessive sighs. “I'd like

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<sup>60</sup> James T. Wooten, “In River City of Savannah, Old-timers Recall Pollution Free Days,” *The New York Times* 28 January 1971, 16.

to keep my job [so I won't say much more],” he offered with a fair amount of sarcasm, “but funny things happen in a town like this.” A passive-aggressive argument over racial unity in Savannah erupted when Ray and another older resident being interviewed for the *Times* article interacted on a park bench in one of Savannah's squares. The other man made a horribly racist comment to Ray, to which Ray only replied: “Just like the [black residents] in this town will never be what he wants, the river will never again [be what we want].”<sup>61</sup>

The amazing outcome of Fallows' “community-based” activism is that it did have a huge impact in its immediate vicinity. Nearby existed a paper mill town which was exactly the opposite of Savannah—namely, in Fallows' observation, it had no cultural boosterism that could cover its industrial being with a metaphorical perfume. This is St. Mary's, in Camden County, where a company from Vermont called Gilman Brothers had established a mill in 1941, hopeful for southern success in the wake of the paper migration into the piney woods. St. Mary's was settled by the Spanish early but not incorporated until 1802; geographically, it serves as a gateway to the Cumberland Island National Seashore. In recent decades the town has undergone a push from its tourism board towards embracing its nineteenth century past, but in 1970 Fallows described it as a place so void of a southern-ness that the “graceful gray-green moss that drips from trees in other Georgia towns is [completely] gone.”<sup>62</sup> It produced only one-third the amount of paper that Union-Camp in Savannah did, but nearby residents would voice similar concerns about pollution in the 1970s because of the state of the nearby St. Mary's River.<sup>63</sup> It would also arguably become a more contested ground for workers' rights than its larger sister-city, in a court case that involved the alleged use of a hit man and sulfuric acid as a weapon.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 103.

<sup>63</sup> Information on the Gilman Brothers and St. Mary's in large part from Fallows' expose article on the Gilman Brothers, published in *Southern Exposure* (1982).

St. Mary's was a “company town” in every sense of the word. Its grittiness, its growing filth, had no filter as Savannah did. It was not that Savannah could deny being a company town—it certainly was in part—but the Nader team found that Savannah residents had better tricked themselves into thinking that their world was just as peaceful and beautiful as in the gothic novels they still read. In early 1973, Fallows (back from a trip that had kept him from the unveiling) was contacted by a man named Wyman Westbury. Westbury had spent years as a millworker at the St. Mary's paper plant—run by a northern company called Gilman Brothers. After the Savannah River Project broke the local and then national news, Wyman became a vocal opponent of Gilman's environmental practices. He worked with the local newspaper to secure investigations for possible violations of federal pollution regulations—in other words, exactly what Nader and Fallows had urged local citizens to do.

Westberry claimed he was fired for his activities. Gilman went on record that Westberry had been fired for throwing acid on a black employee at the mill; they painted Westberry as an ignorant racist. But those claims never stuck, mostly because anyone who knew and spoke to Westberry could never believe him capable of such a heinous physical act. Wyman eventually got his job back, under pressure from the community and lawyers, but went on to file a lawsuit against three executives at the St. Mary's mill—George Brumley, Robert Harrison, and Tommy Thomas. In it, he accused the men of attempted murder. Ample evidence had emerged that the Gilman men had hired and paid a local hit man—a fellow St. Mary's worker named Lawrence Brown—one thousand dollars to off Westberry. In front of a grand jury in Savannah, Westberry calmly told the judge: “If telling the truth is being openly critical, then I have told the truth.” After a delay in sentencing, all three Gilman employees were eventually convicted of conspiracy to commit murder. One of them also earned extra time for lying to the FBI. In 1982, Fallows

headed back to coastal Georgia to pen an article about Westberry's case—and he entitled it “How Wyman Westberry beat Gilman Brothers Paper.”<sup>64</sup>

Fallows' model set fire to local residents, many of whom felt nothing less than emboldened by the power of ecological information. Thirteen black employees sued the company for three million dollars in pollution-control equipment and eventually won the suit in June of 1975. Tax-free bonds in excess of thirty-five million dollars were also approved for Union Camp facilities in 1973, and since the mid-1970s Union has publicly prided itself on efforts to further curb pollution. In the past two decades, coastal Georgia has seen a substantial shift from industry to tourism. Summer homes and golf communities are replacing paper-making facilities in Chatham County at alarming speed. This is no surprise. Many of the paper companies bought stock in these subdivisions, knowing full well that they would require a lot of paper and lumber. National cuts in timber demand have egged this process along, although International Paper--which bought out Union Camp in 1999--remains the largest landowner in the United States. The Savannah Plant has undergone 475 million dollars' worth of environmental upgrades since 1980, including filters that cut sulfur releases by a full ninety percent and Aquifer use by thirty-five percent.<sup>65</sup> And the public relations machines got back to work as well, claiming that in the 1980s “workers on the mill floor produced some of the best ideas on how to achieve even greater efficiency.”<sup>66</sup>

Reflecting on the Savannah River Project in 2002, a local columnist suggested rather boldly that the project and its book-length study had “provided the central thesis for other communities” struggling to remove themselves from the tight grasp of industry. The very

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<sup>64</sup> “Former Official Linked in Murder Plot,” *Savannah Morning News* October 16 1975; “Sentencing Delayed,” *Rome News-Tribune* January 22 1976.

<sup>65</sup> *Savannah Morning News*, June 7, 2002.

Ben Werner, “A Landscape Changed,” *Savannah Morning News*, Oct. 6, 2002.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24.

concept of a “central community thesis” should be resurrected not just in the South but perhaps anywhere and everywhere. The book “sold like hotcakes” when it was released in the summer of 1971 and in reasonable numbers thereafter, and received national attention as part of the country’s broader-based environmental movement. It undoubtedly played a role in drumming up support for the Clean Water Act in 1972, as well as countless other federal measures in the following decades. Also notable is the forceful nature by which the project thrust eco-activism into the South. That Ralph Nader exerted the time, money, and energy to isolate Savannah, Georgia, as a locale typical of the rest of the industrialized nation signified a shift in the ways that Americans viewed the South as well as the ways that southerners viewed themselves.<sup>67</sup>

Inasmuch that the Savannah River Project--and even, some might say, all of Nader's projects in the 1960s and 1970s--serve as "windows" through which the historian may view punctuated moments of American attitudinal change and activism, the rattling off of environmental policy adjustments since the summer of 1970 would seem a bit hypocritical. The more important value of historicizing the project, and Nader for that matter, is to emphasize the confluence of social forces--industrialization, the environmental movement, the student activist thrust, and the citizens of Savannah, to name a few--that converged during that summer to help the historian restructure the picture of not only "environmentalism" or "activism" but also the 1970s more generally. Defining "environmentalism," in fact, seems quite trite when the bigger realization is that Nader, his students, and the residents of Savannah entered a national dialogue that remains with us to this day--a complex one concerned with, among myriad other issues,

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<sup>67</sup> David Charles Donald, “It surrounds us and defines us,” *Savannah Morning News*, June 8, 2002; Bret Bell and Mary Landers, “Fallows Returns to the Scene of the Grime,” *Savannah Morning News* 23 August 2003 Interview with Jim Fallows, Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley.

corporate power, land ownership, and pollution control. Herein may lie an example of what historian Andrew Hurley has called a perfect “marriage of environmental and social history.”<sup>68</sup>

Nader reflected on the summer of 1970 some thirty years after its passing and emphasized its importance as a punctuated national momentum. It was, Nader recalls, "a time when many young students came to Washington," then dispersed throughout the country "to investigate corporate and government wrongdoing and write books from their research that received wide notice and brought significant changes." Some, including Jim Fallows, tend to argue that the impetus of the early 1970s--and especially among America's youth--turned fleeting. Fallows had traveled to work on a labor gang in Ghana by the time *Water Lords* was published in 1971. "I picked up a moldy, sea-soaked author's copy" at the post office in Ghana, Fallows recently recalled, and it "seemed like some space capsule from a different universe."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, xiv.

<sup>69</sup> Jim Fallows and Ralph Nader, "The Breakfast Table," *Slate Magazine*, May 2, 2002.

## CONCLUSION: A GHOST SOUTH WITH SMOKESTACKS

*“The mill stands as a brawny testament to the American work ethic; it once rarely stopped its huge machines because they were too expensive to re-start, but now it's taking on the feel of a ghost town with smokestacks.”*

(Reporter Tom Barton, *Savannah Morning News*, January 2002)<sup>1</sup>

*“Because sash and loblolly are intolerant of fire, the tree farmers, with Smokey as mascot, kept fire back. Within ten years a canopy would close, and the commercial plantation was dark within—darker than you can imagine a forest being.”*

(Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 1999)<sup>2</sup>

In 1976, a retired editor of *Atlanta* magazine, Betsy Fancher, wrote a collection of essays about Savannah—the city, she claims, that had charmed her into believing the South was still a place that possessed a regal kind of magic. She admitted, even boasted that, Savannah had been a city “almost captured” on numerous occasions. But in her mind, the Mother City always had the foresight to “seduce her captors”—from Tecumseh Sherman, who had found the city too beautiful to burn, to the “industrialists” who brought Georgia out of the grips of the Great Depression. There was a slew of similarly honey-drenched local histories published in the mid-seventies; it was as if older Savannahians needed desperately to reclaim their agency in the face of Nader's big reveal of the dirtier Savannah. In a sense, these efforts worked, for they successfully re-crafted a fluid social narrative with the suggestion that Savannah's officials had,

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<sup>1</sup>Tom Barton, “Editorial: Savannah must do a better job of replacing brawn with brains,” *Savannah Morning News* Jan. 27, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 125.



in fact, seduced Union Bag in 1935—gaining some level of power in the ordeal.<sup>3</sup> In turn, the re-crafting also re-focused cultural and historical attention to the city's center—often an elite place, and one rippled with distractingly exotic stories.

In 1994, John Berendt, a self-professed “Yankee” writer, pulled this very localist vision of Savannah into the national cultural consciousness with *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, often mistaken for a novel but a purely non-fiction account of a sexually-charged murder allegedly committed by a member of Savannah’s elite circle. The accused was none other than Jim Williams—famed Savannah interior decorator and proprietor of the city's purportedly “most haunted” home, the Hampton-Lillibridge House on St. Julian Street.<sup>4</sup> On the other side of the street, Mills Lane (banker and son of the founder of Citizens bank, which had been largely financially responsible for bringing Union Bag down in 1935) owned a string of homes; both stood in opposition of what they called the “bulldozer and the architect.” Any reader, though, quickly realizes that far more important than the trial or the architecture that Berendt documents is his overall literary interpretation of the city as perhaps the most southern place on earth.<sup>5</sup> Presenting a cast of beyond-eccentric characters, Berendt proposes that Savannah is a city lost within itself, isolated and forever caught in the gardenia-scented, gin-soaked mores of a mythic Old South that other places have fought to erase. He presents the one picture southern historians do not want to see. There is no progressive narrative here.

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<sup>3</sup> Fancher, *Savannah: Renaissance of the Heart*; Joe Purvis, *Savannah Bits and Pieces*; Coffey, *Only in Savannah*. These were books that included such passionate commentaries on Savannah's social history—although heavily biased and in need of analysis by the historian's hand—that I have quoted them and incorporated them into this dissertation. They represent, among many others' work, the effort to resurrect this delicate, stored “elitism” in Savannah historical culture in the 1960s and 1970s.

<sup>4</sup> Atlanta write Betsy Fancher spotlighted Williams in several of her essays on Savannah tourism and history; in 1976, she wrote an entire piece about an exorcism he performed to rid his property of “Savannah's ghosts.”

<sup>5</sup> This turn of phrase—the “most southern place on earth”—is obviously loaded, so to speak, and has been best employed in the title to one of Professor Cobb's works.

Berendt is clearly the outsider in his own story, a willing carpetbagger; he is a Fallows without an agenda, there simply to absorb and record. He, in turn, attracts Savannah's odd-ducks like flies to peach juice. Some of them want to flaunt their peculiarities as if those oddities were trophies, to show an intruder like Berendt that they can thrive only in a place as untouched as Savannah. The city might still be shrouded in a less-than-pretty past, this narrative puts forth, but at least it allows individualism to flourish. If we are to believe Berendt and in his southern gothic Savannah, then it is a place where blacks still stay away from whites for the most part, where the police will turn a blind eye to wealthy men driving with cocktails at the helms of their Cadillacs, and the hypocrisies of homophobia still thrive the way they did in, say, 1954.

But, in some ways, Berendt was no different than the others. The Southern mythology he exposed, so raw, for its classism and racism captured him even as he captured it. But in a way, he lets the tale of the withering aristocracy win again. Didn't he smell the sulphur in the air? Did he not know where the real money was in Savannah? His is often a South Romantic without the South Industrial. Those two do not, of course, actually exist without one another. Unlike the Northeast and Midwest, southern industry has always been more rural, so it can be more easily hidden. Savannah *now* is indeed designed to make people forget. A beautification and gentrification process started in 1960s, but it has been since the early 1980s that its tourism industry has become one of the most lucrative in the South; this includes everything from "Old South" style bed and breakfasts to bluesy concert venues to Paula Deen's infamous The Lady and Sons Restaurant, where tourists wait in a long line to eat heaping bowls of mashed potatoes and chicken livers family-style.<sup>6</sup> The National Park Service's quest to preserve as much of

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<sup>6</sup> The "tourist-ization" of Savannah ; Robert Hodder, "Historic Preservation Planning and the Social Construction of a Historic Landscape, 1955-1985," in Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver, ed., *Planning the Twentieth Century American City* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 361-391; Fancher, *Renaissance of the Heart*, 91-108.

downtown Savannah under the historic places register has contributed even more to Savannah's city image of preservation and isolation.

But the indisputable fact is that one does not have to travel far to find the smokestacks around Savannah or anywhere in the piney woods corridor. Take a road trip through the flat lines of North Louisiana, and then sweep up into southern Arkansas, or take back-roads from the Florida panhandle into Alabama and Mississippi—in all these places, long cylindrical towers pop up out of seemingly nowhere, down dusty highways, in the middle of aging towns that had nothing to offer but a few jobs at the mill. South Georgia is the same. Savannah was and is different, of course. It has always been something of its own, not a company town in the most direct sense. Yet it was the foreshadower, the comer; it opened up the era of the southern subsidies. The Old South is a symbolic oasis at the city center, but it is a mirage that fades quickly—something that nearby rural Georgians have known all too well.

Georgia nature writer Janisse Ray was born in Appling County just a few years before Fallows arrived in Savannah, the daughter of a failing rural ideal. Ray contends that her hometown of Baxley, Georgia, about 90 miles slightly-southwest of Savannah, is now “about as ugly as a place gets.”<sup>7</sup> There, Highway One weaves through a dry but tangled scene of wiregrass expanse, cutover fields, aging trailer parks, and the occasional junkyard. Oddly, only a few dozen miles away, the Altamaha River runs smooth, an ecologically-rich but hotly-contested wetland complex—a bastion for shore birds (though some of them near-extinction now) and weekend adventurers. Disconnected from the riverbeds as well as from the Atlantic, a town like Baxley is lost within itself in Georgia—rural but so close to the urban, dry but thirsting for nearby water, old but begging for renewal. Pines once grew quickly, like sprouts, in the earth there, and some of them lived a really, really long time. But most of the “virgin” longleaf forest

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<sup>7</sup>Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 3.

has been gone for years now, its patterns along the landscape broken both by ecological changes and the lumbering hand.<sup>8</sup>

Car parts stacked to the heavens, knees scraped and muddy from dirt-pile playgrounds, it was in the abyss of one of Baxley's roadside junkyards that Ray learned her way around a limited Georgia landscape as a child. Raised in part by an Evangelical father who turned trash into treasure and attempted to pray his way through a nervous breakdown, Ray grew up with virtually nothing in a material sense but exited her childhood with a keen sense of curiosity, of wondering where her family might fit into a bigger map of both cultural geography and ecology. She understood that her home had not always looked the way it came to in the late twentieth century—just the echo of a lost pine forest, as she describes it.<sup>9</sup> When she left the South as a teenager, though, she did not even know what a longleaf pine really looked like. She hadn't seen any in her backyard, or along the dusty highway during jaunts to church; by then, the pines were largely gone, or bundled into highly-managed industrial plantations. What she could surmise from her own family's genealogical folkways is that her ancestors had “lumbered across the landscape like tortoises,” burning and clear-cutting through the pine in a quest for subsistence.<sup>10</sup>

Appling County, and countless other hinterland-areas that splayed away from Savannah like fingers on a hand, by the 1960s and 1970s, struggled to continue feeding the industries which had so drastically altered the southern landscape. Two decades after leaving Baxley, trained in ecology and mournful of the hometown landscape she never *really* knew, Ray returned

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<sup>8</sup>The use of the term “virgin” with “longleaf forest” is about as common *and* controversial as the use of the term “contested” with “landscape.” Throughout this work, I generally only use the exact term when I am referencing an area that someone *else* has deemed “virginal” in their own research or writing. I do not claim to make any summations in this work about the conditions of the forest during Native American inhabitation or prior. For a deep discussion of the longleaf forest and this “virginity” debate, see: Lawrence Early, *Looking for Longleaf: The Rise and Fall of an American Forest* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and Albert G. Way, *Conserving Southern Longleaf*

<sup>9</sup> Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

home and composed a venerable funeral dirge to the lost Georgia longleaf pine. Her book—*Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*—has quickly become a kind of modern classic among both academics and the more mainstream public. It weaves stories of a childhood in the dry, dusty trailer park together seamlessly with the ecological evolution of the pines, the wiregrass, and several native species that have struggled with resiliency under increasingly hostile conditions.

By the opening of the twentieth century, only two million acres remained of Georgia longleaf pine. The original “virgin” longleaf forest was largely gone by the 1930s, when the southern paper industry began encouraging the growth of new trees exclusively for its use.<sup>11</sup> And by the year 2000, natural stands of longleaf—which means stands *not* planted at all, whether by farmers or industrialists—had fallen to one percent, in its place fire-resistant and quick-growing slash and loblolly. Much of these virginal stands are now on preserved or privately-owned land. The advent of wildfire suppression—a trend that has its roots in debates as early as the seventeenth century but peaked in the early twentieth century in the form of educational forestry programs—also interrupted the longleaf forest’s ecological sequence. In its place have grown other mimic-species like loblolly (*pinus taeda*), which is shorter than longleaf and more native to the Piedmont region but serves many of its same purposes in an industrial sense.<sup>12</sup> Companies like Union spent so much time developing “super” species, however, that they largely learned how to make Kraft and corrugated boxes from loblolly and slash pines just as perfectly as they had once birthed from the longleaf. Their genetically-modified seeds push these species to mature up to eight years faster than they would on their own. Half of the world’s

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<sup>11</sup> Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Some distinctions: In the coastal plain, longleaf (*pinus palustris*) and slash (*p. caribaea*) thrive. In the Piedmont, loblolly have traditionally mean the most common pine. And in the upper elevations of the Appalachian Mountains, shortleaf (*p. echinata*) and scrub (*p. Virginiana*) pine reign.

tree plantations are in the American South, and it will house an anticipated 52 million acres by 2040.

In the end, then, the SRP did little to change the actual landscape of paper-making. In 2003, though, the *Savannah Morning News* rode the nostalgia train when it joined forces with the PEW Center to hold a reunion event for the Savannah River Project.<sup>13</sup> Fallows showed up for various appearances and bespoke of the study's ongoing legacy in the community. He has largely cut ties with Ralph Nader these days, but he looks fondly back on his time as an activist. He works now as chief correspondent in China for the world-renowned *Atlantic Monthly*, and his essays periodically show up in online news magazines like *Slate* and *Salon*. Savannah Project member Dirk Schenkken, in a phone call with me, recently reflected on the impact of the community study, and the reunion, and remains a bit disheartened at the obscurity that projects like it have unfortunately slipped in to. “What we did was part of a national consciousness-awakening movement that brought environmental issues to the forefront of social discourse and politics,” he remembers, “and led to major improvements in laws and environmental practices”—some that persist to this day, some that do not.<sup>14</sup>

The legacy of the SRP is now one composed mainly of this nostalgia for activism, and “sweetheart deals” continue apace in the South. In 1993, for example, Alabama officials notoriously offered Mercedes a nearly-three-million dollar subsidy to open a massive manufacturing plant near Tuscaloosa. The state's government was so hell bent on bringing the car producer (and its prestigious name brand) through their tax doors that they even bartered with a promise to purchase vehicles for their employees. Once the deal went public, sixty-three thousand local labor applications reportedly circulated into Mercedes' hands. But the German

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Landers, “Forum to Revisit 'Water Lords',” *Savannah Morning News* March 30, 2003

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Interview, Dirk Schenkkan, with the author, 25 February 2007, notes in the possession of the author.

company only planned to hire about fifteen hundred people. Officials believed that number would inevitably grow. They also retained faith in the theory that industry usually begot more industry, and then more growth. So despite the fact that Mercedes could count on a thirty-percent wage decrease by moving into the American Deep South, Alabama boosters remained convinced that the state itself would emerge the real financial winner in this situation. Notably, the Governor even threatened to siphon some of the needed funds from the state's education budget—until a group of impassioned teachers petitioned hard enough to prevent his re-appropriation. That fact in particular did much to feed the stereotype of southern aversion to educational growth in the face of monetary gains. Would the South always sell itself to industry, sacrificing any chance at intellectual, environmental, or cultural growth?<sup>15</sup>

Evidently so, for Mercedes was far from the only foreign dealer to set up shop in the Deep South. Honda, Hyundai, Nissan, and BMW all moved to the South in during the 1990s as well. These new “outsourced” industries grew alongside established ones like paper, timber, oil, and textiles. But what is perhaps most unsettling is that many of these foreign companies have done little to hide their reasons for outsourcing; most common among them are lower labor costs and lower environmental standards. Southern subsidies no longer require that elusive “psychological” manicuring that the paper industry once confronted.

Even on these terms, Savannah, too, seeks to lure newer and bigger businesses. A “mega site” was groomed and sectioned off in nearby Pooler in the early 2000s for Chrysler, but the car maker never moved in. Volkswagon also passed it up, choosing a site in Alabama instead. Mitsubishi eventually bought up the space, sandwiched in between two major interstates, but for over five years the land sat empty, hopeless—like a banner for the South's willingness to attract

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<sup>15</sup> The 1993 Mercedes/Alabama story is “common knowledge,” so to speak, but I was made aware of its sheer importance through James Cobb's mention in *Globalization and the American South*.

more industry and more jobs from the highest bidder, or any bidder for that matter.<sup>16</sup> That these industrial sites sit at the periphery and not *in* Savannah allow the city's tourism boosters to remain in a seeming slumber to the economic realities of this “newest” version of a New South.

James Cobb has pointed out that it makes the most sense to view the globalization of Southern manufactures as an ongoing process that requires compromises from all the parties involved. It is not something that just “happens,” not a modern reality that we have all been barreling toward with a sense of inevitability. Globalization also has everything to do with the local, ironically, as it is on the most minute levels that culture clashes bring to academia wholly new challenges. The academic realization that perhaps the South has not been as isolated or as unique as originally thought was a direct product of scholars' broadening their view to a global stage. In terms of racism, poverty, and alleged industrial “sell-outs,” the South has actually looked like much of the world for much of its existence. And however loose its environmental standards, however lax its labor laws, in the new global economy there is always a place that is looser, laxer, and more desperate; there will always be a place willing to out-Dixie Dixie.

By the 1990s, Union Camp represented diversified forest products across the South. It held packaging plants in Atlanta, Augusta, Griffin, Statesboro, and Tifton and lumber mills in Folkston and Meldrim (all of these are in Georgia) and others scattered throughout the Carolinas and Virginia.<sup>17</sup> In 1995, its CEO, a Princeton economics graduate and Harvard MBA recipient named Craig McClelland, delivered a moving and detailed manifesto on the company's history and its enduring legacy in crafting an “American Dream”--namely that it had risen from the ashes of failure and adversity to status of corporate player. McClelland represented a new wave

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<sup>16</sup> For information on the “Pooler” mega-site, see the series of articles published in the *Savannah Morning News* (searchable at SavannahNow.com), notably, Mary Carr Mayle, “What's Wrong with Pooler's Megasite,” July 12, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, “Union Camp” entry.



of paper men, though, a group trained not in the art of paper-making or sales but instead in business strategies. They hailed from the Ivy League schools in the Northeast, not from the southern woods. Union-Camp had given up the guise of “becoming southern”--something they attempted through their merger in 1956 and again in battling Nader's study—and had completely re-embraced their Northern roots.

McClelland had served for 21 years at Hammermill, moving from the marketing department to the office of President and Chief Executive Officer. In 1988, he was hired on as Union Camp Executive Vice President, then became President and COO, and finally occupying the Chairman and CEO position in the early 1990s. Before his 1995 address to the entire company and its stockholders, the COO of Union Camp introduced him with this famous line from Benjamin Disraeli: “We are not creatures of circumstance, we are creators of circumstance.” And in a new market—one that was bigger, more global—the company wanted to utilize those skills of “circumstance creation” in brand new ways.<sup>18</sup>

With McClelland at the helm, Union Camp boasted 18,300 employees and 1.5 million acres of timber in the late '90s, but in a global market its profits were only about a fourth of what consolidated giants Weyerhaeuser and Georgia-Pacific could pull in. The third “king of paper”--International Paper—stepped forward to acquire Union Camp in 1999, just four years after McClelland had pledged to take the company in new directions. It became clear, in that moment, that he had likely been vetted *for* the purpose of preparing the company. The Calder and Camp families sold for 7.9 billion dollars; they presented it as a “merger” to the media, but it became clear within a few months that it was nothing but a traditional buy-out. Paper companies are still operating all across the piney woods; but they are, like Union Camp, now ghosts of their former, smaller selves-- consolidated, mechanized, and under new ownership. With bigger pockets, they

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<sup>18</sup> McClelland, “Union Camp,” 1-4.

are also more capable of bringing existing mills up to the stricter environmental standards in the U.S.

Donna Katula, environmental group leader for International Paper, went on record in the mid-2000s claiming that each new employee now and forever will receive environmental stewardship training. The Savannah plant also generates some of its own power now, via two turbines that run off steam from bark collected and burned during the chip-making process. The mill has new furnaces to reduce the odor, although most southerners know that *completely* getting rid of the sulphur smell is next to impossible. Not many people comment that it “smells like money” anymore. The *Savannah Morning News*' website is consistently full of sarcastic bloggers, in fact, that comment on the persistent odor. The IP mill makes some of its local revenue now by selling excess power to Savannah residents. There is a 500-acre landfill nearby for IP's exclusive use, but the company has claimed over and over again that it strives to use it very rarely. It still goes through roughly fifteen million gallons a day of water.<sup>19</sup> Environmental organizations are urging companies like IP to turn exclusively to post-consumer materials, to no avail thus far.<sup>20</sup> The booster idea, now of old, that “forests have always been a major source of prosperity and serenity for Georgians” is becoming more and more of a distant dream every day.<sup>21</sup> It is difficult to say whether IP is a “better citizen” than Union was; its operations remain, as these facts collectively show, a mixed bag.<sup>22</sup>

Now the payroll is down to just several hundred at IP in Savannah. A local newspaper columnist claimed that he heard a bartender downtown yell late one night, “Where’s Ralph

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<sup>19</sup>Werner, “A Landscape Changed.”

<sup>20</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council, “Paper Industry Laying Waste to North American Forests,”

<sup>21</sup>Steinbeck, “Changing Forests,” p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Sean Harder, “Old Fight, New Faces,” *Savannah Morning News* January 13, 2005.

Nader when you need him?”<sup>23</sup> Maybe that bartender was upset because he remains unsatisfied with the ecological conditions of the Savannah River or Chatham County in general. Or perhaps he understood that Nader’s presence in Savannah had much to do with regulating corporate power, with finding an equilibrium at which residents and local industries could peacefully co-exist in a sustainable and mutually-beneficial environment. International Paper has cut production significantly in the past two decades, a fact which the company itself blames on decreases in national demand for Kraft paper. But these cuts in production also coincide with tightened environmental regulations for air and water pollution from the local, state, and federal levels. Many Savannah residents may now be wondering what their landscape will look like without any American industry at all. When Nader’s group charged down South in 1970, no one imagined that the lack of a binding relationship between industry and residents would be the product of downsizing instead of dirty water.

“Its [the mill’s] future is largely the subject of speculation,” one Savannah reporter wrote in 2002, and “dependent on a machine called the Number 8.” Once so prideful in its simultaneous operation of up to ten bag machines at once, most of the corridors there are empty now. The plant is still producing up to International Paper’s standards. But mechanization has cut jobs so heavily (down from 2,600 when IP bought the mill to just 1,200 six years later and now less than half of that) that the mill no longer feels like part of Savannah’s community. The odor of the sulphur used to “smell like money” to residents because many of their paychecks came directly from Union Camp. Now, “unless the wind blows just right,” the mill hardly comes up in casual conversation, one local has shared. Former presidents of Union Bag and Union Camp, even if controversial elite figures, made enough appearances out and about within the community that workers and their families could feel consistently that the company held a stake

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<sup>23</sup>Werner, “A Landscape Changed.”

in Savannah's overall welfare. The top-ranking IP executive in Savannah “hardly casts a shadow” anywhere in the town and cancelled several times on a phone interview with a *Savannah Morning-News* reporter before she printed a recent story about its machine closings; she went to press without any of his input.<sup>24</sup>

Some still rely on the company as a career, though. Rex Coleman, who graduated high school in Savannah in 1980, goes to work there every day to operate Machine 8. His grandmother, father, and father-in-law all worked there as well—back in the era when high schoolers considered Union Camp one of their most lucrative options, when paper-making was the “world of tomorrow.” Coleman's son Josh started with him in the utilities department fresh from high school, learning to work the boiler units. So there remain some generations of workers on site. But this is becoming rarer by the day. The ideas of industrial order tend to remain, though, perhaps only for appearances' sake. In 2011, the Chamber of Commerce named the IP mill's current manager Walter Chastang the Savannah Industrial Person of the Year. The modern building on the river is, arguably, now a safer place where quality, efficient equipment, environmental standards, and cost competitiveness work together to make the industry's very reputation cleaner and stronger. But everything is smaller, and everything is mechanized.<sup>25</sup>

Floyd Adams, a prominent black resident whose family bought the *Savannah Herald* in 1949 (he has been known in town as the “little press boy”), said in 2002 that without a doubt “what has saved Savannah and the people is the Clean Air Act.”<sup>26</sup> But thirty years after the Vernonburg sewage lawsuit (in which suburbanites addressed the mills' effluents in their taps and streams) at least one resident claimed that IP still had work to do “getting the crap out of the river,

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<sup>24</sup> “What's Left in the Bag?,” *Savannah Morning-News* 28 April, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Carr Mayle, “IP Mill Celebrates 75 Years,” *Savannah Morning News* online edition Oct. 22, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Floyd Adams, Interviewed by Kiernan Taylor, Southern Oral History Project Collection #4007, R-0168.

literally.”<sup>27</sup> New accusations appear constantly. Starting in 2000, a nearby poultry plant in Claxton County warranted complaints of water pollution.<sup>28</sup> The very reputation of industry in Savannah is marred, considered dirty. It would be easy then, to blame the environmental “dream” for the death of the paper dream in Dixie. But IP's buyout of Union-Camp is the more-likely culprit; it represented the American papermaker's flight from the South, the spreading of its global and more cost-efficient wings.

So much of what created the original paper dream in the South was the quest for the kind of disposability that is now shunned by American progressive society. In 1851, Francis Wolle's invention of a machine that could churn out paper bags made shopping convenient. In the 1950s, when everything was printed on paper, American school children headed off each day with backpacks full of notepads, workbooks, and, of course, a brown bag lunch. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, though, environmentalists warn us that we all should be using washable bags again. Women from the 1920s, the women who were so eager to throw away their own cloths and embrace containers they could toss out with the garbage for not a lot of money, perhaps would have laughed to know that almost a hundred years later we have realized cloth is the best thing to reuse.<sup>29</sup>

For as much as progressive Americans like their recycling, though, many still do not understand their trees. In 1990, botanist-cum-essayist Michael Pollan suggested that urban America had become a society coddled by shade trees to read books under. Planting a tree means driving to a nursery, or just to Wal-Mart, purchasing a seedling for thirty dollars, and then

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<sup>27</sup>Mary Landers, “The Vernon River is murky and so are explanations why,” *Savannah Morning News*, July 14, 2003; State of Georgia, Environmental Publications, “Vernonburg, Georgia,”; Charles D. DeLorme, Jr. and Norman J. Wood, “Savannah River Improvement and Environmental Protection,” *Land Economics*, Vol. 50 No. 3 (August 1974), pp. 284-288.

<sup>28</sup>Gail Krueger, “Awash in Pollution: Family's Canoochee River spot is threatened by poor water quality,” *Savannah Morning News*, June 17, 2000.

<sup>29</sup> See Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York: Holt Publishers, 2000).

watching it sprout almost overnight in a decorative pot on the back patio. Most Americans, he claimed, have taken to planting things like the weeping willow (*Salix babylonia*)--known to many with a more sophisticated palate as, simply, the “Tree of Immediate Gratification.” Pollan views the lack of desire to plant what he sees as *real* trees—oaks and pines and stately maples—as synonymous with a lack of investment in an ecological future for everyday Americans. “True, we have less space to work in, and we move every five years or so,” he wrote, “but I can't help thinking some cultural pathology is also at work here, some failure of imagination about the future.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, we might identify such a phenomenon as “urban apathy.” For modern city dwellers, trees are not the future—they are idealism, means, and leisure time. Time, means, idealism and leisure are four things rural Georgians had and have precious little of. Somewhere between a shade-less farm, where the trees are valuable and practical, and a shaded city, where trees are anything but practical, is a pine plantation, where paper still comes from.

In American culture, paper has become a laughable entity, spotlighted every week as a dying interest on the immensely popular television show *The Office*. In it, the struggling *Dunder Mifflin Paper Company* works as a middle-man between paper producers and office consumers; in one iconic episode, its manager Michael Scott makes a presentation in a business class at a local community college. One of the students raises a hand and wittily demands, “How must we believe that a paper company can survive in an increasingly paperless world?” Indeed, the first and perhaps most pervasive new situation is that America is no longer made of traditional paper at all. The crossroads of an environmental debate centered in Savannah takes place here: where disposability no longer signifies sophistication and the once-lauded innovation of paper-making. In this sense, it was smart of paper men like the Calders to buy interest in other manufactures, and to participate so actively in the chemicals industry. International Paper sustains itself now

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<sup>30</sup> From Michael Pollan, “Putting Down Roots,” *The New York Times Magazine* 6 May 1990.

not off of paper bags (most people use plastic these days anyway) or the *actual* paper that used to go into Union-Camp's notepads or home goods, but instead off of the products that remain timely—multiwall bags, chemically-treated products like wax, and the sectors still embracing disposability—the fast food industry, chief among them.

And that is the catch. With the advent of the fast food empire, the world is actually consuming more paper than ever. The business world and the social networking complexes might be paperless, but the average consumer is anything but. Meanwhile, the American paper industry has turned to an equally-global expansion. The Savannah mill is no longer representative of what the industry looks like—in any way. It is moving its production into countries like Russia, China, and Indonesia in droves—and for some of the same reasons that Union originally moved southward: low wages and low environmental oversight. In Central America, paper companies are stripping trees in ways similar to the cutover period of the South in the 1880s. It is their new “Dixie,” but this time they didn't need the boosters. Environmental organizations like Greenpeace and the Natural Resources Defense Council have mused that one of America's twenty-first century exports is, in fact, deforestation. These are heavy claims.

The best scholarly summation on the global paper industry thus far was a British study commissioned by the World Rainforest Movement in 1996; entitled “Pulping the South,” it examines the consequences of monocultural tree plantations south of the Equator. Behind the U.S., Brazil is home to the largest acreage of genetically-altered pulpwood trees. Not far behind are Chile and Indonesia. Right off the bat, the study's authors (a group of researchers trained primarily in ecology) acknowledge that it has been in the realm of water treatment that the pulp and paper industry had received disdain worldwide. They also venture, just as I have here, that large sectors of society have handed the paper industry a “free pass” in the forests because the

industry continues to re-plant where they cut.<sup>31</sup> Still growing at an alarming rate every year, however, the global pulpwood industry is an aggressive and transformative business. Its full environmental implications have not yet been measured.

International Paper remains the single largest paper concern in the world, followed by a Swedish company and then a Finnish one. Between 1990 and 2002, “paperless” myth be damned, paper consumption in the United States actually increased by ten million tons, and by almost the same percentage as the world's overall increase. With headquarters in Memphis, IP employs 60,000 people and, in 2010, boasted net sales of twenty-five billion dollars. Its operations are in North America but also in Latin America, Russia, and even North Africa. This is largely because companies like IP now produce items like Starbucks' coffee lids and McDonald's sundae cups; their emblem is ubiquitous, but it has nothing to do with Dixie—and certainly not Georgia.

In 2009, IP set its eyes on a completely new frontier. It announced plans to sell the first genetically engineered forest trees ever outside of China, a type of eucalyptus tree that they developed in a joint venture with a company from New Zealand. Eucalyptus may soon overtake slash pine as the greatest and fastest provider of pulp. Large companies like IP claim that engineered plantations actually protect native timber lands, but ecologists insist just the opposite—that these “alien” genes (many go so far as to call them harbingers of “Frankenforests”) will infect naturally-occurring trees quickly and permanently. That year, writer Jack Kinsey compared IP and other goliath paper makers to the likes of Monsanto—the corporation accused of genetically altering America's food supply in irreversible ways.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Carrere, et al., *Pulping the South*; there is not adequate time or room in this current study to incorporate such global comparison—America's pulpwood output next to Brazil's or India's, for example—but these realizations serve as a harbinger of my own (and other's) future work.

<sup>32</sup> Jack Kinsey, “International Paper Treads Monsanto's Path to 'Frankenforests',” 28 August 2009.



And so the new reality is that while the paper industry continues to grow exponentially, it is growing in all the wrong ways. And in the South, where paper-making is anything but innovative and cutting-edge anymore, supplying this industry remains nothing more than a status quo. It is now an embedded cycle that promotes monotony, industrially and ecologically. There is a road sign I spotted on highway 129, near the town of Albany, that still reads: “Growing Trees, Growing Jobs.” I have been told that these signs are still everywhere in South Georgia, off the main highways and heading into the smaller towns, often even down patches of dirt road. *This* is one of the most important legacies of the paper empire because it is a notion that has endured. Poverty and economic uncertainty require collective voices of hope no matter the era, no matter the place, and in Georgia ties to the land are so innate and so deep that there remains an arguably eternal hope that new order could always be found *on* it.

Union was, simply put, a solution to the South's problems of deforestation and absence of sustainable industries. But Savannah's subsidies and Georgians' dedication to its success proved a solution to Union's lagging profits—arguably its Savior. The birth of the paper dream in Georgia, and then all over the South, in the 1930s was—for a while—a relatively happy marriage, a hopeful moment. And then, with a merger and countless acquisitions—all coupled with a monopolistic tree leasing system throughout the piney woods—Union became bigger, more powerful, and more impersonal than Georgians might have ever imagined. The “world of tomorrow” that Union and countless booster organizations promoted only made sense if southerners became willing and unquestioning members of a new “grower class” of tree farmers and absentee owners. That pine plantations are called just that, plantations, evokes the deep symbology of what they have come to mean for the South—environmental destruction and the oppression of workers. Though southerners understand the logistics and necessities associated

with industrial tree farms and the revenue they bring to the region, the transparency of the farms' ecological consequences has made the original “paper dream” into a fading memory. And in its wake, Georgians have had a hard time understanding that Union (and now IP) never thanked them for “saving” the industry.

And ironically, the original “paper dream in Dixie” ends up looking like a montage of better days gone by. In October of 2011, IP hosted a “family fun day” in honor of the mill's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It took place, quite fittingly, on Mary Calder's namesake golf course; Savannah's children ran around with Frisbees on the same ground that Calder once roamed with his world-class clubs—the same space that once signified to locals a massive and new industrial dream. One of the reporters covering the event that day mistakenly wrote that “Calder had founded the company in Savannah seventy-five years prior.” To many it must have seemed that way, but by 2011 it had become almost inconsequential a detail. Union Bag and Paper had restructured the southern economy, had defined so many aspects of industrial order in the modern South, but it no longer exists.<sup>33</sup> Off with its bulldozers and its mechanized pulping tools to distant places like Indonesia and parts of Russia, the paper industry has perhaps found a place more “Dixie” than Dixie itself. The Georgia families on the golf course that day were congratulating themselves to some degree—on maintaining a legacy, on casting their faces into IP's story. In this way, Savannahians stay in a collective coma—because the paper giants simply do not need them anymore.

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<sup>33</sup>“International Paper's Savannah Mill to Celebrate 75 Years,” *Savannah Tribune* 22 October 2011.

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