TULLOS, ALLEN
HABITS OF INDUSTRY. CHAPEL HILL: UNC PRESS, 1989

· 4 ·

A History of Industry

"The Time for Prosperity Is at Hand"

Residents and observers of the Carolinas in 1870s and 1880s assumed that the future, like the past, lay with farming. "Know as we do," affirmed a Charlotte newspaperman in August 1869, "that upon the cultivation of our soil and the strong arms of our farmers depends the future prosperity and general advancement of our country."[1] In market towns throughout the Piedmont, the yeoman ideal was extolled and catered to by local editors and their merchant advertisers:

> The crowded appearance of our streets yesterday convinced us that the fall trade had in reality commenced. From the time the sun first gilded the eastern horizon with his golden rays, till far up in the day, wagons could be seen wending their way into the city from every direction, laden with cotton, flour, oats, wheat and other produce, and by ten o'clock that portion of Trade Street known as "Cotton-town" was literally jammed with vehicles. Cotton, the principal article offered, though not bringing as good a price as it was a few weeks since, still commands remunerative figures, and we cannot but think it will again reach thirty cents a pound.
>
> Our grocery merchants keep busy, and from the way bags, bales and bundles pass from the stores to the wagons, will have to replenish their stock long ere the season is over.[2]

Prospects for railroad links that would fully open the Piedmont to the world of trading and trafficking were harmonized by town editors with the needs of a region of diversified farmers: "We assume that the time for their prosperity is at hand. The world of the Railroad will soon commence, and they will have a good market for every thing we raise, from a bushel of wheat to an onion."[3] With the coming of the railroad, however, Piedmont farming

moved toward one-crop dependence upon either cotton or tobacco. Disastrous years lay ahead for farmers who, linked by merchants and landlords into the international cotton market or pressed to take the tobacco monopolists' price, were forced in unprecedented numbers into tenancy and off the land.

"The effect of a railroad in developing a country," the *Charlotte Observer* argued in 1875, "is shown by the increased productions lying on the line of the A. T. and O. Railroad, running on the dividing ridge between the Yadkin and Catawba rivers, without so much as crossing a stream of water for thirty miles. . . . Many farmers about Centre and Mooresville, who made from three to eight bales of cotton before the war, are now making forty to fifty."[4] Despite their increased production and dependence upon cotton, however, farmers discovered that prosperity seldom came by the bale.

From a wartime high of nearly a dollar a pound, cotton prices, reflecting demand, slid precipitously into the 1870s, stagnated, then collapsed in the depressed 1890s. For the seventies, cotton averaged twelve cents, for the eighties, nine cents. By 1890 the price stood at seven cents, and by mid-decade, at the height of the Populist revolt, it fell as low as a nickel a pound. Renewed world cotton and tobacco demand in the first two decades of the twentieth century provided the South's farmers with an era that some would remember too glowingly and come to expect as normal when the boom years of World War I gave way to the depressed 1920s and 1930s.[5] Independence and the self-sufficient farming ideal gave way to the fear and the reality of debt and dependence as tens of thousands of rural folk became part of an industrial working class.

The histories of the rise and spread of Southern sharecropping, the economic ascendance of town merchants, the appearance and fall of the Farmers' Alliance and the Populists, the political disfranchisement of poor farmers of both races, and the labor market consequences of the South's high fertility rates are now familiar and need not be repeated here.[6] My concern is to catch something of the social character, the temperament, of the captains of Industry who sought to place their designs upon the Carolina Piedmont during this New South era.

In the Carolina Piedmont of the 1870s and 1880s, merchants' control of farmers' crops and credit and the increasing dependence upon cotton or tobacco single-crop agriculture made possible (as David Carlton has observed about South Carolina) "the accumulation of capital by a new class of potential entrepreneurs, in a portion of the state which was well endowed with water power and had a heritage of small-scale manufacturing." As trade shifted away from coastal ports and factors, it was "being reconcentrated at several score small centers, where merchants gathered to take advantage of

transportation and communication facilities, and where farmers came to sell their cotton, obtain their provisions, and arrange their financing."[7]

A combination of natural and social ingredients (including the suitability of soils for extensive monoculture, market demand for staples, population growth, a fluctuating regional labor market, the accumulation of merchant capital, habits of industry, political power, and so on) led to the particular shape of the Carolina Piedmont's mercantile and industrial emergence. In other historical regions of the South—for instance, the Delta or the Tidewater—varying combinations of natural resources and social forces produced distinctions and gave definition. In the Carolinas, the significance of the new arrangement is evident in the increasing use, and the changing meaning, of the word *Piedmont* in the postbellum era.

"We Are among a Hard-working People"

From the mid-eighteenth century, when *Piedmont* was first applied to American geography from its original Italian usage (descriptive of the region at the foot of the Alps), it encompassed the vast piedmont plateau of the eastern United States. "Between the South Mountains and the higher chain of the endless mountains," wrote an observer in 1755, "is the most considerable quantity of valuable land that the English are possest of; and runs through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. It has yet obtained no general name, but may properly be called Piedmont from its situation."[8]

Within the South, throughout the antebellum period, *Piedmont* was not a familiar designation. In his excellent *Atlas of South Carolina* (1825), for instance, Robert Mills describes the state's Piedmont region, emphasizes its agricultural potential, but does not use the word:

> The country between the last division and the foot of the mountains is about eighty or ninety miles wide, and possesses a pretty uniform character. It is of primitive formation and rests on granite and gneiss rocks. The surface is generally clay, covered with a rich soil, sometimes mixed with sand and gravel. The region is hilly, and in many parts too rolling for cultivation, without washing. . . . It is capable of great improvement in its agriculture, and of supporting a very dense population. It is much the thickest settled part of the state.[9]

Writing in *The North Carolina Reader* (1851) as a traveling observer of a state and its people, C. H. Wiley pauses at Hillsborough, the Orange County seat, to consider the striking distinctiveness of the "Upland regions of North Carolina" from the territory he has just crossed:

> We have now left the swamps, the level lands and broad sheets of water, the sand-hills and pine forests, behind us; we have got among forests of oak and hickory, into a country undulating with hills and valleys, and chequered with creeks and bountifully supplied with springs. Population is becoming more dense, mechanics and laborers are more numerous, and the land more universally cultivated. . . .
>
> We are, in fact, among a hard-working people; and all about us are signs of their industry, patience and economy. The sloping hills are yellow with the ripening wheat; and in the vales and bottoms the green grass waves in the summer breeze. There are no idlers—there is no appearance of waste or extravagance; but, on the contrary, the whole of the large population seems to be making enough to support themselves and to educate their children, and a little to spare. . . .
>
> A single laborer, with an ox, a horse, plough and wagon, can, on a few acres, live independently and comfortably; and the lands are divided among a multitude of small farmers of this sort.
>
> They form a race of people different from any we have yet seen; these small freeholders, composing the larger portion of the population, are a people peculiar to the upland districts of North Carolina. You will find them a sedate, sober, virtuous race. . . .
>
> They are at the same time extremely frugal and industrious, and yet very kind and neighborly; they give long credits to each other, seldom sue, and are as seldom sued; labor with their own hands and hold themselves the equal of the proudest of the human race. . . .
>
> There is a general absence of levity among them; they are a grave, and moral, and thinking people. . . .
>
> Now in the region through which we are passing . . . we find that the hope and dread of things beyond the grave, more than the fear of law or the love of worldly honors, influence the actions and dealings of men; and we observe that there is little taste for enjoyments purely sensual.[10]

Among residents of the antebellum Virginia Tidewater and Carolina coast, the Piedmont, when it was mentioned at all in print, fell into the Low Country frame of reference held by official Southern society: "the next breadth of country, known in several of the states as the Piedmont district, . . . more salubrious in its atmosphere."[11]

One deeply etched image of the Southern Piedmont, as a region given over

to the harmony of small farms and nature's bounty, persisted in the form of the myth of the Garden, even during the years in which tenant farmers multiplied in number, streams ran red from eroded fields, railroads cut through the forests, and cotton factories blew their before-day whistles:

> Among the foothills, vales and spurs of the Blue Ridge Mountains, better known as the "Piedmont Region," is to be found the greatest variety of natural food for the opossum, raccoon, rabbit and squirrel. In the dense forests that cover the rivulets of the deep ravines with arching boughs or shelter the banks of the larger streams, and along the hedgerows of the cultivated fields, abound the wild summer grapes, the crab apple, the winter grape that hangs upon the vine until far into the spring, the berry, persimmon, gooseberry and dogwood berry, together with the toothsome paw-paw and the large variety of wild nuts. And all of this makes the Piedmont Region the natural paradise of the nocturnal huntsman.[12]

These romantic evocations appeared during an era in which the region's industrial boosters were laying miles of railroad track in pursuit of an altogether different cornucopia.

With the construction of postbellum railroad links connecting the Carolina Piedmont directly to the North, printed references to the region, which had originally fit comfortably in the traditional associations with nature and farming, were altered by the energies and designs of capitalists, engineers, and publicists from Danville to Atlanta. In their hands and by means of their publicity, *Piedmont* came to mean primarily the industrializing Carolina Piedmont, whose area duplicated that encompassed by the electric lines of "Buck" Duke's generating company, or—in the largest Southern view—what geographer Rupert Vance called the "Piedmont Crescent of Industry" stretching across the Carolinas and Georgia to the Birmingham steel district. The modern sense of the Carolina Piedmont began with the coming of the Air-Line Railway in the 1870s.

An essay, "The Piedmont Country of the Carolinas and Georgia," published by a Greenville, South Carolina, real-estate agency in June 1873, is typical for its time in its ebullient self-advertisement. Readers are told of the coming of the railroad, which will drastically shape and reshape the region. The promotional tract connects the Piedmont as a region with a prosperous, lily-white future assured by the Northern-built road. It promises marketplace success for farmers and manufacturers, the restoration of "good government," and unequivocal benefits conferred by integration within a national trade network:

> The Atlanta and Richmond Air-Line Railway, traversing the Piedmont country of the Carolinas and Georgia, is now complete as far south as Greenville, . . . a central point between Charlotte, North Carolina and Atlanta, Georgia. In a few more months the trains will be running through to Atlanta.
>
> This great railroad, completing the direct line from New York to New Orleans, is tapped at various points by rail, running out from the large cities on the Southern Atlantic Coast. This Piedmont country is now within eighteen hours run of these sea ports.
>
> The value of this great highway to the people of the United States cannot be overestimated. Its immediate political effect will be to restore good government to the Southern Atlantic States, in the practical development of unsurpassed agricultural and manufacturing resources. . . .
>
> As the resources of this Piedmont country—heretofore unknown abroad—are developed by means of this great road, built by Northern capital, so the deficiency of labor will be supplied by intelligent white labor from Europe and the North.[13]

Towns, merchants, and manufacturers grew and prospered from the completion of the "great railroad," but the results for farmers were not so clear. As for the anticipated immigrants, they neither arrived in significant numbers nor stayed very long in the low-wage region. With the coming of the Air-Line, the Carolina Piedmont acquired the core of its modern definition.

"The 'Piedmont Region' of the Carolinas"

At the end of the Civil War, the railroads of both North and South Carolina lay in sorry shape. North Carolina tracks showed more the effects of heavy use and minimal maintenance than of hostile action, while South Carolina's, first worn out with Confederate service, had been torn up later by Sherman's troops. For stretches of thirty to fifty miles to the east, north, and west, Union soldiers destroyed the four rail lines serving the state capital and hub city of Columbia.

The rebuilding of the Carolinas' railroads began slowly. The war had wrecked state finances. There were efforts to loot railroads and efforts to use them as political prizes. Absentee ownership and speculation flourished throughout the late 1860s and early 1870s, although Northern capitalists found more promising investments in other regions of the United States. Railroad historian John Stover has observed that while rail mileage in the

North and West more than doubled in the first eight years after the Civil War, Southern railroad mileage expanded by only a third.[14]

Before the completion of the Air-Line Railroad in late 1873, the Piedmont areas of North and South Carolina were tied by rail not to each other, but to towns in the direction of the Atlantic Coast. In North Carolina, a 223-mile crescent, the route of the North Carolina Railroad, was built by state stock subscription between 1851 and 1856. Oriented toward Fayetteville, New Bern, and Wilmington, the NCRR extended west from Goldsboro to Raleigh, then toward Greensboro and Charlotte. Approved by the planter-dominated state legislature, the NCRR was intended to pull trade toward the coast and away from the backcountry wagon roads into Virginia and South Carolina.

In much the same way that the NCRR began to stimulate the growth of that state's Piedmont market towns during the late antebellum years, the completion of the Greenville and Columbia Railroad in 1853 helped draw Upcountry South Carolina farmers and merchants in to a town—Greenville—that had served primarily as a Low Country planter summer resort. When the G & C was rebuilt in 1872, a writer for the *Greenville Enterprise* noted that "for many miles around, especially in the direction of Laurens, Anderson and Pickens, the cotton producers seek Greenville as a place for a market . . . growing larger and more important every year. . . . It will thus be seen that ours is no mean city."[15]

Between 1865 and 1875, railroad mileage increased in North Carolina by 372 miles, to a total of 1,356, and in South Carolina by 328 miles, for a total of 1,335. The location, rather than the length, of these new tracks was critical for the industrial emergence of the Piedmont. The Air-Line Railway tied the older NCRR with other Piedmont towns all the way to Atlanta in the southwest and northward through Danville, Virginia, to the cities of the East Coast. Across the spine of the Air-Line, short connecting lines extended into the Appalachians and toward the Atlantic. The coastal cities of Charleston, Wilmington, and Savannah suffered as trade moved with increasing volume in a new geographical orientation reflecting the power of new political and economic centers. Piedmont newspapers cheered the regular "consummation" of connections among the region's towns. The new awareness of a Carolina Piedmont region began to be shared and shaped in the early 1870s by an emerging business class whose towns were zippered together by the Air-Line.[16] Johnstone Jones of the *Charlotte Observer* editorialized:

> As long as railroads last, Charlotte, Spartanburg and Greenville will be intimately connected in business relations; and, to a large extent, in social relations. Whatever therefore tends to strengthen and multiply the bonds of mutual interest and friendship between the places, is worthy of closest attention and highest efforts.
>
> The people of western North Carolina and upper South Carolina are nearly allied in blood and kinship. An imaginary state line divides us, but we have a common interest, the same historical associations, and much the same destiny in the future.
>
> Let the two sections strive to cultivate as far as possible amenities of life that will tend to increase the ties that now bind us together. "Let us swear an eternal friendship."[17]

Another editorial in the *Observer* exhorted participation in an upcoming Fair of the Carolinas:

> Were the great natural advantages of western North Carolina and upper South Carolina known abroad, the value of land in those regions of the country would be greatly enhanced. The main reason why this beautiful, rich and noble piedmont country is not sought by the emigrant is because little is known beyond our own borders of its great fertility, its varied production, its vast buried mineral wealth, and the surpassing loveliness of its valleys and streams, its hills and mountains; to say nothing of its water power and railroad facilities, its abundance of timber, and cheapness of provisions. One of the very best means of showing the important facts relative to the resources of our country, is through the medium of annual fairs.
>
> It is, therefore, to the interest of every citizen of this region of the country, who has his country's or his own interest at heart, to do all in his power to insure a full and faithful exhibition of the splendid resources of western North Carolina and upper South Carolina. These two sections, though divided by a state line, comprise the "Piedmont Region" of the Carolinas, and are united in all their industrial or agricultural interests. They are both equally interested in the Fair of the Carolinas.[18]

As construction of the Air-Line was completed to each town along the route, railroad officials, merchants, bankers, lawyers, mill men, and mayors traveled back and forth across one another's state boundaries in special rail cars named after the influential politicians and railroad officials in their midst. It was a time of backslapping and boasting, of toasting and memorializing, of celebrating and prophesying. The fierce intertown rivalries lay in the future. Aware of the similarities that they saw out the coach windows and in each other, these leading citizens turned familiar territory into both regional revelation and advertisement.

"It was wisdom that pointed out this great route through the beautiful

piedmont regions of the Carolinas and of Georgia, along the base of the Blue Ridge," wrote a newspaper correspondent aboard the Air-Line's first train between Spartanburg and Charlotte. Ultimately, the Future London of the South (Charlotte) and the Queen City of the Empire State (Atlanta) would be connected, enabling towns along the way "to be united henceforth and forever, and to march hereafter shoulder to shoulder on the high road to prosperity." The correspondent continued:

> At precisely 3:20 PM, we entered the corporate limits of Spartanburg, admidst the ringing of the bell of the "B. Y. Sage," and the firing of cannon, and cheering of the crowd of citizens that lined the side of the road. A large concourse of citizens were gathered at the depot to greet the first train on the Air-Line; fair hands made haste to decorate, with evergreens and flowers, the engine which had the distinguished honor of being the first to enter Spartanburg from Charlotte; and mutual congratulations were showered around amid joyous smiles and hearty handshaking.[19]

Behind the construction of the Air-Line stood the Southern Railway Security Company. Behind the Southern Railway Security Company stood Tom Scott and his cronies of the Pennsylvania Railroad, seeking control of Southern rail traffic. "Charlotte today is in the iron grasp of railroad monopolists," complained the editor of the *Observer* in 1873. "Every route leading out of our city to the great markets of the North and South, is under the control of the Southern Security Company."[20]

Unlike the small-time swindlers, promoters, and ringmen who flourished in the late 1860s in several Southern states, including North Carolina and South Carolina, the Southern Security entrepreneurs sought monopoly and legitimate profits by annexing short local and state-owned lines into their private systems. Their experiments were stopped short by the panic of 1873, but they signaled what lay down the track of the South's railroad future. Not until after 1880 did the Air-Line, reorganized and in the hands of the Clyde Syndicate, begin to show profits and expand along with the industrializing region.[21] By the turn of the century it became the major trunk line of the Northern-owned Southern Railway.

Running parallel to the mountains and the fall line, the Air-Line lay at the core of the Carolina Piedmont. Its route lay near the heart of the region's old settlements of Scotch-Irish, English, and German farm families. Like earlier movements of people into and across the region, this trunk line's traffic was gathered and dispersed all along the core. No single Carolina Piedmont town

stood in a position of dominance, although Charlotte was eager to claim the role.

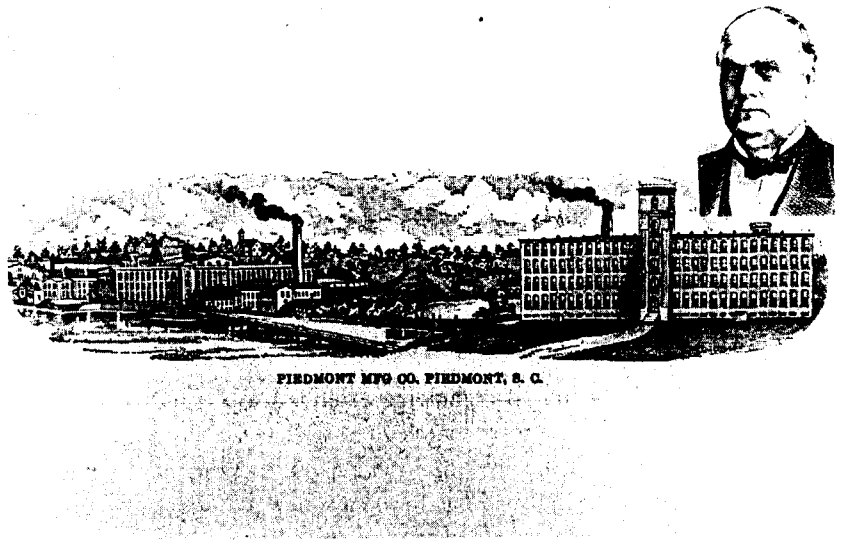
In the year of the Air-Line's arrival, Charlotte town promoters crowed over their tributary rail links and, counting everything from tiny woodworking shops to John Wilkes's iron foundry, claimed thirty-five "manufactories": "The centre of five railroads, with a prospect of others—the commercial emporium of a magnificent scope of country—the principal city of the Piedmont regions of the Carolinas, Charlotte must daily increase not only in commercial importance but also in an industrial point of view."[22] As Charlotte grew, so did the importance of the points of view of its leading men in commerce and industry.

The ascending influence of commerce extended to Piedmont towns all along the new railroad. The town merchant as well as the city merchandiser assumed central roles in the lives and market transactions of the region's farmers. "The Air Line Railroad has brought a new and extensive trade to the city of Charlotte," acknowledged the *Lincoln Progress*. "Many merchants of Union, Spartanburg and York counties in South Carolina are purchasing their goods in Charlotte and selling their cotton at that point."[23]

"The completion of the Richmond and Danville Air Line railroad in the early seventies," reflected a Greenville historian around the turn of the century, "gave new courage to the hearts and minds of our people and made Greenville the best mart for trade in the upper-part of the state. . . . The growth of our city, in population, in the decade from 1870 to 1880 was greater in ratio than in any other decade of her history."[24]

Among those celebrating the arrival of the first Air-Line train to their city was Greenville mayor H. P. Hammett, who addressed a gathering of Carolina elite before joining them for refreshments at the City Club. "The section of the country along its entire line," proclaimed Hammett, "possesses all the natural advantages and all the elements necessary to make a country rich, prosperous and great, to be found in any part of the civilized world. . . . The traveller passing through it cannot fail to be impressed with its beauty and advantages, and the capitalist must see that it is one of the very best fields for investment."[25]

Hammett knew how to take his own advice. In the mid-1870s he built the Piedmont Cotton Mill and the village of Piedmont about ten miles south of Greenville along the Saluda River and the Greenville and Columbia Railroad.[26] The G & C, of which Hammett had once served as president, tied into the Air-Line. As state legislator, railroad promoter, mayor of Greenville,



Piedmont Manufacturing Company, Greenville, S.C. *Inset*: Henry P. Hammett. (Courtesy of the Greenville County Library)

and builder of the Piedmont Mill, Hammett (1822–91) showed a comprehension of regional industrial development not equalled until the arrival of engineer-propagandist D. A. Tompkins and the Carolina Piedmont's grand engineer of power and capital, James B. Duke.

A native of Greenville County, Hammett grew up on a prosperous farm, and attended common schools, after which he taught school for a few years and then clerked in a general merchandise store in the town of Hamburg. Through his marriage to Jane Bates, Hammett joined a family with antebellum manufacturing experience in the region. His wife's father, William Bates, was one of several Rhode Islanders who fled the New England textile depression and came South before 1820. Bates took his knowledge of cotton machinery to mills on South Carolina's Tyger River and to Lincolnton, North Carolina, an early center of small manufactures in the Piedmont. In 1833 he bought a site on Rocky Creek in South Carolina's Greenville District and built a wooden factory holding a thousand spindles. The factory and settlement were soon known as Batesville. "Bunches" of Batesville yarn were bartered locally by wagon. The mill was a success, and Bates enlarged it several times prior to the Civil War. H. P. Hammett was a commercial and financial agent for the Batesville mill for fourteen years.[27]

During the Civil War, Hammett rose to the rank of colonel, serving the Confederacy as a quartermaster in Charleston. Due to illness, he returned to

Greenville in 1864 as a tax assessor. Combined with his antebellum training in manufacturing, Hammett's wartime experience paid peacetime dividends, a common pattern in the rise of Southern industrialists following both the Civil War and World War I.

By 1870 Hammett was ready to enter the mill business on his own, and on a larger scale than was possible in a town like Batesville, which had no railroad connection. On a fine water-power site, the location of antebellum gristmills, he laid the cornerstone of the Piedmont Manufacturing Company in February 1874. He brought several families of experienced mill workers from Augusta, Georgia, to teach other workers drawn from nearby farms. "I do not admit," wrote Hammett in an 1883 letter to the *Atlanta Constitution*, "that the Northern people are any better material out of which to make cotton manufacturers and operatives than our own, and especially in the 'Piedmont belt,' of the South."[28] On 15 March 1876, the Piedmont Mill's machinery—of the most modern Northern make—was put to the production of thirty-six-inch, three-yards-to-the-pound sheeting for export to China.

The Piedmont Manufacturing Company was capitalized at $200,000, with the major portion of the stock taken by Hammett, a handful of coinvestors from Greenville and Charleston, the Northern manufacturer of the textile equipment (Whitin Machine Works), and the New York-Baltimore commission firm of Woodward and Baldwin.[29] "Mr. Hammett," wrote D. A. Tompkins in 1899, "may be said to have inaugurated a renaissance of cotton milling in the South. For, while there was a general renewal of the industry throughout the country, after the abolition of slavery, it was on the old lines, and with more or less old machinery. The Piedmont Mill was designed, built and equipped after strictly modern plans."[30]

Hammett's Piedmont Mill proved a success. Several thousand spindles and over a hundred looms were added in 1877. By 1883, with 25,796 spindles and 554 looms, the Piedmont had become South Carolina's largest mill. Hammett built Piedmont Mill Number Two in 1888, Number Three in 1889. By 1900, the Piedmont complex ran 61,000 spindles and about 2,000 looms. It was no longer the largest mill in the state, but it had demonstrated the possibilities of the large-scale mill building characteristic of the New South era.

"The wonderful success of Piedmont," wrote a Greenville historian in 1903, "was the incentive to building Pelzer, Clifton, Pacolet and many of the magnificent mills in this section which were built in 1882."[31] Significant, too, for the emerging Carolina Piedmont manufacturing region were the dozens of men trained in Hammett's Piedmont Mill who became superintendents in mills throughout the Carolinas and Georgia. Hundreds of workers who first

learned machine operating and repair skills at the Piedmont Mill moved into and out of other mills, teaching workers just arrived from the farm.

"The Enterprising and the Hard"

The Carolina Piedmont in the last quarter of the nineteenth century hung ripe and toothsome for men with such names as Hammett, Holt, Lineberger, Cannon, Gray, Springs, Love, Reynolds, and Duke. The devastation of the Civil War had irreparably ruptured both the plantation and yeoman ways of life, broken the ability of the Low Country planters to keep the Piedmont from increased trading and trafficking with the North, and raised the prospects of manufacturing in this region of abundant water power and increasingly more abundant, cheap, white labor. The men who took advantage of this wide-open, rough-and-tumble situation represented a puritanical collection of capitalists that had never before stood in a position to set the pace and standards for Southern society. The New South was driven by men of a different temperament, centered in a different region than the Old South.

Certainly, a number of descendants of the antebellum planter class could be counted among the Carolina Piedmont's industrializing elite—men like engineer and New South booster D. A. Tompkins and manufacturer Leroy Springs.[32] Yet a "planter," in the Piedmont, had just as often been a merchant, physician, lawyer, mill owner, or trader. Hardin Reynolds (1810–82), for instance, sole heir of Abraham and Mary Reynolds, was a successful tobacco grower, manufacturer, and merchant. He increased his slaveholdings from nine to eighty-eight slaves between 1840 and 1863. In the late 1820s, Hardin and his father began to buy small lots of tobacco from neighbors and manufacture chewing-tobacco twists. Carrying the pressed twists by wagon through the backcountry was easier than the usual practice of rolling hogsheads of tobacco leaves over trails to markets more than a week's journey away. Like moonshine, chewing tobacco was a more compact product made from an Upcountry crop. Slaves labored over each step from tilling to pressing. The Reynoldses peddled all the chewing tobacco they could haul within the boundaries of the Carolina Piedmont.

Hardin Reynolds, observes Nannie May Tilley, historian of the family and of the tobacco industry, "utilized every opportunity for profit. . . . Though he lived his life in a landlocked area largely devoid of prime farm land, he nevertheless developed an estate of more than significant proportions. He was a proud and successful man who left an indelible mark on his older children and instilled into them a tremendous drive to succeed in business."[33] The best-known of Hardin Reynolds's children was R. J. (Richard Joshua), who during the last quarter of the nineteenth century built a tobacco company in Winston, North Carolina, that even Buck Duke's American Tobacco Company was unable to swallow up or drive out of business.

Among the emerging Piedmont elite were representatives from the small, antebellum cotton-mill owner-manager class, men such as the Holts, Hammetts, and Linebergers.[34] "The continuity between the industrialist stratum of antebellum and postbellum days," Eugene Genovese has written, "does not prove that the war had little effect; on the contrary, it suggests that the war, or rather the defeat of the South, created some of the preconditions for the liberation of the industrialists and of industrialism."[35]

Present, too, among the Piedmont's New South–era capitalists were several merchant-businessmen from the Low Country such as Ellison Smyth and Francis Pelzer, whose Charleston families had seen prosperous times but who now came to seek the unorthodox prospects in Upcountry manufacturing.[36] Here and there were also men from lowly origins who made spectacular successes: Duke, Cannon, Gray. Most numerous, however, seemed to be the businessmen and manufacturers who emerged from the ranks of yeoman farming by way of mercantile interests. Every bustling town had them, men themselves not long away from the furrows: Montgomery, Orr, Hanes, Ragan, Stowe, Belk.[37]

Taken all together, these rising men, whom W. J. Cash called "the army of the enterprising and the hard," were as much a part of the Southern Piedmont as were the rolling hills, waterfalls, and agrarian culture. They were not, however, as Cash has written, "mainly . . . such men as belonged . . . within the broader limits of the old ruling class, the progeny of the plantation."[38] The fathers of the modern Piedmont emerged across a broader spectrum than Cash would have it, coming not only from plantation backgrounds, but also, and especially, from the Upcountry's characteristic ranks —the sons of successful farmers and rising merchants.

The pioneer capitalists of the New South Piedmont need to be understood not only in terms of the changing social and economic relations within Southern regions and within the terms of the expanding industrial capitalism of the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but also in terms of temperament, ambition, and desire. Here, in the regional application of what Erich Fromm described as social character or Raymond Williams has discussed in terms of a society's structure of feeling, historians and biographers, when they have tackled the issue at all, have tended toward hagiography.

In reconstructing the historical temperament of the Carolina Piedmont's

emerging elite, Fromm's discussion of the "productive-exploitative character" proves quite helpful.[39] "The concept of the productive-exploitative individual," writes Fromm, "implies someone who builds something that is an imaginative response to new opportunities which the majority do not use. The productive-exploitative syndrome characterizes the 'new men' who are like small-scale robber barons in their character." Fromm's insight into the character of these "new men" allows for at least a preliminary discussion, in terms of cultural temperament and social character, of the insights of historians such as Eugene Genovese, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, C. Vann Woodward, Steven Hahn, David Carlton, and Lacy Ford as to the characteristically ambitious, agressive, and exploitative behavior of the New South's emerging business and manufacturing class.

The antebellum forerunners of these New South capitalists, men like Piedmont manufacturing pioneer E. M. Holt and Henry Hammett's father-in-law, William Bates, found themselves constrained by the Carolina Piedmont's relative isolation and its hegemonic relationship with the plantation South. For the most part, they had to content themselves with being "big men" in small antebellum communities and neighborhoods—consider the Presbyterian Belks in the Waxhaw District, or the brewer Alexander McKenzie. Certainly, too, the moral economy of the antebellum yeoman culture helped to hem in the potential for full exploitation of "neighbor" by "neighbor."

The steady habits that typified the ranks of the Carolina Piedmont's antebellum yeomanry suggest what Fromm calls the "productive-hoarding" character of emerging middle-class groups. The traditional pattern of self-exploitative household labor, which produced the margin of success and surplus possible on yeoman farms in the Piedmont, required slow hard work and good fortune. By carefully managing, saving, and improvising, self-sufficient farm families could count on a subsistence plus a small surplus from their yearly labor on diversified crops. At critical times of the year and at certain stages of life, self-sufficiency and independent work joined with cooperative efforts. Personal responsibility to neighbors, kin, church, and community bound yeoman families together and offered some protection against bullying or domineering individuals. Yeoman-to-yeoman relations, with their ideal of mutuality, constituted one tradition that accompanied the migration from farm to cotton mill. Traditional paternalism, with its inherent dominant-dependent relations, constituted another. The factory and mill village met these traditional relations with an unencumbered industrial capitalism. In the changed postbellum circumstances, conditions were ripest for Fromm's productive-exploitative individuals (rather than the more cautious, community-based, safety-first farmers) to assert themselves and apply their obsessional and accumulative industriousness to the turning of wheels and profits.[40]

"In the changing, developing society," Fromm observes, "the entrepreneur is the new man who can be considered the village 'progressive.' But he is this only in a certain historical perspective of intensifying the class difference in the village and destroying its traditional structure." Consider, for instance, the rise of Bobo Tanner, Grier Love, or William Henry Belk. In the Carolina Piedmont, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the "new men" pushed their way out of the traditional neighborhood structure, out of the folk restraints, and set the tone of paternalistic capitalism that would dominate the region's affairs into the following century.[41]

A Romance of Industry

To read the legends of the fathers of the modern Piedmont is to read again and again the same story of the habits of industry turned single-mindedly toward the making of mills and money. "Gaston's [Gaston County's] prominence as a textile manufacturing center," wrote the *Gastonia Gazette* in a 1965 retrospective series entitled "Textile Pioneers," "is a monument to men of foresight like the late George W. Ragan, who died here June 9, 1936, and whose life and career would become a romance of industry if committed to book form."[42] "As a youth," the *Gazette* continued, Ragan's life "was very similar to those of practically all who were reared on small farms at that period. He was healthy, vigorous and very active, and performed in a careful, manly way those tasks that usually fell to the small boy on the farm."

Born in 1846, Ragan was the son of Scotch-Irish parents. Too young to join the Confederate army until the last year of the war, he served in the Seventy-first Regiment in eastern North Carolina, then, with the Southern surrender, returned to the family home. "He did not spare himself," Ragan's biographer tells us, "but went at his work with zeal, and performed all kinds of labor common to farm life without large means, from the lightest task to splitting rails." Soon, his father turned the management of the farm over to young Ragan.

In 1873 George Ragan "entered the mercantile business, and for nineteen years conducted his affairs successfully at South Point, Lowell, McAdenville and Gastonia." Along with R. C. G. Love, George Gray, and several other pioneers, Ragan was one of the organizers and original stockholders in Gastonia's first cotton mill (1888). A year later he helped create the First

National Bank of Gastonia. "Giving his undivided time and attention to the work he had in hand," Ragan built additional mills, pioneered in the Southern manufacture of fine yarns and became the largest holder of real estate in Gastonia. After "long years of honest toil," Ragan, a Presbyterian elder, lifelong Democrat, one-time mayor of Gastonia, and generous contributor to staunchly Presbyterian Davidson College, died at age eighty-nine.

And, there was Abel C. Lineberger, who, "like others of his time, did not for a moment sit down in sullenness and despair, but, without benefit of UNRRA or Marshall Plans, set to work with nothing but his bare hands to build out of the rubble of Reconstruction a new South that could stand on its own feet and ask favors from nobody."

"We of this favored age," wrote an anonymous Lineberger eulogist in 1948, "will never be able to appreciate the hard scrabble of poverty through which the men and women of that time labored their way to accomplish one of the world's historical miracles, but we can see the busy industries that dot the red hills of the Piedmont and the shining rails and broad highways that link them with the great market places—all standing as monuments to a courage and determination that have yet to be matched."[43]

And then there was Charles Cannon:

> Mr. Cannon's success was due to the trading and merchandising ability which was his original gift of genius, and to two attributes of character. One was absolute integrity, the other the will to give all he had to his work. . . . Mr. Cannon built up his reputation of hard work, so hard that it was his only interest.[44]

And George Gray:

> Gray was a dynamo of nervous energy. . . . He lived his life on tiptoes. An objective once in his mind, he drove at it incessantly. He went to his mills at 5:30 on summer mornings, and at 6 o'clock in winter, and was the last man to leave.
>
> Gray regimented his life—his rising and retiring were on the dot, he drank water at certain times during the day, if he said 'wait two minutes' he meant exactly that. But his eye twinkled, and people liked to call him by his first name. He insisted upon having associates he could rely on.[45]

And the tobacco and textile Hanes brothers:

> The story is told that when the Hanes boys were growing up and came to the house for their mid-day meal from working on the plantation, their mother would say, "Now you boys rest until dinner's ready. And while you're resting, go out and chop some wood."

Daniel Augustus Tompkins. (Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina)

> P. H. Hanes' industry and habit of rising early won him the nickmane of "Early Bird," which was also to become the name of his most popular brand of tobacco.[46]

And there was Daniel Augustus (D. A.) Tompkins. "He is a type of tens of thousands of men, young and middle-aged," wrote *Manufacturers' Record* editor R. H. Edmonds, "who, after 1865, went out of the South because of the poverty and woe and wretchedness and lack of opportunity."

> These men have been great leaders in the upbuilding of the North and West. Fortunately for these sections, but unfortunately for the South, nearly all of them continue their work beyond the borderline of the

South. Tompkins, on the contrary, had no sooner mastered the situation, and demonstrated in the North and in Germany the power of his brain to initiate and the strength of his will to carry forward to completion great enterprises, than he determined to give to Southern upbuilding all the strength of body and mind he possessed. . . . He returned and became a great leader whose influence has been more potent for good than that of any dozen men in political or public life combined.[47]

For these upbuilders and pioneers of the industrial Piedmont—men who "lived life on tiptoe"—habits of industry defined the meaning of their lives and became Industry's habits. Consider the biography of Gus Tompkins.

"I Had a Bent for Industrial Development"

"I was a child of the Old South," Daniel Augustus Tompkins (1851–1914) always said. Yet beneath the son's public courtesies and gentlemanly mantle, one doubts whether Tompkins's physician-planter father would have recognized the full-grown man—the engineer, industrial capitalist, and Piedmont propagandist. Even during his youth, when he lived on the Tompkins's two thousand acres in Edgefield County, South Carolina, Gus Tompkins is remembered as being less interested in the management of agriculture, slaves, and land than in what he could find and make in the carpentry and blacksmith shops.

"In the carpenter shop my brother worked on everything from fixing an old clock to making a complete wagon," recalled A. S. Tompkins. "He was fond of helping make the water wheels and trunks for our father's grist mill, a difficult task, and took great interest in the mill, working on the dam when needing repairs. I well remember when he took a notion to make a croquet set, balls, mallets, etc., and wore me out turning the old lathe for him."[48]

During the war years, while Gus Tompkins's father served with the Confederate army, his mother, Hannah Virginia Smyly Tompkins, supervised the growing of the crops. According to A. S. Tompkins, Virginia dominated her husband "by superior will power and executive ability." Of Scotch-Irish descent, a Baptist, "industrious and rigidly economical," she "wasted nothing, not even time; for she was always an early riser."[49]

Like many of the Scotch-Irish who came to the Carolina Piedmont in the mid-eighteenth century, the Smylys had migrated from County Antrim, Ireland. Virginia's father (D. A. Tompkins's grandfather), James Smyly, apprenticed himself as a worker in wood and iron in South Carolina's Edgefield

District. He later went to Columbia and bound himself to a master mechanic in order to learn to make fine carriages, gigs, and sulkies. He moved back to the Upcountry after serving in the War of 1812 and married into a German farming family.

James Smyly built and repaired wagons. As his shops grew, he apprenticed young white men to work in them and began to acquire land and slaves to grow cotton. He built and operated a large store and an inn on a stage road. Smyly's inn was typical for the Piedmont region, serving the considerable traffic from the mountains and surrounding countryside. "All sorts of people stopped here," writes A. S. Tompkins, "from judges to hog drivers":

> His lot was often filled with droves of mules, horses, hogs, and even turkeys, driven through the country from the Mountains, and beyond enroute to Augusta and Hamburg. The German settlers in the neighborhood would bring in great loads of corn and fodder, which he always purchased along with chickens and eggs and other provisions, paying for them mostly in goods from the store and would use the provender and provisions in feeding the passing consumers.

"His business increased rapidly," continues the family history, "the store was torn down and a new larger and neater one was erected, his shops were all the while kept going and he could usually be found in there at work." Late in his life, Smyly became a large cotton planter, but he continued to produce all the provisions needed on his plantation.[50]

In addition to his carriage shops, store, inn, and loom house, Smyly at the time of his death had acquired over two thousand acres of land and perhaps a hundred slaves. Since his wife had died a few years earlier, he left his estate to his children, one of whom, Virginia, had married a prominent Edgefield physician, Dr. DeWitt Clinton Tompkins. Young Gus Tompkins grew up with the image of his grandfather—the energetic antebellum manufacturer, trader, craftsman, and planter—as the model for success. Gus's brother, A. S. Tompkins, imagined what James Smyly would have done with the opportunities of the postbellum era: "Had he lived in this age with his industry and ability as a manufacturer, he would doubtless have reached the top of all that can be accomplished with steam and electricity."[51] Certainly, Grandfather Smyly would have recognized himself in his grandson Gus and in his daughter Virginia.

While her physician husband was away at war, Virginia Smyly Tompkins oversaw the family's slaves' production and storage of 130 bales of cotton. These bales, which were sold for the high prices of 1864–66, enabled the Tompkinses to clear a number of large debts and escape total ruin. The

family was solvent, but there was no money to spare for such a postbellum luxury as college for the sons. Immediately after the war, Gus Tompkins, then in his midteens, convinced county officials to award him a contract to rebuild a couple of bridges in Edgefield. He used black labor to cut bridgework timber from the family's land and made enough money on this job to cover his first college expenses at the University of South Carolina.[52]

Tompkins arrived in Columbia in 1867 at age sixteen. He was a healthy young man, although, from a cause that remains unclear, he had already lost the sight in his left eye. At the state university he studied geology and natural philosophy with Joseph LeConte and math and engineering with General E. P. Alexander, former chief engineer of Robert E. Lee's army. It was Alexander who urged Tompkins into an even sharper break with the ways of the Old South. "I had a bent for industrial development," Tompkins would recall, "and he was the first person I had ever met who had any sympathy with my aspirations; and he, as a graduate of West Point, had been an important constructing engineer before and during the war. In talking over with me my hopes and expectations, he advised me to seek a trade also while studying to be an engineer. He recommended to me the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, at Troy, New York."[53]

Tompkins was to succeed heroically by Rensselaer's measure. In later years, classmates remembered his seriousness of purpose, his strong opinions, his ascetic habits, his gentlemanly authority. They elected him Grand Marshall, the highest student office.

At Rensselaer, as at USC, the practical, the useful, the means of getting ahead—these mattered most to Gus. "I am glad you are studying Botany," wrote family friend Eliza Mims from South Carolina, "if it has made you learn to love flowers. I thought of sending you some in a letter at one time but was afraid you were about flowers like you say you are about music—'don't-object-to-it.' "[54]

Tompkins's parents could provide little money to support his Rensselaer education, so throughout his stay in Troy, New York, he worked night and weekend jobs and full time in the summers. One summer he met Alexander Holley:

> He was a young engineer [recalled Tompkins] who was introducing the Bessemer process into this country. Youthful as I was, I recognized in him a man of ability. I did considerable work for him tracing drawings during my vacations. He also gave me work to do in my room while I was attending the institute. Through his influence, too, I secured work during my spare time at 'Poly' in the John A. Griswold and Co.'s Steel Works of Troy, where I took a course of apprentice and machine shop.[55]

Alexander Holley, engineer and industrialist, introducer of the Bessemer steel process into the United States, was one of the founders, in 1880, of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. Emerging out of the craft traditions of the shop-culture elite, Holley became a prime mover in the professionalization of engineering. After General Alexander at the University of South Carolina, Holley stood as another father to the young Tompkins, an example of a different type of man than the South had seen.[56]

For a year after Tompkins's graduation from Rensselaer (1873), Holley employed him in Brooklyn as confidential secretary and draftsman. He then helped Tompkins get an apprenticeship at the Bethlehem Iron Works under the management of John Fritz, one of the country's foremost steel makers. Tompkins's beginning pay was seventy-five dollars a month. "His career at Bethlehem," writes Tompkins's biographer George Taylor Winston, "was a continuous illustration of his favorite theory that genius is mostly application. While other employees were taking a day off for county fairs, or Fourth of July celebrations, Tompkins was at work."[57]

During his stay in Brooklyn while working for Holley, Tompkins had met and become engaged to Harriet Brigham, a schoolteacher of genteel background. He visited Brigham and her mother regularly on Sundays and, when he moved to Bethlehem, kept up an exchange of letters, with occasional visits to Brooklyn. The correspondence, begun in 1874, ended with Harriet Brigham's death in 1884.

The letters that remain from this friendship reveal primarily Tompkins's absorption in his work at John Fritz's ironworks and his single-minded practice of the habits of industry, often in acts of conspicuous display that would have pleased Benjamin Franklin:

> I have a feeling that I ought to persist in being absolutely punctual at my work until I shall have something to identify me with the Works. For instance since I have been here I have been working a good deal on the designs of some new engines which Mr. Fritz speaks of building and if he should conclude to build them, having had most to do with the design, I would naturally be depended upon to keep everything straight and that dependence would make for me a sort of tie. I want to have it so that when I am away they will miss me. It seems to me the best way to get a start in that direction is by punctuality and a willingness always to accept those responsibilities. To come so as to reach you by dinner time

would require only an hour and a half, and it seems almost foolish not to take it, but it is the impression upon Mr. Fritz's mind of going at all that I wish to avoid.[58]

As if to deny his actual words, a tone of pleasure, of puritanical self-satisfaction, colors Tompkins's account of the social isolation that routinely filled his away-from-work hours during the passing weeks:

> The week evenings seem to slip imperceptibly by me and before I know it Sunday is at hand with no letter on its way to you. With getting home at six o'clock, then bathing, dressing, and eating supper, and going to bed rather early to be able to rise at five and a half A.M. it leaves little time to perform the errands and duties of housekeeping incumbant upon a forlorn bachelor, that it is almost impossible to accomplish anything outside the works. You have no idea what a pest it is to me to see after the washer woman and have buttons put on my clothes, even tho' such things are done only when absolutely necessary.[59]

Tompkins remained at the Bethlehem Iron Works for nearly a decade, learning the skills of both shop craftsman and engineer. He might have stayed in Pennsylvania had there been room and enthusiasm enough in the ironworks' management to allow his advance—and had he not come to view the Upland South as having great prospects for manufacturers once the political situation had "settled down." Had he had the money, Tompkins would have entered the iron and steel industry in north Alabama or east Tennessee. Instead, being dependent upon salary, savings, and the beginnings of a few small investments, he waited and worked impatiently.

In March 1883 Tompkins accepted an offer from Westinghouse Machine Company to become their agent in the Carolinas, selling and installing steam engines and machinery. Westinghouse furnished the engines and guaranteed Tompkins $1,200 a year plus 15 percent commission on sales. This was a business opportunity that required Tompkins's skills but little start-up capital. His headquarters was to be Charlotte, North Carolina, population seven thousand.[60]

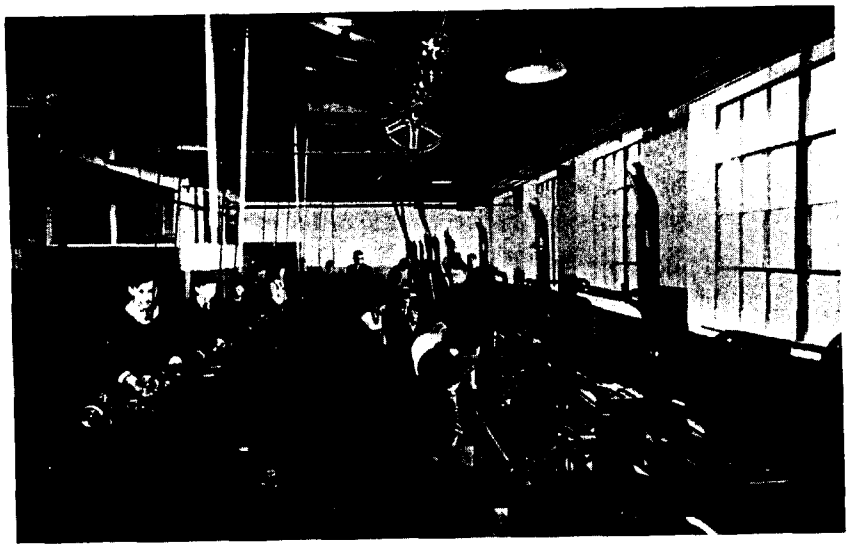
Stirring with new railroad connections that attracted merchants, farmers, and factories, Charlotte was the sort of place where a newcomer could take a room in a boardinghouse and list his profession in the city directory as "capitalist." From the perspective of D. A. Tompkins, however, a man who had now spent many years keeping pace with the changes of Yankee heavy industry, Charlotte appeared not so much a land of promise as a tiresome backwater: "I find the evenings here intolerably dull—I have made few acquaintances and southern people are particularly shy of strangers, and I think I have now so much the air of a northern man that they are afraid that I will make some of the money that they might make. N.C. is a very quiet state at any rate, and the people partake of the same character."[61]

In 1884, Harriet Brigham died. Tompkins, then in his early thirties, seems to have found in the death of his longtime fiancée a reason to resist intimate friendships with women for the remainder of his life. More and more he became engaged with the machinery of New South development. A single vision grew from Tompkins's mechanical knack, his long labor, and his identification of industrial success with the Piedmont and with the South's redemption from the legacies of slavery and military defeat.

Throughout the 1880s, Tompkins sold engines for Westinghouse. He also undertook a partnership to build cottonseed-oil mills. By the 1890s he had accumulated enough capital and contacts to engage for the design and construction of cotton factories. He purchased the newspaper that soon was named the *Charlotte Observer*. "The only thing I wanted the paper for," Tompkins later reflected, "was to preach the doctrines of industrial development and the reasons for it."[62] Within a few years he held controlling interest in three Carolina Piedmont newspapers.

Eventually Tompkins came to be chief owner of three cotton mills and director of another eight. By 1907 he claimed to have built, for clients of his machine shop, more than 250 cottonseed-oil mills and more than a hundred cotton factories. Typically, he would single out a likely man in a Piedmont town, make his acquaintance, then propose the construction of a cotton mill. Tompkins would design and erect the factory, convince the machinery makers in Massachusetts or Rhode Island to take stock, and help promote investment in the mill among the town's prosperous and up-and-coming citizens.[63] "In those days," recalled R. H. Edmonds, founder of the *Manufacturers' Record*, "it seems that Tompkins could have nearly, if not quite, equaled Edison in his ability to work twenty hours a day and sleep four. I have sometimes wondered if during that period he really knew a home, except the sleeping car, and even in a sleeping car he must have been too busy planning and working to have grudgingly yielded up many hours to sleep."[64]

As one of the most outspoken men in the Carolina Piedmont's industrial pantheon, Tompkins, as C. Vann Woodward has pointed out, was "supremely articulate and fired with a zeal to proselytize his unregenerate countrymen" as to the transforming power of laissez-faire capitalism.[65] "His speeches and pamphlets," writes Tompkins's biographer, "on good roads, broad tires, road building and repairs, farm and factory, cottonseed and its products, beef and dairy cattle, trade schools, early education, building and loan associations,



Textile machinery class at Parker High School, Greenville, S.C., 1920s. Photo by Dowling. (Courtesy of the Greenville County Library)

and similar subjects were scattered broadcast, and produced throughout the Carolinas a pregnant spirit of progress and a harvest of industrial establishments."[66] Seeking the widest possible influence, Tompkins wrote articles for his own newspapers and for the *Manufacturers' Record*. He set his name as author to a partially ghost-written series of books on cotton mills and their profitability and to an inspirational history of Charlotte and its surrounding county of Mecklenburg.[67]

Tompkins signed on eagerly and served diligently both the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Civic Federation in efforts to block any federal legislation that would limit or prohibit child labor. In his view, children should be set to work as young as possible. "It's as easy to teach a boy to love work with the result of capability," observed Tompkins, "as it is to let him drift into habits of idleness with the result of incapability."[68]

"As long as men are greedy men there will be need ultimately of some law to set a limit to the overwork of children," Tompkins observed in a 1906 address to the National Civic Federation meeting in New York. "And also," he quickly added, "as long as there are tenderhearted women, there will be sentiments that are liable to injure children, as the tender mother so often spoils the child. I believe there are just about as many children spoiled by indulgence as there are by overwork." [Laughter and applause.]

A Voice: "More."

Mr. Tompkins: "A gentleman here says more, and I agree with him perfectly."[69]

As a prominent foe of the "habits of idleness" and as an industrial patriarch with wide contacts and great respect among Southern employers, Gus Tompkins received many letters from inquiring and hopeful fathers, much like the following from the editor of the *Baptist Courier*, A. J. S. Thomas:

> I have a son, twenty years of age, good habits, industrious, quick, polite, who I believe you could use in your work. . . . He has some head for machinery, and has some liking for that kind of work. I thought that perhaps he would soon develop into a useful man in the sale of it and knowing your interest in young men I have decided to write to you on the subject. The boy attended Clemson College and the Virginia Polytechnic for several years but got in the notion to go to work, and he has been at it and doing hard work at that. . . .
>
> If you can help me to make a man out of this my only boy I shall very much appreciate it. . . . Boys who are willing to work need looking after for they will make men if we help them.[70]

With regard to the national movement to slacken the eleven- or twelve-hour day for factory workers, Tompkins cautioned that "it must be well considered to what uses the surplus time will be put. To those without proper education, without developed tastes for reading and other profitable use of spare time, any excess of spare time is calculated to be absolutely injurious." When it came to wages, as with time, one must be careful not to give workers more than they knew how to use: "An important factor in the matter of wages is how much can a wage earner take care of with advantage to his family. It would seem not only useless to pay $200.00 a month to a man whose family and himself live as well if not better on $75.00. It has often happened that big wages ruined a man with drink and profligacy and made his family miserable and unhappy. Most negroes are of such temperament—wages beyond a reasonable good living are injurious rather than advantageous."[71]

From the mid-1890s, Tompkins stood as the driving force behind the successful movement to build textile schools in association with Clemson College in South Carolina and North Carolina State College in Raleigh. By design, from their beginnings, these textile schools were very closely allied; indeed, their purpose was to supply technical workers, engineers, and managers to the Carolina Piedmont's manufacturers. The region's mill owners donated resources for construction and machinery for teaching; they lobbied the state legislators and dominated the boards of trustees.

Tompkins's designs upon regional education were joined with clear intentions as to the control of New South industrial workers. "The education which fitted the control and direction of slaves," he wrote to his brother, A. S., "does not fit the control and direction of free white labor. The free white labor is all right if it be educated, and the education is all right if it be thoroughly adapted to free white labor and modern conditions of scientific farming, and to modern conditions of industrial pursuits."[72] "Are the people of this section fitted for factory management?," Tompkins asked the crowd gathered for the dedication of Clemson's textile school. "I answer, Yes."

"The Piedmont region," Tompkins continued, "leads in cotton manufacture. The coming generation wants nothing but opportunity, and this opportunity is chiefly a matter of education of the right kind."[73]

More than anyone before him, D. A. Tompkins conceived and articulated the modern image of the Carolina Piedmont as an industrial region, distinctive yet incorporated within the national economic order. He pressed his regional view unceasingly for decades, up and down the railroad tracks that ran through his headquarters city of Charlotte, the city he came to view as the keystone to the region:

> The Piedmont region seems to be the centre of the new industrial South. The city of Charlotte is the centre of the Piedmont region; and the new conditions are most emphasized in the matter of Charlotte's growth. If, as has been done in the past, Charlotte is initiative and progressive in the development of the resources of the surrounding country, if she continues friendly to her neighbors and interested in their developments, there is no reason that we should not have a city here such as never before has been built in the South Atlantic States. We have a situation most favorable for the building of a city, being one day's ride from Atlanta, one from Richmond, one from Washington. There ought to be a commercial centre for the great Piedmont manufacturing section, and Charlotte ought to be that commercial centre.[74]

Tompkins's politics at any time were those that best maximized manufacturers' profits and promoted government by propertied white men. With his own increasing wealth over the years, he moved from the ranks of Cleveland Democrats to embrace the Republicans and cast his ballot for Taft. "The Republican party," he wrote a friend in 1908, "is more in sympathy with the essential elements of modern prosperity than the Democrats."[75] When the American Cotton Manufacturers' Association proposed Tompkins as minister to China during the Taft administration (ultimately, the job went to a more

bona fide Republican), scores of letters from Southern mill owners endorsed his nomination and testified to the wide support his views had among this fraternity.[76]

"About three years ago," wrote Tompkins to a friend late in 1912, "I had a nervous breakdown, and I have not been regularly in the working harness since."[77]

> Since I have been sick I have had occasion to reflect upon the multitudinous phases that exist in the nervous system of the human body, and the multitudinous ways in which these may get out of order. A life that is strenuous, but not the best balanced for exercise and recreation, is liable to lead to a sort of general break-down of the nervous system. . . .
>
> The probabilities are that at the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon's energies and vital forces had been simply overstrained and therefore he lost the Battle of Waterloo. While he was on the Island of St. Helena, his vital energies seemed to be low. He was many times peevish and fretful. This is nothing but a general breakdown of one of the phases of the whole nervous system, due to overwork and over exertion, and not sleeping enough and not rest enough. . . .
>
> The weariness of the body may become incapable of taking care of the activities of the mind, and the mind becomes therefore crippled, and I guess it cannot get its ideas executed. It seems to me the remedy is wholly nature's remedy. . . . The greatest difficulty is for the man himself to get his own consent, or otherwise be able to pull himself loose from all his life ties, his life activities, and return to the simple life away from civilization. . . .
>
> The feeling of many a man is that this is such a revolution he might as well continue the old way and die—rather than enter upon restraint and lengthen out a useless life.[78]

Daniel Augustus Tompkins was laid to rest in Charlotte in October 1914.

Buck Duke, Master Builder

"There are three things I will never understand," Washington Duke is reported to have said, in the most legendary utterance of the Piedmont's oral tradition, "electricity, the Holy Ghost, and my son Buck." During the 1870s, George Washington Duke (1820–1905), a crafty, hardscrabble, Methodist yeoman farmer, had turned his family's home production of smoking tobacco

into a modest factory operation whose sixty black workers daily filled tens of thousands of small cotton bags labeled "Pro Bono Publico." His success in the steam-powered factory near the railroad in the booming town of Durham, North Carolina, was hard earned and ample enough for him.

The elder Duke's mind balked when, in the mid-1880s, the youngest of his three sons, James Buchanan "Buck" Duke, gambling the family's wealth, prepared to move to New York City. There, by means of titillating advertising, the purchase of favored rights to the newly developed Bonsack cigarette machine, and no-holds-barred competition, young Buck proposed to do in tobacco what John D. Rockefeller had done in oil. By 1907 Duke's American Tobacco Company, by then worth some $500,000,000, had monopolized the tobacco industry from farm to final product. Prices of raw materials were controlled and rivals crushed. Machine-made cigarettes had been turned into a national desire.[79]

Buck Duke set aside a portion of his enormous and constantly increasing fortune for investment in Carolina Piedmont textile manufacturing, then, in 1905, he incorporated the Southern (later renamed Duke) Power Company with an eye to generating electrical power to industrialize the entire region. More than any single individual, James Buchanan "Buck" Duke (1856–1925)—tobacco monopolist, master builder of Duke Power, and homegrown robber baron—put his design upon the Carolina Piedmont's development, integrating hidebound industriousness, utilitarian ruthlessness, and fierce practicality with the risk-taking audacity made possible with the instruments of advertising, accumulated capital, and electricity.

"He had a wonderful power of making decisions," recalled W. S. Lee, the man whom Buck Duke selected to be chief engineer of his power company. "Generally," said Lee, "he had gone into the matter thoroughly, had the points fixed in his mind and was sure of his ground. He merely thought faster, more accurately, and grasped the points of a situation more quickly than most men. And once he had decided, he acted promptly."[80] Duke's decision making was speeded by his conversion of situations and prospects into dollars. "Mr. Duke had a great mind for figures," recalls a former foreman who worked on the earliest of Duke's hydroelectric dams on the Catawba River. "We would think about these plants in terms of kilowatts. Mr. Duke would think about them in terms of how many dollars that power would bring in." "Buy good automobiles and good men, buy good anything," said Buck Duke. "They pay profits."[81]

For the engineers drawn to Duke's power project—men such as Lee, David Nabow, Charles Burkholder, John Fox, and dozens of others who joined and stayed with the company for the remainder of their working

lives—the attractions, challenges, and possibilities for technical achievement were extraordinary. With the zeal of missionaries and the enthusiasm of boys set to single-minded play, these engineers transformed the Carolina Piedmont's vast water power into an electric grid, leaving the issues of economic politics and power to Mr. Duke.

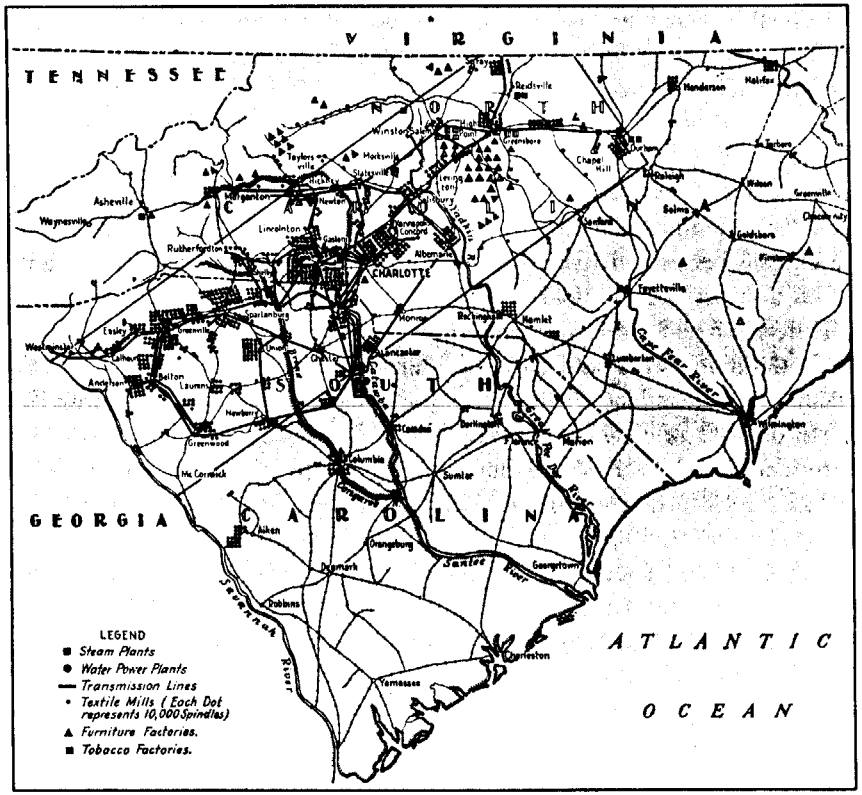
"It's been an amazing thing to me," recalls Herman Wolf, a child of the Carolina Piedmont who in 1916, at age twenty, went to work for Duke and eventually became an assistant vice president in the company. Along the way, Wolf also became the holder of a dozen patents for electrical equipment. "Here was a boy," he says of himself, "with very little knowledge, who's been able to do and work with all these things. It was fascinating. When I was manager of operations, I had a whole power company to experiment with."[82]

In the case of chief engineer W. S. Lee (1872–1934), who later became president of Duke Power, a boyhood fascination with water-driven toys, which he set turning on the creeks of his family's Carolina Piedmont farm, propelled him through engineer's training at the South Carolina Military Academy (The Citadel). Still hearing "the flutter wheels calling," Lee, who designed the earliest hydroelectric plans for the Catawba River Valley, had his maps, charts, and estimates ready in 1904 when Buck Duke was considering the formation of a power company.[83]

"I worked just as hard on that idea as if I had had unlimited capital at my command," recalled Lee. "I surveyed every yard of the Catawba River, and had my plans worked out in minute detail before I knew how the thing was going to be financed. It had even occurred to me that I might never realize anything out of it. But what interested me more than anything else was the practicability of the thing." When Buck Duke asked Lee about the cost, "I told him about eight million dollars. I thought that was about the biggest amount I had ever heard of, but it seemed to attract him."[84]

With Duke's underwriting and Lee's drawings, dams were constructed on the Catawba and a sales campaign was begun to build and electrify Piedmont cotton mills. Mill owners, doubting the potential of electrical power in industry, frequently required considerable reassurance before they would allow the strange new force into their factories. To help convince manufacturers, Duke money was invested in several new Piedmont mills. Scores of aspiring cotton-mill men took up the encouragement of Duke's sales force and the cheap rates and erected new factories along the routes of the power transmission lines.

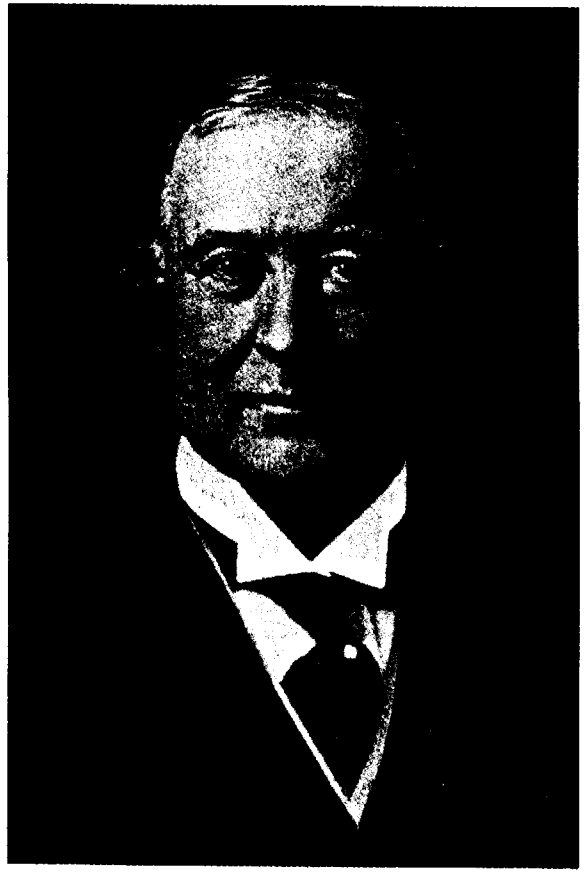
By 1922 Buck Duke's power company, headquartered in Charlotte, had built ten hydroelectric plants and four steam plants, which supplied 93 percent of the total amount of electricity used in the Carolina Piedmont.



The Carolina Piedmont, showing steam plants, water power plants, transmission lines, textile mills, furniture factories, and tobacco factories. (Reproduced from *Management and Administration*, June 1924)

Nearly all of this electricity (90 percent) went to industrial users. Seventy-five percent of Duke's output furnished power for textile manufacturing, 15 percent went to furniture and tobacco factories, and the remaining 10 percent was purchased by the region's towns. Household and farmstead use of electricity—not part of Duke and Lee's original plan—was promoted slowly. Duke Power, by 1930, was the largest power company in the South.[85]

In December 1924, James B. Duke set aside forty million dollars' worth of power company, tobacco, and textile-mill stock to establish the Duke Endowment. Annual income of the Endowment was to be divided so that about one-third would go to Duke University, the name given to transformed Trinity College, a Methodist institution in Durham that Washington Duke had rescued in 1892. Other, much smaller, yearly monies would go to the Presbyterians' Davidson College in Charlotte; to Furman University, a Baptist



James Buchanan "Buck" Duke. (Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina)

school in Greenville, South Carolina; and to Johnson C. Smith University, a black institution in Charlotte. Nearly another third of the Endowment's yearly income was directed to aid for hospitals in the Carolinas. In addition, the Methodist Church in North Carolina was to receive 12 percent of the Endowment's annual income.

Duke philanthropy had begun at least as far back as old Washington Duke, a Methodist steward who practiced and taught his children tithing. "In a time when the Southern churches still kept the new social gospel at arm's length and concentrated on the actions and responsibilities of individuals," writes Duke biographer Robert Durden, "the old doctrine of stewardship remained alive. Those who possessed wealth had the dual responsibility, according to

the teachings of the church, of both using and giving it wisely."[86] "I have selected Duke University as one of the principal objects of this trust," wrote Buck Duke in the Endowment's papers of indenture, "because I recognize that education, when conducted along sane and practical, as opposed to dogmatic and theoretical lines, is, next to religion, the greatest civilizing influence."[87]

With the establishment of the Duke Endowment, James Buchanan Duke had kept the faith of his father, just as, in replacing the name of Trinity with that of Duke, he incorporated and absorbed the lives and labors of thousands of anonymous Carolina Piedmont workers in Duke tobacco factories and textile mills and along the path of Duke power lines. From the mastery of the streams and rivers of the region's natural world to the education of preachers in Duke University's divinity school, Buck Duke sought his immortality through the transformation of the Carolina Piedmont. Dynamo and lightning rod, he fused the Holy Ghost world of his father with that of the electric, profit-chasing forces of modern America.

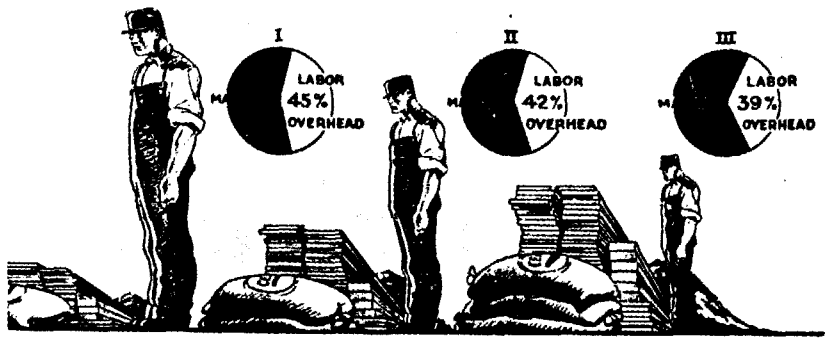
The puzzle that Washington Duke had once proposed about the young Buck received no satisfactory answer until one day late in the twentieth century, when a renegade Catholic priest stood in the regal, stony nave of towering, Canterbury-fashioned Duke Chapel, erected near the center of the Duke University campus, and observed: "You would think Mr. Duke had killed God and buried him standing up."[88]

"The Piedmont Carolinas"

"Gentlemen of the Rotary Club and fellow citizens of Piedmont Carolinas," began Charlotte businessman G. W. Freeman in a 1927 speech. "I am proud of my Piedmont citizenship—and why shouldn't I be? This is a go-getter section, peopled by men who are go-getters."[89]

Proudly, Freeman recited some of the facts and figures that the Duke Power Company had recently assembled in its little book, *Piedmont Carolinas: Where Wealth Awaits You*. "You all know," he said, "that one of the miracle spots of the country is the tremendously wealthy section around Grand Central Station in New York City. During the last 20 years, the value of that section has increased 631 per cent. During that same period the wealth of this section down here has increased 660 per cent."

"Another index of the go-getter qualities I meet down here," Freeman continued, "is per capita wealth." By Duke Power calculations, in the five richest states of the Union per-capita wealth had increased by 35 percent



WHERE CONDITIONS FAVOR STABILITY OF EARNINGS

"THE greatest stability in earnings is found in industries where raw material represents the largest part of the cost of finished goods."

That statement was made by one of America's business leaders, and is amply proved by the surer, more stable earnings of corporations that have migrated to Piedmont Carolinas.

Here, for identical operations turning out identical classes of products, labor and overhead represent 39% of the cost of the finished goods as against 42% to 45% in other sections of the country. Examine the figures on the above charts.

Chart No. I shows the figures for a group of factories, in an old, congested, highly industrialized section of the country. Chart No. II represents a group of factories in a small city area enjoying conditions unusually favorable to low cost production.

Chart No. III represents conditions in one of the *least* favorable sections of Piedmont Carolinas.

This chart may safely be taken as a *conservative* ratio figure against your own relative costs.

Labor That Produces

High wages are profitable where they result in high production. That is the secret of these favorable labor-costs.

Workmen are active, willing and co-operative. Of old native stock, they are untouched by unrest and un-American ideas. Low cost of living and high output keep costs at a satisfactory figure, yet *insure high "real wages"*. There is more left over from the pay envelope at the end of the week than where money wages are higher but living costs are also higher.

If you want complete facts, raw material sources, wage tables, etc., send for the booklet illustrated above. It gives you all the data you need. Your request, addressed to Industrial Department, Room 719, Mercantile Bldg., Charlotte, N. C., will receive prompt and courteous attention.

Where Life Is Pleasant

You will enjoy the neighborly, friendly spirit of Piedmont Carolinas. You will enjoy the sunshiny days, the cool summer nights, the short, mild winters.

If you are a golf enthusiast you know the world-famous courses at Aiken and Pinehurst and Asheville—all a few short hours away.

You doubtless will be amazed by the mountain and seashore regions with their wonderful hotels and recreational facilities.

DUKE POWER COMPANY

SOUTHERN PUBLIC UTILITIES COMPANY AND OTHER ALLIED INTERESTS

Duke Power Company advertisement from the Piedmont Carolinas' Campaign. (Reproduced from the *Southern Textile Bulletin*, 4 October 1928)

over the preceding ten years; for the Piedmont Carolinas, the increase had been three times as great. And Freeman went on through a catalog of indexes that fell pleasingly on the ears of the white gentlemen of Charlotte Rotary.

Freeman's purpose and that of the Duke Power Company, which supplied electricity throughout the region, was to enlist these go-getter businessmen and manufacturers in a project of regional advertisement. Known as the Piedmont Carolinas' Movement, this campaign built upon the rhetorical tradition of men like H. P. Hammett and D. A. Tompkins. Its ambition and potential grew around the structure set in place by Buck Duke. "How can we make this section better known?," speaker Freeman asked the Rotarians.

> Nobody ever asks where the city of Rochester is located. Rochester is known—known as the home of Eastman Kodaks, as the home of V. & E. filing cabinets, Blue Label Ketchup, and ninety other nationally famous products.
>
> But if we turn to the known and advertised products of Piedmont Carolinas, gentlemen—what do we find? Twenty-three advertisers and of these, Cannon towels are advertised under a New York City, Worth Street, address. . . .
>
> The Duke Power Company, as you know, is advertising this region as a great industrial section with a great industrial future.
>
> But when the American public buys the products of your brains, your handiwork, your energy and capital, does it know it?
>
> You spin yarn. You weave cloth. You make hosiery and underwear and blankets and furniture and bricks and clay products—but who knows it? . . .
>
> Here, gentlemen, is a . . . symbol [that] can be used to direct the eyes of the world toward Piedmont Carolinas. (The speaker displayed a handsome symbol, with the words "Product of Piedmont Carolinas.") . . .
>
> Suppose every Piedmont underwear manufacturer used this symbol on his product. . . . Suppose the Chatham Blanket Company used it on its goods.
>
> Vicks salve, Camel cigarettes, Cannon towels. . . . Suppose the furniture makers of High Point and Thomasville come in on this plan.
>
> Make your packing cases carry the message. . . .
>
> When you advertise in the trade papers, in the newspapers, and in the magazines include this symbol. Tell the world that you live and work in God's own country and that you're not ashamed of it.
>
> Now, gentlemen, you are enthusiastic about this method you can

Some of the elements of

MANUFACTURING COSTS

may be lower in other sections

1. You can hire labor elsewhere for less per hour than in Piedmont Carolinas, in some places for *much* less, but few sections provide workmen and workwomen at less per unit of finished product. And few indeed offer such a reservoir of intelligent, loyal, native born operatives both skilled and unskilled.

2. Some sections of the country approach Piedmont Carolinas in raw material resources but in many lines of agricultural, mineral and forest products, it has no equal.

3. The extensive hydro-electric system of Piedmont Carolinas, carrying power over more than 4000 miles of transmission line to 1600 thriving communities, is one of of the nation's outstanding examples of electrical development.

4. Land is plentiful, and new, sparsely settled regions are rapidly being opened up by paved roads and power lines. Brick, stone and lumber are produced in abundance and contiguous to the section are three important cement and steel areas. Labor, in the building trades, is constantly being recruited from the agricultural field and delivers an honest day's work. Consequently, construction shares in the region's low cost advantages.

But they ALL *meet* here at their lowest common point

72 New Industrial Plants During Past 12 Months

INDUSTRIAL engineers from other sections, making surveys for their clients, have gathered data on manufacturing costs for the whole country. They have stated that, as a result of the six basic economic factors brought to a focal point in Piedmont Carolinas, manufacturing costs in many lines are lower here than anywhere else in the United States. Their figures show savings equal to a very substantial extra dividend on a year's operations.

The large and active markets in and surrounding Piedmont Carolinas afford an added powerful incentive.

These facts are behind the migration of manufacturing plants (averaging one every five days all last year) to the opportunity that awaits them in Piedmont Carolinas.

Investigate. Get the facts that apply to *your* business. Our Industrial Department, Room 1112 Mercantile Building, Charlotte, N. C., gladly places its facilities at your disposal. Write.

Make this Memo to Your Secretary

Send for "Piedmont Carolinas, Where Wealth Awaits You." (In this book you will find *complete*, authoritative data, tonnage tables, wage scales, markets, etc., etc., that cover just the facts you need to form a clear judgment. Brief. Condensed. Write for it today.)

5. Piedmont Carolinas is 300 miles nearer the nation's center of population than, for example, New York City. It embraces within a 600-mile radius (the economical marketing circle) 30.1% more of the country's purchasing power. This is availability to the national market.

6. Legislation, both state and local, is sane, reasonable and encouraging to industry. The lawmakers of both the Carolinas recognize the advantages to the people of a wide development of manufacture. Best index of their attitude is the number of new enterprises attracted to the section during the last year. Burdensome regulation, restriction, and corporation-baiting do not invite such a migration.

Bracing Summers Mild Winters

Piedmont Carolinas enjoys a *summer* climate equal to that of Pennsylvania with its Poconos. The Berkshires of Massachusetts and the Catskills of New York have their counterpart in the bracing upland sections of the Blue Ridge. But in winter the Southern sun warms the Piedmont, so that the temperature during that season averages 10° to 20° above the Pennsylvania-New York-Massachusetts sector.

DUKE POWER COMPANY

OWNERS OF SOUTHERN POWER COMPANY, SOUTHERN PUBLIC UTILITIES COMPANY & ALLIED INTERESTS

Duke Power Company advertisement from the Piedmont Carolinas' Campaign. (Reproduced from the *Southern Textile Bulletin*, 2 February 1928)

follow to cash in on the great advertising program of the Duke Power Company. You can see the advantage in identifying your company with this section that is getting to be known as a region that delivers a big and honest dollar's value for its merchandise.

Between 1927 and 1929, Duke Power promoted the industrializing Carolina Piedmont with speeches throughout the region by such men as Freeman and with a national advertising campaign in such publications as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Nation's Business*, *World's Work*, *Review of Reviews*, *Time*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. At a time when tenancy engulfed nearly 50 percent of Carolina farmers, and when thousands of families had already fled the land looking for work of any kind, Duke Power dangled these displaced and desperate folk before prospective manufacturers within and outside the region.[90]

"Greater than any resource of Piedmont Carolinas," read the ad copy, "is the character of its men and women. That is what has made the industrial development possible and attracted a host of manufacturers."[91]

> Willing, intelligent white male labor is available in a steady supply. . . . And all, men and women, are 99% native born, Americans of old pioneer stock—keen, teachable and ambitious to work and get ahead.
> . . .
> A population marked by racial purity and unusually high character.

At a time when the region's manufacturers were placing workers under the most intensive pressures yet seen in the Piedmont, pressures that would result in labor resentment and short-lived revolt, Duke Power advertised:

> Willing labor, unhampered by any artificial restrictions on output; native born of old pioneer stock and not imbued by un-American ideas or ideals. . . .
> Labor in the building trades is constantly being recruited from the agricultural field and delivers an honest day's work.[92]

And, at a time when the cost of a miminum standard of living for a family with three children in Charlotte was $1,438, while the average wage of a Carolina mill worker (working between fifty-five and sixty hours a week) was $624 a year, Duke Power's copy writers boasted:

> Legislation, both state and local, is sane, reasonable and encouraging to industry. . . .
> Nearly 82% of the people of the Carolinas live on farms and in communities of under 250 population. . . . Small town life is an underlying cause of the stable, productive industrial conditions you find here. There are no slums, no breeding places of unrest. It makes for a wholesome point of view. . . .
> The birth rate of the Carolinas is the highest in the United States. Already a second generation of textile workers has come along, and in many older textile centers a third generation has grown up.

Upon the auction block of distressed farmers and farm labor, the go-getters of the Carolina Piedmont and increasing numbers of investors from outside the South restructured the region's economy between the 1880s and the 1930s. Habits of industry that were turned to the pursuit of profits and to the accumulation of economic power animated an ascending class of merchants and manufacturers as they took charge of the region and presumed to know best for the workers they called "our hands." In the Victorian gingerbread neighborhoods and first streetcar suburbs of Charlotte, Greenville, Durham, and Greensboro, the captains of Piedmont industry resided alongside their cities' leading doctors and lawyers, just up the sunny side of the street from the most striving members of the new middle class. On the mill hills of the these same cities, the white farming folk who sought "public work" became a working class.