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ERWIN, TENNESSEE:
TRANSFORMATION OF WORK AND PLACE
IN AN APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY,
1900-1960

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF ARTS IN HISTORY
WITH A CONCENTRATION IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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Erwin, Tennessee:

Transformation of Work and Place

in an Appalachian Community,

1900-1960

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ABSTRACT

ERWIN, TENNESSEE: TRANSFORMATION OF WORK AND PLACE IN AN APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY, 1900-1960

Margaret Duncan Binnicker

Erwin, Tennessee, county seat of Unicoi County, grew to exemplify the New South era in the early twentieth century when the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway, as masterminded by George L. Carter, opened this Appalachian area to development, encouraged the expansion of industrialization, and provided Erwin its economy. The railroad's management also hired New York architect and community planner Grosvenor Atterbury, known for his garden-city plans, to create a residential area including schools, industries, parks, and employee housing adjacent to Erwin.

While construction commenced on Atterbury's plans, another enterprise began that would become equally significant for Erwin. Potters from Ohio opened a dinnerware factory called Southern Potteries in 1917. The pottery maintained a work force of 250 for twenty years, but after 1938 the employee roster expanded to five times that figure. Southern Potteries developed a distinctive dinnerware that looked like folk art and named it Blue Ridge. The pottery factory hired Appalachian women to hand-decorate the dishes, and, as Blue Ridge dinnerware gained national recognition, Southern Potteries became the largest hand-painted pottery in the United States in the mid-1940s.

Conveyance by the Clinchfield Railroad out of Appalachia made Blue Ridge dishes available throughout the country. The quantity produced resulted from the mechanized kilns and assembly-line methods operating in the pottery. The final product, however, remained hand-painted dishes, where each piece differed slightly. Decorators at Southern Potteries were rural women, familiar with the craft tradition surrounding

them. They were also union members living in a community being transformed by twentieth-century industry and consumer tastes. Times and momentum changed, though, and in 1957 stockholders voted to liquidate their holdings before competition from Japanese imports bankrupted the company. Production of Blue Ridge dinnerware ceased.

Generalizations about women workers in southern settings have little bearing here. For a few years these women made their own marks on what they produced, transforming that product and their role within the pottery industry though not challenging their roles within the community. Oral histories, union correspondence, and the built environment help illustrate that this community's transformation involved outside influences, various local elements, and their complex interactions.

CONTENTS

TABLES

ILLUSTRATIONS

APPENDICES

INTRODUCTION

The town of Erwin in Unicoi County can be located easily on a current map of Tennessee. Thirteen miles south of Johnson City, the town sits beside Highway 181, a four-lane connector intended to run from Interstate 81 to Asheville, North Carolina, fifty miles to Erwin's south (see Figure 1). Unicoi County borders North Carolina on its east and south. Along with other counties to its northeast, north, and west, Unicoi helps form the triangularly-shaped region called upper East Tennessee, the earliest section of Tennessee to be settled by people of European and African descent (see Figure 2). The Unaka Mountains that form part of the Appalachian chain of mountains run through this region, and their presence helps explain why groups of colonists from Virginia and from North Carolina began to move into the area only in the second half of the eighteenth century. This region of mountain terrain and upland valleys along its rivers provided the territory (and later the state) some of its early statesmen, heroines, political and military actions, and folklore.[1] Erwin and Unicoi County, however, came into existence over one

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[1]In the eleven years from the first permanent settlement in 1769 to the mustering of men to join in the American Revolutionary battle of 1780 at King's Mountain, South Carolina, the upper East Tennessee area became home to William Bean, James and Charlotte Reeves Robertson, Jacob Brown, Valentine Sevier, his son and daughter-in-law John and Catherine Sherrill Sevier, and Samuel Doak, among others. The early settlers established a form of government, called the Watauga Association, and they ran into conflicts with Cherokee of the region led by Attakullakulla and later by his son Dragging Canoe, with whom settlers fought the Cherokee War. Daniel Boone and the long hunters before him explored the area and lands beyond it, resulting in a group venturing forth in 1779 from the Wataugan region to establish a new settlement a great distance away on the Cumberland River in what became Middle Tennessee.

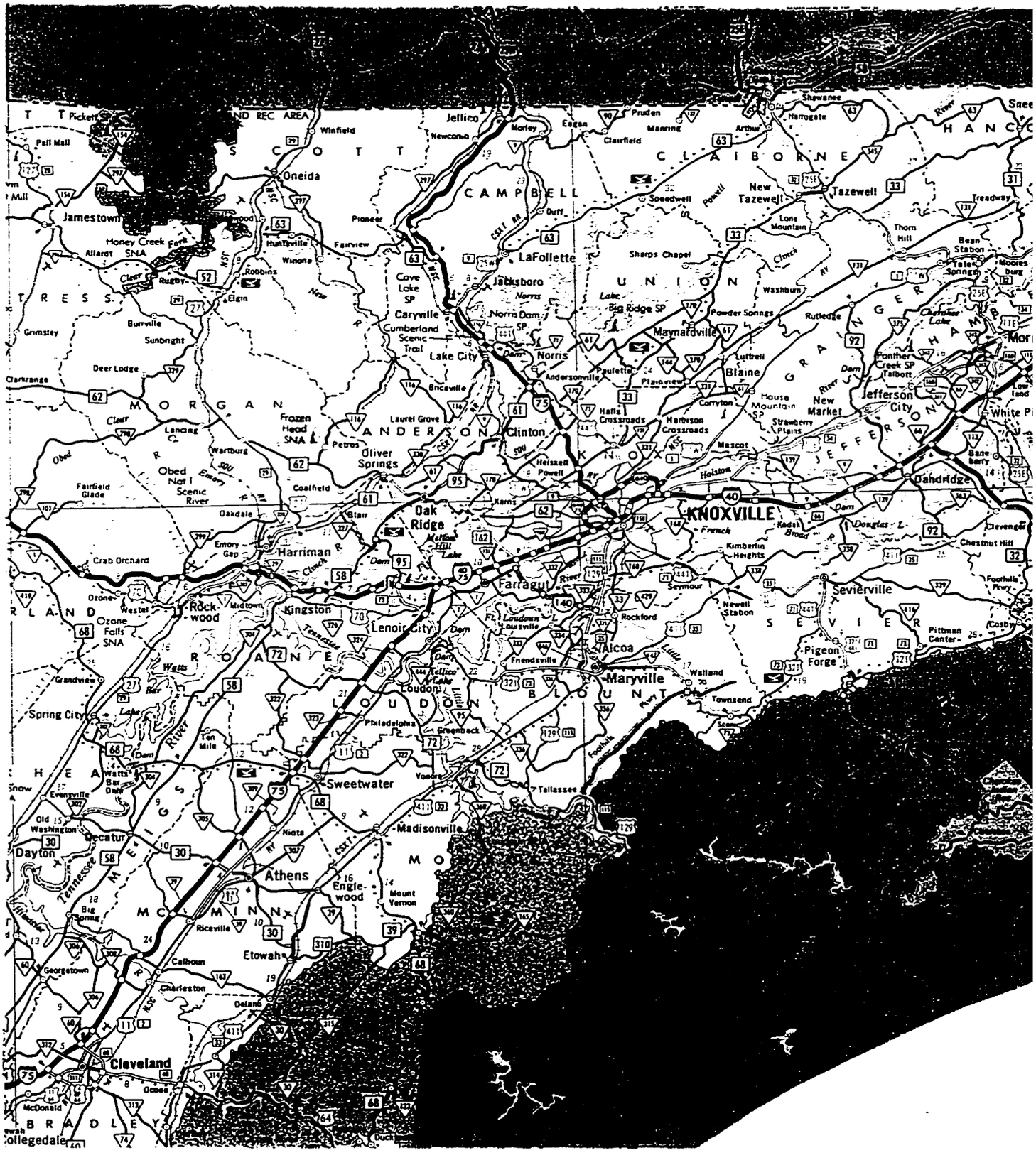
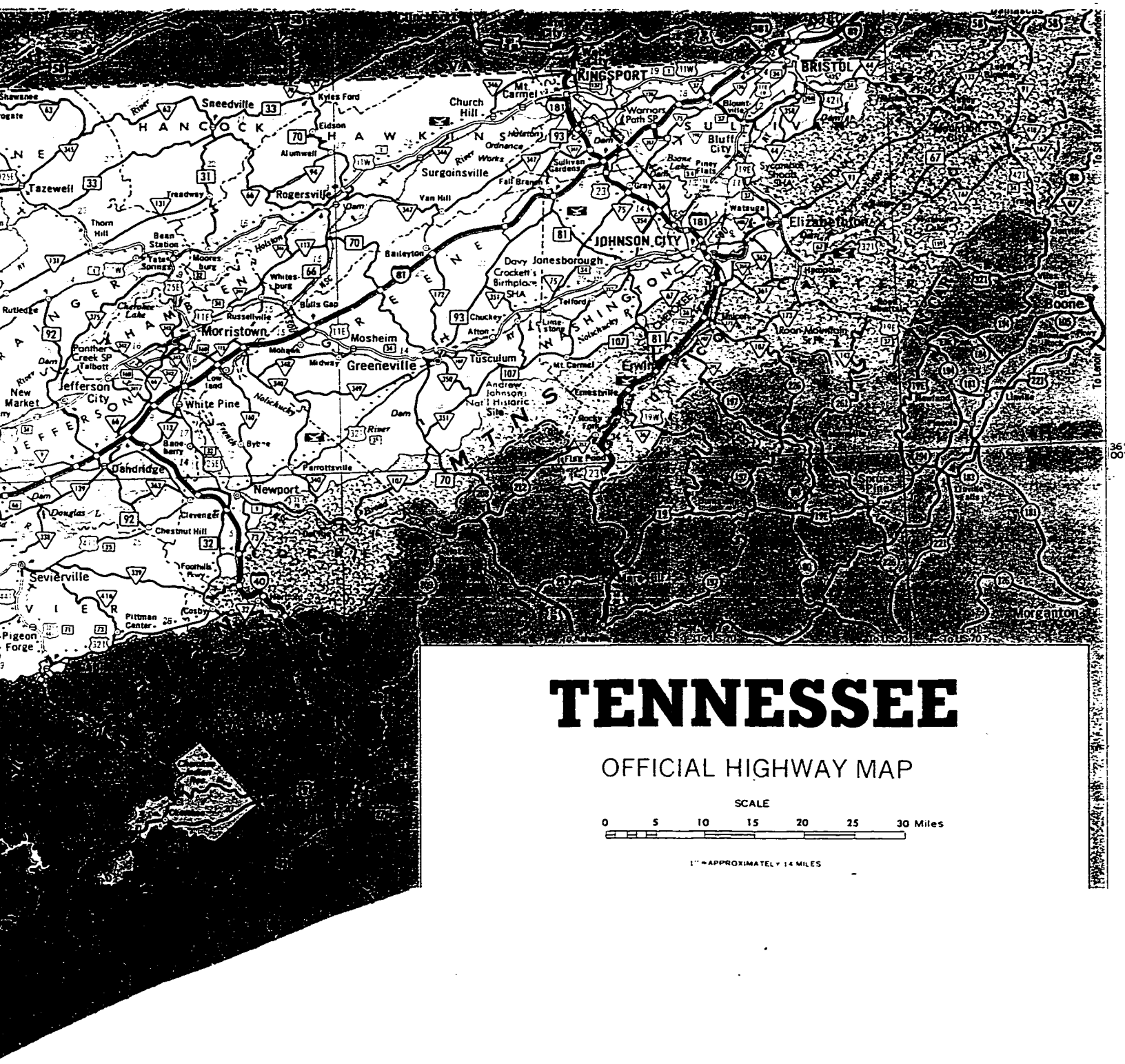


Figure 1. Tennessee Official Highway Map (East Tennessee Segment)



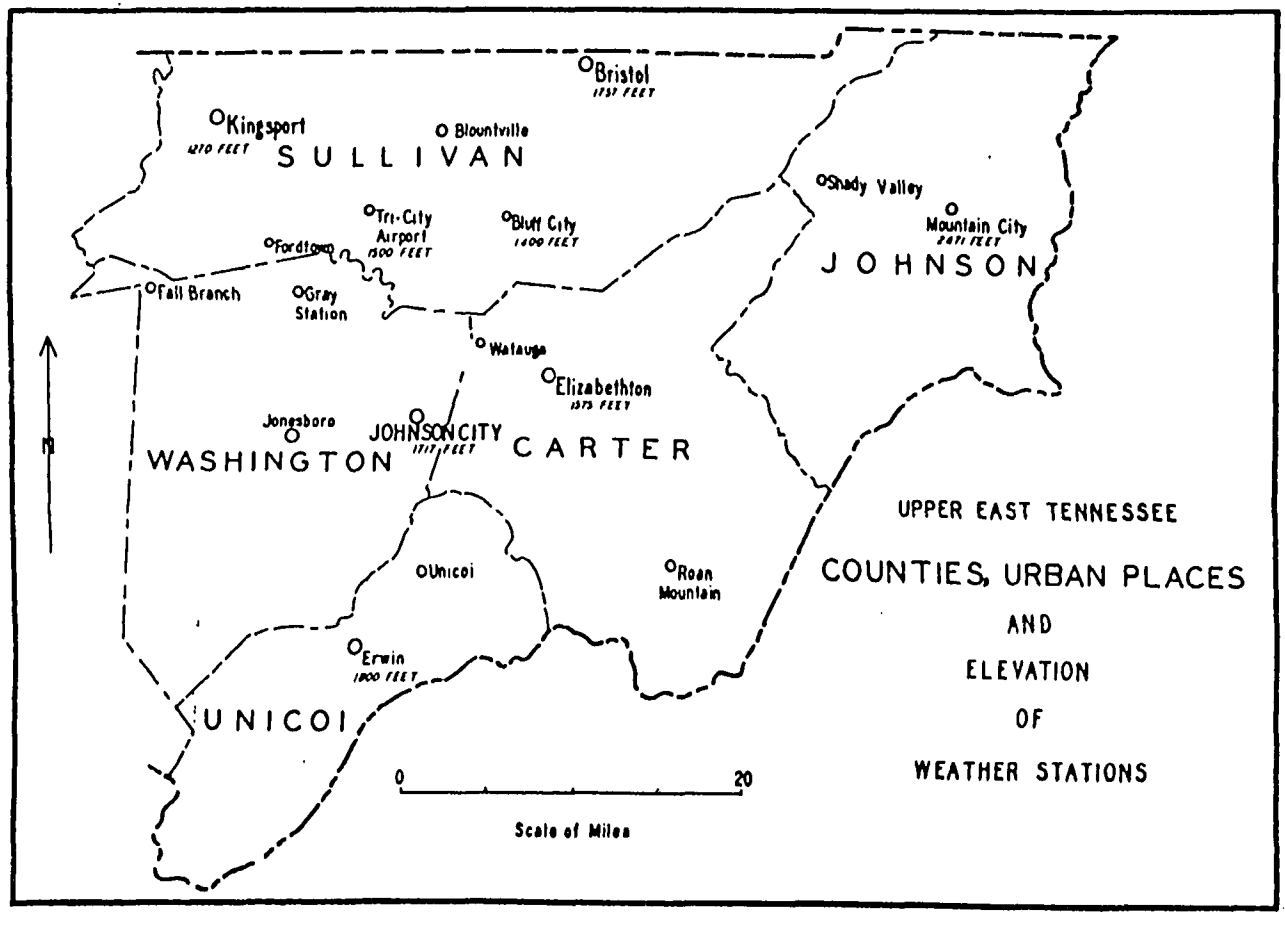


Figure 2. Upper East Tennessee Counties, Urban Places, and Elevation of Weather Stations

(Reprinted by permission of the University of Tennessee, from Terry Elmer Epperson Jr., "Geographic Factors Influencing the Manufactural Industries of Upper East Tennessee" (Knoxville, 1960), 4.)

hundred years later. Their history documents a more recent period in upper East Tennessee annals.

The westward migration of settlers into Tennessee increased in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and pushed beyond the mountainous section of upper East Tennessee towards what would become the middle of the state and then on to the Mississippi River. From being seen as a gateway, upper East Tennessee's image underwent a transformation in the nineteenth century. The established upland communities the newer arrivals passed by looked to them to be isolated in their settings. The Appalachian area of the state differed from the Tennessee counties at lower elevations to its west, and negative impressions of the "hollers" and their residents developed. On the state level, sectional disagreements over political matters surfaced regularly in the first half of the nineteenth century. While the events of the Civil War from 1861-1865 seemed to magnify those sectional disparities, the impact of the defeats and destruction of that war hit every part of the state with equal heaviness. After the war's close Tennesseans reconstructed, and in the New South era that followed, economic recovery and expansion depended in part upon the exportation of natural resources from upper East Tennessee, once railroads made such a prospect feasible and economically profitable. The oldest section of the state, then, just as much as the younger or more urban locations, experienced the newest trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: industrialization, boosterism, and progressivism. Erwin was one of several towns in Tennessee born in this period.

Numerous and varied books have been written on Appalachia and its inhabitants, with the majority of them concentrating on states and locales in the southern portion of the mountain chain.[2] The appearance of the earliest of these studies followed the

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[2]As defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission, Appalachia spreads

railroad's opening of the region and reflected the nineteenth-century opinion that Appalachia was a section removed from the progression of civilization. Among more recent authors some differing perspectives have emerged. The notion that time stood still in these mountains has given way, and published articles and books that include oral histories provided by Appalachian residents merit close attention.

"Erwin, Tennessee: Transformation of Work and Place in an Appalachian Community, 1900-1960" attempts to build from previous research, ideas, and themes concerning Southern Appalachia, and it uses as its setting Erwin, Tennessee. The railroad and the subsequent industry introduced into Erwin beside the train tracks were factors from outside the region that greatly influenced the town's development in the twentieth century and affected the lives of its residents. One factory in particular, the Southern Potteries dinnerware plant in operation from 1917-1957, had a bearing on the community almost as significant as the railroad itself. In order to examine these primary aspects of the transformation of Erwin, this dissertation turns to books, articles, newspapers, county records, correspondence, oral histories, and historic photographs. Of equal significance as resources, the built environment of Erwin and the pottery produced there also contribute to this study. Indeed, while the county seat of Unicoi County has much in common with other Appalachian communities, these last two elements make Erwin distinctive from those other places.

The fact that Erwin underwent transformation does not make it extraordinary. Though not every place that experiences change survives, any community that survives

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through at least portions of the following thirteen states: New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. Further details on books and discussion of the idea of Southern Appalachia will be found in chapters 2 and 5 that follow.

through time has displayed the ability to adapt to a changing world. The irony in this successful adaptation, however, is that what survives is no longer exactly the same as what existed earlier. Transformation of a town, in other words, involves an element of choice: what will people give up in their adapting and what will they cling to and not surrender? The responses made to those questions by community members influence both the change a town undergoes and its results. Influential as well are the interactions of the community's different parts in reaching its course of action. The various groups within the town jockey among themselves, based on their perceived comparative levels of power, and at the same time compete against or for the outside influence that precipitated the transformation in the first place. A chronological listing of developments, provoked from either outside Erwin or from within the community, can be composed. These events that had some bearing on Erwin's transformation can then be compared with the same type of list drawn up from other towns. There, however, with the idea that no place can escape the impact of forces of change, the mirroring of Erwin and other places ends. For Erwin (and for each individual town), discerning the choices its citizens saw open to them and evaluating why the community reached the decisions it made separates the study of that place from every other place.[3]

An example to prove the point comes immediately to mind with the word "community." Though people may believe they understand and agree upon the meaning of the word, as Douglas Flamming makes clear in his introduction to *Creating the Modern South*, the composition of Southern upland industrial communities varies.

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[3]Emily Satterwhite, "Seeing Appalachian Cities," *Southern Change* 21 (Summer 1999): 22, makes a similar point that the number and variety of size of urban areas and the economic differences within the 164-county region labeled "core Appalachia" should prevent people from making blanket generalizations about the region or parts of it.

Flamming carefully delineates how his study of a mill village associated with Crown Mills of Dalton, Georgia, differs from the rural North Carolina textile mill villages highlighted in *Like a Family* by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and others. The North Carolina laborers, Flamming declares, "drew upon preindustrial customs of mutual cooperation to form closely knit communities that perceived themselves and their interests as separate from, and largely in opposition to, company management." The situation at Dalton differs, he believes, because it is the very presence of the Crown Mills factory that creates the workers' community. Their sense of "family," therefore, cannot be grounded in opposition to the company leadership.[4] The employees at Erwin's Southern Potteries may have more in common with Dalton's textile workers than with those from *Like a Family*, but at least one point makes the pottery distinct from those other scenes. The Southern Potteries community included from its beginning a local chapter of the nationally organized potters' union to represent the workers' needs to management. The choices workers saw open to them in Dalton, in North Carolina mill villages, and at Southern Potteries were not the same. While the issue of paternalism flavored each of these Southern upland industrial communities, for example, the extent of its effect on the relationship between management and the workers varied considerably.

The Southern Potteries community came into existence within the larger community of Erwin that had itself been platted first in the 1870s. The Tennessee General Assembly's passage of a new state constitution in 1870 enabled the creation in upper East Tennessee in 1875 of what became Unicoi County. The gift of acreage for a

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[4]Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984*, Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), xxvi.

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

county seat to this new county by a resident named David J. N. Ervin helped to settle the location of the courthouse. Selection of the town's name proved to be more complicated. At the time the organizers of Unicoi County divided and sold lots from the Ervin donation, they determined the town should be named Vanderbilt. Earlier in the decade the northern millionaire Cornelius Vanderbilt had presented an initial gift of $500,000 to a Methodist college in Nashville, which changed its name to honor him and then received another $500,000. Rumors of Vanderbilt relatives looking for property in the Southern Appalachian mountains made the Unicoi County citizens hopeful; they might benefit through the simple ploy of naming their county seat Vanderbilt to draw the attention of Vanderbilt land agents to the area. George W. Vanderbilt, great-grandson of Cornelius, did purchase land for what became his Biltmore Estate, but the tract of 12,000 acres he selected lay outside Asheville, North Carolina. Following this disappointing turn of events, the Tennessee General Assembly in 1879 renamed the Unicoi County seat of government in honor of David J. N. Ervin.[5]

Maps of the region prior to 1903 vary in spelling the town's name Ervin or Erwin. The latter is not, however, a misspelling of the former. Instead, the confusion arose when the post office that had functioned for Vanderbilt changed its name to honor Jesse B. Erwin. He had helped lay out the county's ten civil districts and had been the first County Court Clerk. Erwin, then, operated as the post office for Ervin from 1879 until the town's incorporation under the name Erwin (in place of Ervin) in 1903.[6]

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[5]Tom Siler, *Tennessee Towns: From Adams to Yorkville* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1985), 28; Viola Ruth E. Swingle, *Ervin* (Johnson City, Tenn.: Overmountain Press, 1975), 19; *Goodspeed's History of Tennessee* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1887; reprint, Nashville: C. and R. Elder Booksellers, 1972), 906; and Pat Alderman, *Greasy Cove in Unicoi County: Authentic Folklore* (Johnson City, Tenn.: Overmountain Press, 1975), 10.

[6]Alderman, *Greasy Cove*, 10, and *Goodspeed's History*, 905. Perhaps fearing that

The matter of its name settled, Erwin witnessed over the next several years the arrival of the railroad and the creation of factories. These new additions meant that the established community had to modify its definition of itself. Thomas Bender's book *Toward an Urban Vision* raised questions about nineteenth-century Americans coming to terms with the changes in their social and physical environments, and Erwin's citizens had similar adjustments to face in the first decades of the twentieth century. The allocation of space represents one area of symbolic and actual adjustment as a community Erwin had to confront. This dissertation looks at the issue of the town's development in the early twentieth century and how its built environment manifested the image of Erwin the town boosters wanted realized. Moreover, besides being imbued with social, economic, and cultural meanings, the control of space within the community or a portion of the community could represent political power as well. The historian attempting to interpret those various meanings has a complex task at hand.[7]

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the change in 1903 had in effect repressed the memory of the donor's act except to his descendents, Viola Ruth Ervin Swingle, fifth child of David J. N. Ervin and Susan Catherine Jones Ervin, writes in *Ervin* on page 20: "In around 1870, Longmire was the postmaster in Unicoi County. David J. N. Ervin later purchased a tract of land from Longmire for the new town of Ervin. The first postmaster was Jessie [sic] Erwin. Somehow, it was then the *W* took the *V*'s place in Ervin. The town is still Ervin. The people's petition asked that the new town be named for Ervin. The state records listed Ervin as the official name, but the inhabitants somehow call it Erwin." Ervin and Erwin families continue to reside in the region today.

[7]Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, for the Organization of American Historians, 1975). In the years since Bender's work first appeared, various historians have continued inquiries into the meanings behind the manipulation of space in the built environment, its role in defining society, and the controllers of such power. Charles E. Orser Jr., *The Material Basis of the Postbellum Tenant Plantation: Historical Archaeology in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 82-84, provides an explanation of "proxemics," or the human use of space, and the use of this anthropological concept by archaeologists. For other examples, each

In terms of the Southern Potteries factory in Erwin, to take as one example, the physical plant that remains today and Sanborn fire insurance maps of it from 1925, 1931, and 1948 present clearly defined areas for manufacturing its products and offices for managing the whole process. The play of power between the people of the work area and their supervisors, however, does not show up on a floor plan. Assumptions based on comparison of space to function can and should be checked against company records, correspondence, and personal interviews. In the case of Southern Potteries, the company's papers were destroyed after the stockholders liquidated the pottery. The three presidents of the firm have died, as have almost all the people who served in managerial capacities under them.[8] The foremen of the plant's departments are gone as well. The people who are available to provide personal histories of their time at Southern Potteries are the workers from the plant. And what a rich source that turns out to be. These oral histories, though, speak from a perspective that Charles Foreman, president of Southern Potteries from 1922-1951, might not have shared. Likewise, the bulk of the correspondence that survives is related to union matters, again representative of the workers' point of view. That position, while being a very real one, is not the only one that was a factor during the life of Southern Potteries in Erwin.

The issue of authenticity pertains to another aspect of Southern Potteries' situation too. This enterprise developed a method resembling that of an assembly line to paint by

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supporting a different perspective, see Camille Wells, "Introduction," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, II* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, for Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1986); Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).

[8]Interviews were conducted with an assistant sales manager, E. C. Sellars, and the company's secretary, Edythe Manfull, by the author in August 1999.

hand each piece of mass-produced dinnerware. The final product, however, was and clearly looked to be hand decorated. In a mechanized world, what requirements qualify a product as crafted? If the homespun, handmade dress represents the quality "authentic," does a garment cut from a machine-woven bolt of cloth, sewn on a sewing machine, and purchased in a store represent something less real? With industrialization the meaning of authenticity became problematic, and possible modifications to it had to be considered. Did the act of manufacturing pottery in factories and women painters decorating the pottery by copying samples qualify as craft? The immediate response might well be negative, but the acceptance of machinery in the making of products by Gustav Stickley, Frank Lloyd Wright, and men like them who espoused the ideal of craftsmanship clouds the situation. Stickley admired William Morris, even traveling to England to see his work, but he, unlike Morris, accepted the advent of mechanization to a degree. As historian Miles Orvell interprets Stickley, "the worker should master the machine as a useful tool, taking advantage of labor-saving machinery that would leave him--at least theoretically--free to express his own individuality in the finishing of the piece." Orvell believes this adjustment to industrialization became the accepted philosophy for many twentieth-century craftsmen and some artists.[9] The hand-painted dinnerware coming out

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[9]Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 160.

For references to Frank Lloyd Wright and his ideas regarding machine use, see Elaine Levin, "Ceramics: Seeking a Personal Style," in *The Ideal Home: The History of Twentieth-Century American Craft, 1900-1920*, ed. Janet Kardon (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, in association with the American Craft Museum, 1993), 89, and Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Art and Craft of the Machine" (speech presented at Hull House in Chicago, March 1901), in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 1, *1894-1930*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, 58-69 (New York: Rizzoli, in association with The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1992).

For references to Gustav Stickley on the use of machines, see Mary Ann Smith, *Gustav Stickley, The Craftsman* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), 30, and Barry Sanders, *A Complex Fate: Gustav Stickley and the Craftsman Movement* (New

of Erwin was named Blue Ridge pottery by its company. The popularity of this product with the public suggests something like a parallel adjustment to industrialization on the part of some consumers. They appreciated the end result of hand-painted decoration as well as the accessible pricing, which was based on the mass production of pottery pieces at Southern Potteries in Erwin.

The effects from such a consumer attitude could be far-reaching. How much more are buyers willing to pay because of finishing touches added by human hands? Does that role elevate the status of workers so assigned? Will management value these employees or acknowledge their distinctive contributions with appropriate wages? Do unions consider them skilled labor? Who benefits from maintenance of this mixed mechanized/hand-done merchandising? Does the triumph of mechanization mean defeat for craftsmanship? In the chapters that follow, this dissertation looks more closely at these issues and others as they arose in Erwin, Tennessee.

Using a chronological framework, this study progresses through five chapters devoted to developments in Erwin from 1900-1960 that transformed the town. Chapter 2 concentrates upon the efforts of several individuals to locate a railroad through Unicoi County. The necessity of this modern means of transportation to the future growth of the county seat and its prosperity could not be overstated.[10] The movement of passengers and, more importantly, natural resources and goods by rails connected to other rail systems that crossed the nation would dispel any lingering concerns about Appalachian

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York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996).

[10]Some individuals felt, for example, that the absence of a railroad in the county had an adverse effect on the decision by George Vanderbilt in purchasing his estate. Asheville's railroad line, the Western North Carolina, had been acquired by the Richmond and Danville system in 1880, which then became part of the Southern Railway system in 1894, while Erwin had only a spur line from Johnson City before 1890.

isolation in upper East Tennessee. Just as significant, the completion in the early twentieth century of the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railway (CC&O) with Erwin at its center marked a great engineering achievement. This rail line, brought at last to fruition by the determined George L. Carter, was the first to cross the Appalachian Mountains rather than skirting them. With the CC&O trains running, the New South era finally advanced full-blown into upper East Tennessee, changing the region forever.

Close behind the technological advances introduced into Erwin in its New South phase appeared an influx of Progressive ideas. Chapter 3 delves into the reform ideas surrounding worker housing and the local version of it as funded by the CC&O railroad. The commitment on the part of railroad management to the theory that good housing generated good results from satisfied employees led the railroad to hire Grosvenor Atterbury, the New York architect and community planner considered the best designer of garden-city plans in the United States. Atterbury's design for a garden-city residential section commissioned by the CC&O for its employees in Erwin stands as the architect's one representative project located in the South.

Though the railroad did not carry out the complete development as Atterbury envisioned it, the forty-five houses constructed and the road system for the residential area as laid out remain important elements in Erwin's built environment today. Atterbury's plan evoked a progressive image among the town's leaders and stimulated them to undertake other beautification and building efforts in Erwin. The expansions and improvements in its downtown section served as outward signs of the civic capitalism at work there. George Carter had intended his railroad to be the first major industry among many in this part of Appalachia, and the CC&O management and Erwin's business leaders continued to seek after new enterprises to bring to the region. Chapter 4 chronicles the incorporation of Southern Potteries alongside the CC&O tracks, a mile

from the center of Erwin and adjacent to the Atterbury residential development into which some pottery employees moved. Requiring skilled employees, the pottery imported a number of workers of English descent from potteries in eastern Ohio. Unskilled positions at Southern Potteries attracted applicants from the surrounding countryside, and the plant prospered and its payroll grew during its first decade.

The period of civic pride and civic capitalism in which Erwin basked came to an end with the Great Depression. The events covered in Chapter 5, though, show that Erwin managed better through this economically devastating period than many industrial towns in the region. The continued need for coal kept the railroad (renamed the Clinchfield in 1925) busy carrying the raw resource from its collection point in Virginia to Spartanburg, South Carolina, below the fall line. During these same Depression years, the employees at Erwin's second largest business, Southern Potteries, benefited from their association with the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters. Both nationally and locally the union tried to protect its members through the period of production drop-offs, and the plant in Erwin experienced no strikes. The number of hours that Southern Potteries employees worked each week declined in order to avoid laying off employees, and pay, while reduced, did not cease. At the same time the pottery's management continued to look towards and plan for the future, making plant improvements and design changes. Reacting to the interest in Appalachian crafts shown by consumers across the country, the plant moved to producing only hand-painted dinnerware, with its folk art appearance, and named the line Blue Ridge dinnerware. The significance of those decisions enacted in the 1930s at the pottery plant became clear in the decade that followed.

Though war loomed, business for Southern Potteries boomed as the 1940s began. During World War II, with dinnerware imports from abroad in abeyance, the demand for

domestic dinnerware increased greatly and hand-decorated pieces caught the public's attention. Management constructed a new decorating department space of 35,500 square feet, and the pottery's payroll quadrupled. Chapter 6 details the good news but also examines the difficulties the women decorators faced in their union. Their work differed from that of decorators at other pottery factories, but the union was not ready to acknowledge their hand painting as skilled work. The disappointment of the decorators at Southern Potteries surfaces in oral histories collected on tape in the recent past. These employees' descriptions of their expectations and their daily routines exhibit clear recall of many memories; their perceptions of their experiences are just as sharp. These women and other interviewed employees recognized their inability to combat the diverse forces that brought about the demise of Southern Potteries in the 1950s. In those waning years outside factors beyond the control of people in Erwin played havoc with a company attempting to make internal changes to counter its imminent collapse.

Before the conclusion, chapter 7 outlines the ways in which some of the elements of Erwin's history might be preserved and gives reasons why such actions should be pursued. The loss over the last forty years of accurate community memory concerning developments in the previous sixty years brings an urgency to the need for some preservation plans. That is not to say that Erwin should be frozen like a photograph in a time that has now passed. Transformation, as noted earlier, is a part of adapting and surviving, for a community and the residents of it. But making informed decisions regarding what comes next depends upon being knowledgeable about what has already happened and about the choices available from which future actions will be selected. Historic preservation efforts contribute to that knowledge as they help to save a community's memory.

In the process of conducting research and then writing the results of that research, several different types of books provided helpful information, and the list of the sources consulted comes at the end of this volume. For the sake of readers who might turn to this study with hopes of finding it helpful, clarifying what will not be found here seems appropriate. While the focus of this study is on the local history of certain portions of Erwin, Tennessee, the result is not intended to be a genealogical document. Neither is it a case study: Erwin's situation as depicted herein goes beyond proving a point described previously by some published historian. And the significance of the material culture to this study goes well beyond the more narrow scope of collectors. Nowhere in this work are found value judgments on what price certain items made at Southern Potteries should fetch in the marketplace today. And last but not least, the information garnered from recorded interviews has been woven through the narrative in order to avoid depicting the Southern Potteries employees as passive victims, trammeled by the capitalist system without recourse.

In the middle of the twentieth century, the community of Erwin maintained as best it could its local identity while it became known outside the Appalachian region for the Blue Ridge dinnerware produced at Southern Potteries. The town's centennial celebration in 1976 signified community survival as well as marking changes from what the community had been at the end of the nineteenth century. According to *Webster's Dictionary*, the three definitions of the verb "to transform" when appearing in general usage are: "1) to change the form or outward appearance of; 2) to change the condition, nature, or function of; convert; and 3) to change the personality or character of." Erwin experienced transformation of each type, and this dissertation examines all three through seeking answers to questions, among them the following. Did Atterbury's planned-community housing, within which some pottery managers and workers lived, influence

their attitudes towards each other, in comparison with living situations in other Southern Appalachian industrial communities or with pottery towns in Ohio? Does the creativity expressed in a particular item change the amount of respect accorded the workers involved in its production? How much do consumers, factory managers, and union officials value such creativity and the workers responsible for it? Does the durability of a product have any bearing on the respect accorded the workers who produce it? And what of the two worlds these workers moved in and through, the one of family, background, and community and the other of work and material progress? Were decisions pitted as choices between the two? The railroad, the Atterbury residential plan, and the women who made Blue Ridge dinnerware distinctive each in their own way made Erwin different from what it had been before. In the process, of course, they were themselves transformed.

CHAPTER 2

A RAILROAD THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS: GEORGE L. CARTER AND THE CC&O BRING THE NEW SOUTH ERA TO ERWIN

The account of Unicoi County in the1887 *Goodspeed's History* begins: "Unicoi County lies almost wholly in the Unaka Mountain belt." The region's folklorist, Pat Alderman, declares Unicoi County has always been "mountain bordered" so that "no matter which direction you wanted to go, you had to pass through a gap." Another Unicoi County resident has described the Buffalo Mountains to the north and the Unaka Mountains to the south forming a rim effect around "Erwin, the county seat, [which] is set in the center like a deep cup."[1] The geography of this region of upper East Tennessee was an important factor in the decision to create Unicoi County in 1875. The mountainous terrain hindered travel, and journeys to Elizabethton and Jonesborough, the county seats of Carter and Washington Counties respectively, though not far in miles, were not swiftly completed. On the threshold of the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, because of the mountains, this easternmost region of Tennessee still lacked any significant mileage in train tracks. The railroad, as one of the century's most important inventions, had already influenced for years the development of other parts of the South. Prior to the Civil War, Virginia, Georgia, and Tennessee led the South in rail mileage.[2]

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[1]*Goodspeed's History of Tennessee* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1887; reprint, Nashville: C. and R. Elder Booksellers, 1972), 904; Pat Alderman, *Greasy Cove in Unicoi County: Authentic Folklore* (Johnson City, Tenn.: Overmountain Press, 1975), 8; and Viola Ruth E. Swingle, *Ervin* (Johnson City, Tenn.: Overmountain Press, 1975), 15.

[2]*Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, s. v. "Railroad Industry," by John F. Stover, 749. In his book *Railroads of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 5, Stover wrote that the 30,000 miles of track in the United States in 1860 was

Even so, major rail lines through Tennessee had avoided going into the Appalachians (see Figure 3).[3] In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, however, entrepreneurs with new attitudes financed by northern and foreign money brought railroad construction, industries, and expectations of change to upper East Tennessee. Unicoi County had just been formed. From its earliest years as a political entity, then, developments in Unicoi County were often tied to events that occurred or movements that originated somewhere outside the county's borders and were influenced by people elsewhere making decisions.

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divided among the Northeast with 10,000 miles, the Middle West with 11,000 miles, and the South with 9,000 miles. Stover also provided a table with the mileage per state in the South in 1860.

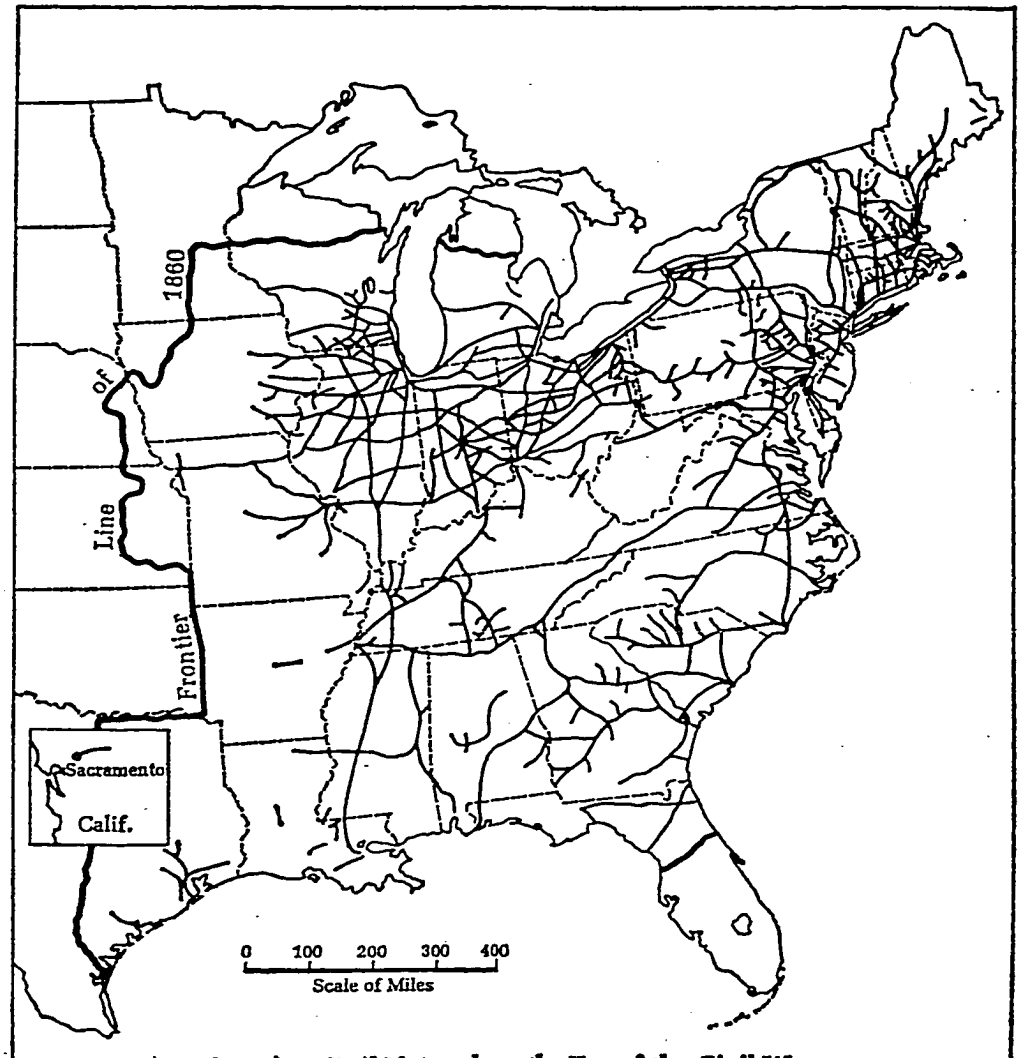
[3]The East Tennessee and Georgia ran between Dalton, Georgia, and Knoxville, Tennessee, first in 1855, and the East Tennessee and Virginia connected Knoxville with Bristol, Virginia, in 1858. These two rail companies merged into the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia (ETV&G) in 1869. The ETV&G route ran parallel to the Appalachian Mountains to its east.

The east-west line known as the Memphis and Charleston (M&C) ran 755 miles from the Mississippi River across the bottom of Tennessee and top of Alabama to Chattanooga and through Atlanta and Augusta on its way to the Atlantic. Linking in with the M&C line at Stevenson, Alabama, the Nashville and Chattanooga line operated its entire line first in 1854. After purchasing the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad in 1872, the Nashville and Chattanooga line changed its name to the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis (NC&St.L).

The Louisville and Nashville (L&N) ran between those two cities (taking nine hours to do so) in 1859 for the first time; its management gained control of a majority of NC&St.L stock in 1880.

A number of other lines also connected West Tennessee with the Ohio River, with the Gulf of Mexico, and with points along the Mississippi River north and south of Tennessee. In 1850 Tennessee had no rail lines laid; in 1860 it had 1,197 miles of track. On the eve of the Civil War four of the five major railroad routes in the South crossed through Tennessee.

For more details on Tennessee railroads, see *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, s. v. "Railroads," by Edward A. Johnson, 769-73, and individually and alphabetically listed railroad entries, and Stover, *Railroads of the South*, 5, 8, 9, and 11.



American Rail Network on the Eve of the Civil War
As of 1860 the 30,626-mile rail system extended into thirty-one states, and had almost reached the frontier line just west of the Mississippi River.

Figure 3. Railroad Routes through Tennessee and the United States in 1860

(Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press, from John F. Stover, *Life and Decline of the American Railroad* (New York, 1970), 40.)

The region's history suggests an independent citizenry, but one willing to support endeavors from outside sources that looked to be beneficial on the local level. In the first years of the twentieth century, the actions taken by one George L. Carter of Virginia had a profound effect upon Unicoi County and its county seat of Erwin. Carter planned a railroad that would connect the Midwest and the Southeast via a direct route. Erwin, Tennessee, sat at the midpoint of the rail line he constructed. Carter and the capitalists who followed his train tracks into the area to build their enterprises brought a New South philosophy to the region. The young county and its county seat responded with enthusiasm.[4]

The Tennessee General Assembly created Unicoi County by a legislative act passed on 19 March 1875 and approved by Governor James D. Porter on 23 March 1875. Though one of the last counties formed in the state, Unicoi County came from Washington and Carter Counties, two of Tennessee's oldest counties (see Figure 4). Washington County dated to 1777, when it was the westernmost county of North Carolina. From the initial boundaries of Washington County, North Carolina carved out Greene County to its southwest in 1783, while the new state of Tennessee took out Carter County to its east in 1796.[5] Unicoi County shared not only its previous history but also

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[4]The initial naming of the Unicoi County seat in 1876 as Vanderbilt, Tennessee, shows that local residents desired some sort of association with northern capitalists. The scheme to attract Vanderbilt money to their valley had clearly failed, though, by 1879. In that year the Tennessee General Assembly declared Ervin the name of the Unicoi County seat of government, to honor David J. N. Ervin for providing the original acreage for the town's establishment. A little over twenty years later, however, the citizens incorporated the county seat under the name of Erwin, and Mr. Ervin sold the rest of his property and moved his family to adjacent Washington County before the end of the decade. See the Introduction for further details of the town's names, the reasons for those choices, and the changes that occurred prior to the town's incorporation in 1903 as Erwin.

[5]*The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, s.v. "Washington County," by Mildred S. Kozsuch and Ruth Broyles, 1037; "Greene County," by Blythe Semmer,

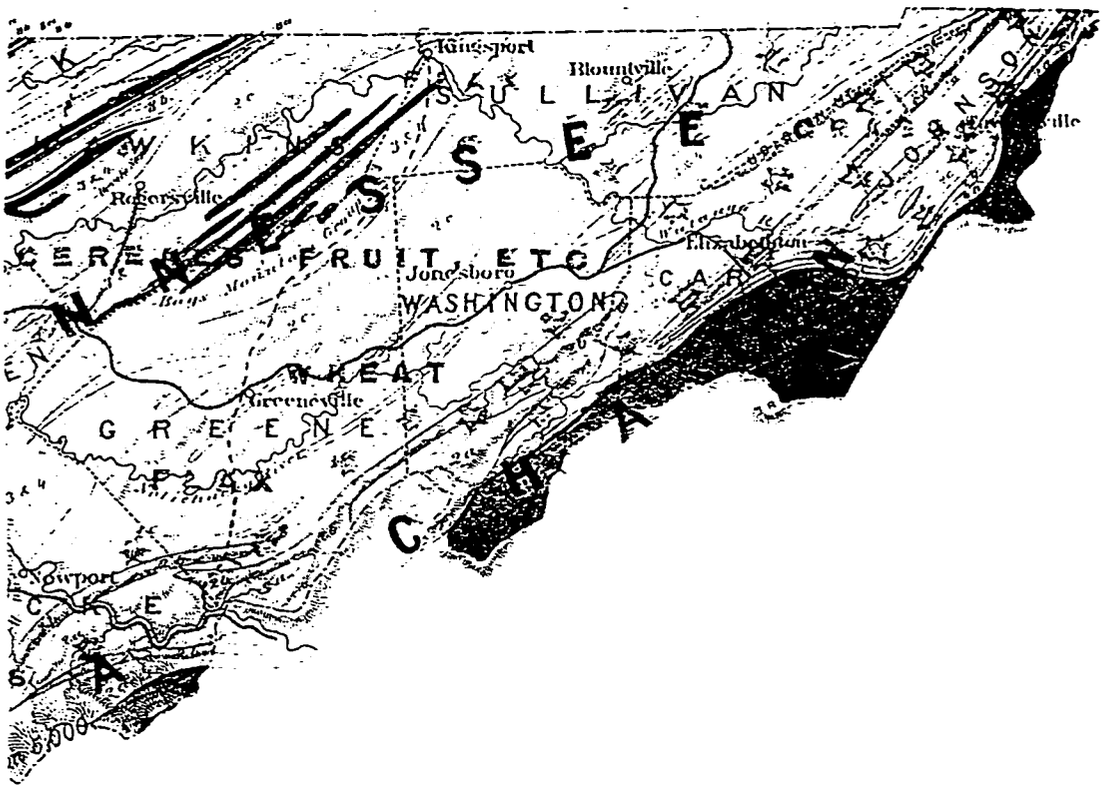

Figure 4. Upper East Tennessee Counties, prior to the formation of Unicoi County,

(Segment of Agricultural and Geological Map of Tennessee reprinted from J. B. Killebrew, assisted by J. M. Safford, *Introdution to the Resources of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1874).)

political persuasions, racial composition, and topographic similarities with its parent counties.[6] The possibility of forming a new county in 1875 resulted from modifications made to the Tennessee Constitution in 1870.[7]

When legislators passed and the governor signed into law an act allowing the creation of Unicoi County in 1875, their action began a process rather than ending one.

386; and "Carter County," by Carroll Van West, 130. The Tennessee legislature created Johnson County out of the northeastern part of Carter County in 1836; see "Johnson County" by Jewell Hamm, 488. Land north of Washington County originally thought of as a part of Virginia fell into North Carolina's possession after a 1779 survey. The next year this region organized as Sullivan County in 1780, from which Hawkins County would be carved in 1787; see "Sullivan County," by Blythe Semmer, 895; and "Hawkins County," by Henry R. Price, 412.

[6]Joseph H. Cartwright, *The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), maps on 26-27 and 64-65, point out, respectively, the small number of African Americans living in Washington, Carter, and Unicoi Counties and the Republican majority in these same counties in elections for governor and president between 1880 and 1890.

[7]This new 1870 constitution reflected the power struggles following the Civil War between the "Radical" Republicans and the "Redeemers," a mix of Democrats and pre-Civil War Whigs. The decision of the constitutional convention to expand the state's Supreme Court from three to five justices (with each of the state's three Grand Divisions to be represented and none to have more than two justices) grew in some measure out of these political quarrels. The most obvious area of disagreement and concern for the convention delegates had revolved around emancipated African Americans and their rights as citizens. The revised constitution provided both for black suffrage and for a poll tax. See Robert E. Corlew, *Tennessee: A Short History*, 2d ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 351 and 350.

Article X, Section 4 of the 1870 Constitution addressed the formation of new counties, and even this topic included an element of political wrangling. The rural northern half of Hamilton County, where residents held political allegiance to the Republicans, broke off to form James County in 1871 in order to escape the dominance of Chattanooga Democrats. James County survived for forty-eight years before it merged back into Hamilton County in 1919, dropping the total figure of Tennessee counties to its present ninety-five. See *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, s. v. "James County," by James N. Monroe.

The 1875 act named nine citizens (two from Carter County and seven from Washington County) to serve as Commissioners in order to organize the new political unit.[8] Under the Constitution of 1870, the people of the area affected by legislation to form a new county had to react positively to it before any change might occur: "No part of a County shall be taken off to form a new County or a part thereof without the consent of two-thirds of the qualified voters in such part taken off," and there had to be at least seven hundred qualified voters in what would be the new county.[9] The commissioners arranged for that vote to be taken on 21 October 1875. At the October polling, as reported in *Goodspeed's History*, more than two-thirds of the ballots cast favored creation of the county. At the same time, the "result: Carter, fraction 119 votes for and twenty-three against, and the Washington fraction 228 for and forty against" adds up to only 410 votes. All of the qualified voters did not turn out.[10] Still, the positive outcome enabled

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[8]Lewis L. Laska, *The Tennessee State Constitution: A Reference Guide*, Reference Guides to the State Constitutions of the United States, ed. G. Alan Tarr, no. 2 (New York, Westport, Conn., and London: Greenwood Press, 1990), 87.

Two of the appointees (David Bell and Thomas Wright) had property in the Limestone Cove area that had been part of Carter County. The other seven commissioners (William Tilson, Charles Bean, Josiah Sams, James V. Jonson, William McInterf, Franklin Hannum, and Richard N. Norris) came from locales in what had been Washington County, stretching from Flag Pond in the south to Unicoi, at times called Swingleville or Swingles, in the north.

[9]Ibid., 138 and 139.

[10]*Goodspeed's History*, 905. Had all the qualified voters turned out, the results might have gone otherwise. Indeed, sections fourteen through eighteen in the original 1875 act created Unicoi County while the first thirteen sections of the act created a county in West Tennessee. That county was to be composed of parts of Madison, Henderson, McNairy, and Hardeman Counties and named Wisdom. This noble-sounding venture did not materialize, however, and only several years later did a different General Assembly move to create Chester County where Wisdom would have been.

the commissioners to select the men who then divided the county into ten civil districts. With the establishment of those districts the first official election in Unicoi County occurred on 25 November 1875. The new county now had officials ready to launch the local government.

A county seat for that government had next to be determined. As the proportion of commissioners from each of the two former counties suggests, more people lived in the southern portion of Unicoi County than in its northern reaches, partly because of the topography of each part.[11] Established communities existed well to the south at Flag Pond and also in the northern half at what is today the community of Unicoi. Farms and small settlements were scattered through the rest of the county (see Figure 5). David J. N. Ervin, who held several pieces of property of varying sizes, had acquired thirty acres at Longmire Postoffice in 1872 in what became a central location in the new county. In February 1876, Ervin deeded this land to the county so that it might be divided into lots and put up for sale, with the proceeds to be used for construction of the county courthouse. Ervin received proceeds from half the lots sold, and he held a one-half-acre lot for his own use. Though William Love and G. Garland contributed five and two acres, respectively, to the town site as well, the place would eventually be named in honor of its primary donor, David Ervin. The building of a brick courthouse commenced in 1876, as the state's youngest seat of government.[12]

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[11]The 1880 census was the first for Unicoi County, and its figures as reported in Swingle, *Ervin*, 19, follow: Piney Grove 154 / Bells 396 / Buffalo 346 / Swingles 511 / Ervin 550 / Bumpass Cove 91 / Browns 137 / Coffee Ridge 409 / Wolfs 279 / Flag Pond 767. Of these places, the first three had been in Carter County, and Piney Grove has since been reinstated in Carter County. The other seven communities had been located in Washington County prior to 1875.

[12]Ibid., 15, 19, 20-21; *Goodspeed's History*, 905-6; Alderman, *Greasy Cove*, 48; and William W. Helton, *Around Home in Unicoi County* (Johnson City, Tenn.:

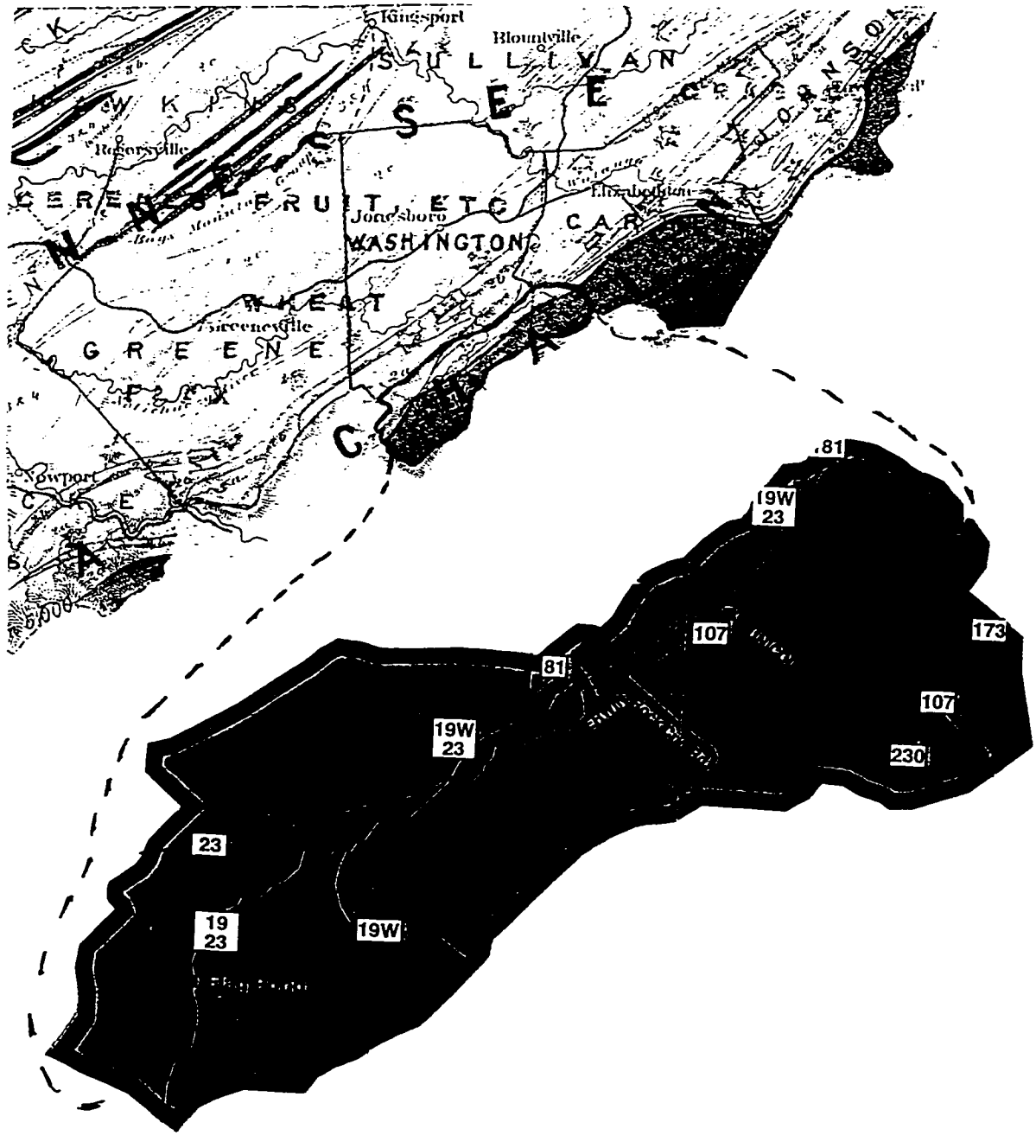

Figure 5. Upper East Tennessee Counties and Unicoi County

(Segment of Agricultural and Geological Map of Tennessee, reprinted from Killebrew and modified by the author.)

At the time of Unicoi County's formation, the Civil War had been over for ten years.[13] The bitter divisions between Unionists and Confederates had largely abated. Some Unicoi residents, like Frank Hannum and Charles Bean, served in the Confederate army while others, including David J. N. Ervin, enlisted for the North.[14] By 1875, however, these individuals cooperated to organize the new county. And political reconstruction, which had ended several years earlier, had little affected the county's population in terms of its political and racial situations.[15]

Overmountain Press, 1986), 11-13. All relate the same information in slightly differing manner. For the wording of the deed of Ervin's land to the county commissioners, see Helton, *Unicoi County*, 12-13.

[13]Next to Virginia, Tennessee had been second in the South in terms of battles fought during the four years of war and first in the mules and cavalry horses it provided. Where the population of the Appalachian region of Virginia had refused to support the secession and had broken away as a separate government to be called West Virginia, similar feelings in the Appalachian region of Tennessee had not resulted in actual separation of East Tennessee from the other two Grand Divisions. Tensions, though, clearly existed. Andrew Johnson from Greeneville remained in Washington when other members of Congress from seceding states departed. Republican East Tennessee also fielded the Tennessee Cavalry Volunteers for the Union. In Washington and Carter Counties, the majority of the population favored the Union, but their state had joined the Confederacy.

See *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, s. v. "Civil War," by Larry Whiteaker, 171; "Livestock," by Ann Toplovich, 557. Whiteaker claims that the 31,000 Tennesseans who fought for "Federal forces constitut[ed] more soldiers than all the other Confederate states together provided to the Union side," 168. John H. DeBerry, "Confederate Tennessee" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1967) writes that Tennessee furnished 140,000 men to the Confederate military, more than any other southern state.

[14]Helton, *Unicoi County*, 318; Alderman, *Greasy Cove*, 18; and Swingle, *Ervin*, 12.

[15]Tennessee's reconstruction had been brief in comparison with the other ten states of the former Confederacy. Tennessee's distinction actually began in 1862 when Federal occupation led Abraham Lincoln to appoint Andrew Johnson as Military Governor. In January 1865, Unionist forces within Tennessee initiated procedures, as

Racial divisions were not common, because of the small African-American population in the region. Of the nine counties forming Tennessee's border with North Carolina, only one--Blount--had a black population above 10 percent. Figures from 1880 show Unicoi County's black population at 3.3 percent, at least a portion of whom had formerly been slaves.[16] Though John Inscoe has suggested that "the southern mountaineers were first and foremost southerners and that they viewed slavery and race in terms not unlike those of their yeoman or even slaveholding counterparts elsewhere in the South," the idea of the relatively small black population of Unicoi County exercising its newly acquired right to vote held no threat of change to the county's status quo.[17]

Lincoln had outlined previously, to end military government. An election put Republican candidates in power with William G. Brownlow as Tennessee's new governor supported by a Radical Republican General Assembly. The state rejoined the Union in July 1866 through Tennessee's ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. Tennessee avoided the military occupation imposed by the Federal government on most of the South for up to ten years.

[16]Cartwright, *Triumph of Jim Crow*, map on 26-27, and Swingle, *Ervin*, 24. John Inscoe, "Race and Racism in Nineteenth-Century Southern Appalachia: Myths, Realities, and Ambiguities," in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 106, writes that in the Appalachian region, of which upper East Tennessee was a part, "slavery existed in every county . . . in 1860, and the region as a whole included a black populace, free and slave, of over 175,000."

[17]Inscoe, "Race and Racism," 113. C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South* (Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 75, writes "The classic lines of cleavage in Southern society were not erased magically by Reconstruction. The very geographical distinctions . . . were constants in the history of the region."

The lack of racial diversity in Unicoi County has continued to the present day. In the 1950 census, out of a population of 5,289 males in Unicoi County fourteen years and older, six were listed as non-white. Of the county's 5,540 females fourteen years and older, two were non-white; see Terry Elmer Epperson Jr., "Geographic Factors Influencing The Manufactural Industries of Upper East Tennessee" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1960), 97. More recently, literature prepared and distributed by the Erwin/Unicoi County Chamber of Commerce, reports the county's nonwhite

Although political and racial conditions in this region changed little after the Civil War, the economic situation was altered as extraterritorial influences manifested themselves and indigenous power lost out to outside forces. Unicoi County came into existence during the throes of the depression resulting from the Panic of 1873, just in time for the developments that would be lumped together and used to describe a New South.

Twentieth-century historians have labeled the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Southern history the New South period, but their descriptions and interpretations of its characteristics, causes, and results have varied greatly. C. Vann Woodward in his 1951 publication of *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, presented a view at odds with those of earlier historians.[18] The fact that authors of subsequent histories have had to address Woodward's interpretation on major points attests to the significance of his volume.[19] Woodward claimed that after 1865 southern leadership

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population was under 1 percent in the 1990 census.

[18]For a succinct description of the school of historians writing early in the twentieth century about the South, see Paul M. Gaston, "The New South," in *Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green*, ed. Arthur S. Link and Rembert W. Patrick (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), particularly 318-30. For a more recent survey of historical thought and historians on the New South, see Harold D. Woodman, "Economic Reconstruction and the Rise of the New South," in *Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higginbotham*, ed. John B. Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987): 254-307.

[19]Both the economic boom in the post-World War II South that led to Sunbelt prosperity and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s may have inspired some historians to reexamine earlier Southern history. Most agreed that the decades following Reconstruction, what are called the New South and Progressive eras, set the patterns the South lived by during the first half of the twentieth century, though their analyses and judgments of those eras may diverge widely from one another. Contributions to this study include: George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton

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Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984); Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Howard N. Rabinowitz, *The First New South 1865-1920* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992); and Jeanette Keith, *Country People in the New South: Tennessee's Upper Cumberland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

For special interests in these years in the Appalachian region, see: Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native & Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Crandall A. Shifflett, *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); and Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, eds., *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Urban perspectives are highlighted in David R. Goldfield, *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607-1980* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), and Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*, Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

Collections of essays or books covering topics of social history of these years include: J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Walter J. Fraser Jr., Frank Saunders Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985); Dolores E. Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community*, Class and Culture Series, ed. Bruce Laurie and Milton Cantor (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making*

emerged among a new group, a nascent middle class, in place of the antebellum planter families. This thesis emphasized change instead of continuity in positions of power. And Woodward believed the New South leadership agreed to function in a type of colonial relationship to northern interests in control of capital. He saw the Populist movement, spawned in frustration and revolutionary in nature, as a threat to that new leadership since it viewed society divided not along racial lines but along class lines. The majority of Southern society, though, wrestled with racial issues, and Woodward confronted its struggle with racial parity and labeled its outcome "Progressivism--For Whites Only." Woodward ended *Origins of the New South* with the apparent recovery of southern leadership in national government during Woodrow Wilson's first term as president.

Paul Gaston's studies of that New South leadership as Woodward had defined it led to his explication of a New South creed. Henry Grady of the Atlanta *Constitution* and Daniel Augustus Tompkins of the Charlotte *Observer* are perhaps the best known proponents of that philosophy because they had access to the public through newspapers they edited or owned. They exemplified, too, certain characteristics seen in most New South advocates. These men had been too young to participate directly in the Civil War.

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of a Southern Cotton Mill World (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); and Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

Books concentrating on Progressivism include: John Patrick McDowell, *The Social Gospel in the South: The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930*, Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998.

They foresaw their future in urban settings, not down on the farm. As spokesmen for their region they denounced slavery and cotton as the primary or solitary crop and claimed that losing the Civil War freed the South from its bondage to both. With this reconciliation to the war's outcome, economic regeneration would develop through industry, funded with capital from the North.[20]

The southern region also needed to restore and expand its railroads in the years following the Civil War. The desired rebuilding and expansion of lines proceeded slowly, due to the defeated section's economy, first, and then to the national downturn in the mid-1870s. Fewer than three thousand miles had been added in the southern region by 1880, reaching a total of 13,259. During the 1880s, southern railway construction east of the Mississippi River more than doubled that total with the addition of 14,396 miles. Woodward comments that railroad development enticed capital from the North and abroad even more than did property.[21] Both could be exploited to the investors'

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[20]Besides national reconciliation, New South spokesmen also talked of racial adjustment, broadcasting the South's solution to it. In 1886 Henry Grady told the New England Club of New York that the Negro question was to be handled by southerners and not outsiders. Grady elsewhere announced that in the New South "the whites and blacks must walk in separate paths. . . . As near as may be, these paths should be made equal--but separate they must be now and always." The failure of the Populist's agrarian-based reform effort enabled the New South version of racial relations to evolve into the Jim Crow legislation of one southern state after another and into a Progressive era focused on whites. See Gaston, *New South Creed*, 7; Henry Grady, quoted in Paul D. Escott and David R. Goldfield, eds., *Major Problems in the History of the American South Volume II: The New South*, Major Problems in American History Series, gen. ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Lexington, Mass. and Toronto: D. C. Heath and Company, 1990), 72-73; and Henry Grady, quoted in Dana F. White, " . . . The Old South Under New Conditions," in *Olmsted South: Old South Critic / New South Planner*, ed. Dana F. White and Victor A. Kramer (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 161.

[21]Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 120. E. G. Campbell, *The Reorganization of the American Railroad System, 1893-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1968), 13, notes that while

advantage. In fact, the history of the New South and the railroad became so totally intertwined that neither can be discussed without reference to or study of the other.

Given the great increase in tracks laid in the 1880s, New South spokesmen from the 1880s onward praised the region's success in economic regeneration. In 1900, D. A. Tompkins described his New South as being "of healthy growth. It is already a young giant. It is absorbing the assets of the old, and adding to them at the same time by turning the raw material of the country, heretofore mostly untouched, into products from the sale of which come handsome profits."[22] His version of the situation varies sharply, though, from historians' evaluation of it. James Cobb devotes the first chapter of *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* to "The Shaping of Southern Growth." His summary of antebellum local industry and its revival after 1865 describes an industrial base kept small in part by an agrarian-oriented leadership. Here Cobb disagrees with Woodward's assessment of the postwar leadership and its origins. His point, however, that the South's leadership allowed industrial investors a free hand corresponds exactly with Woodward's statement that Tompkins and others "were preaching laissez-faire capitalism, freed from all traditional restraints."[23] The raw

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Dutch, Canadian, and German money financed developments of some of the biggest railroad lines in the United States, topping those other foreign funders were the English, who by 1890 owned more than two billion dollars of American railroad securities.

[22]Daniel Augustus Tompkins, quoted in Escott and Goldfield, eds., *Major Problems: The New South*, 75. For a description of one Tennessee version of the New South spokesman, see Samuel Boyd Smith, "Joseph Buckner Killebrew and the New South Movement in Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* No. 37 (1965): 5-22, and Smith's dissertation on Killebrew with the same title, (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1962).

[23]Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society*, 14-15, and Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 148. Jonathan Wiener agrees with Cobb that the planter class did not abdicate its power after the Civil War, but his "Prussian Road" thesis in *Social Origins of*

materials that Tompkins claimed turned into handsome profits did so for the northern capitalists who had purchased those resources and transported them out of the South for final processing. Cobb, Woodward, David Goldfield, and David Whisnant, among others, agree that such a situation epitomizes a colonial economy, where control and profits are siphoned off to the absentee owner's benefit.[24]

The New South boosters had a different perspective, admittedly one that lacked distance in terms of time, place, or personal interests. Historian David Carlton found that in Spartanburg, South Carolina, "the townspeople became infatuated with mills, viewing them as human beehives capable of producing fabulous wealth."[25] That viewpoint

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the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885 maintains that they had controlled to some degree northern industrialists' access to Alabama during that immediate postwar period.

[24]See Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society*, 20; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, chapter 11 "The Colonial Economy;" Goldfield, *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers*, chapter 3 "The Old South Under New Conditions;" and David E. Whisnant, *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), "Introduction."

Rabinowitz, *First New South*, 157, declares that the exodus from the South by both blacks and whites in the years around World War I occurred because of the lack of improvement in the early twentieth century showing the failure of the New South policies of economic regeneration and racial adjustment.

[25]Along with the wealth for the mill owners, though, emerged a problem. As Carlton observed, the mills "also required creating a class of dependent, propertyless white mill operatives." See Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina*, 9 and 10. In some locales such a group of potential employees already existed. J. Wayne Flynt, "Folks Like Us: The Southern Poor White Family, 1865-1935," in *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education*, ed. Walter J. Fraser Jr., R. Frank Saunders Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 226, blames the severe deprivation in parts of the South following the Civil War for driving poor whites from the hills, piney woods, and wiregrass regions in search of a means of living. Boosters determined that building mills and seeking northern investments in mines and factories helped solve the economic woes of the poor whites of their communities.

surfaced in other communities in the Piedmont and other parts of the South as well. The residents of Unicoi County, Tennessee, however, could not grow too excited about mills until they had a railroad beside which to build them. They had to pin their hopes first on their land being selected for a train route. And in 1886 Unicoi County received news of impending construction. The Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago Railroad (3-C) would connect Erwin with the rest of the world.[26]

The primary architect of the 3-C venture, John T. Wilder, had first visited Tennessee as a member of Union forces during the Civil War, a characteristic he shared with several other New South developers. As an officer with the 17th Indiana Volunteers, he had distinguished himself in actions in Middle Tennessee and later in the battles fought in 1863 in the Chattanooga area. Wilder returned and settled in Chattanooga in 1866. He served the city at later dates as mayor and postmaster, and he worked for the establishment of the military park at the sites of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga battles. Beyond the municipal borders, Wilder undertook a number of projects to develop East Tennessee's resources, beginning with the Roane Iron Works in 1867. He created the Carnegie Land Company in Johnson City and built a hotel there both to serve potential investors and in anticipation of the train passengers his Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago Railroad would deliver to the area.[27]

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[26]Although there had been discussions and planning for one rail route or another between the Ohio River and a southern port on the Atlantic, nothing solidified into actual construction for such a route before the Civil War erupted. In the two decades after the war, consolidation and expansion of lines already in operation, as well as the Panic of 1873 and its resulting depression, absorbed investors' money and attention. In Tennessee several sittings of legislatures and governors wrangled with a controversial state debt during these years and finally came to an agreement in 1884 that made prospects for Tennessee's financial future appear healthier at last.

[27]*The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, s. v. "John Thomas Wilder," by Patrice Hobbs Glass, 1058.

The 3-C proposed route stretched from Camden, South Carolina, where it connected with extant rails into Charleston, through Marion, North Carolina, and into Tennessee, via Unicoi County (see Figure 6). Passing through Johnson City and Kingsport, the tracks were to continue through the southwest corner of Virginia and into Kentucky to Ashland on the Ohio River. In Wilder's proposal, at the town of Ironton, Ohio, on the opposite river bank, the railroad joined an extension to Cincinnati and from there rail lines led to Chicago.[28] In this plan, the railroad had to cross mountains between North Carolina and Tennessee and between Virginia and Kentucky. Wilder's proposal proved timely. As Edward Ayers has noted, the South's early railroads had avoided routes that entailed crossing mountains, but "by 1900 four major lines traversed the Southern Appalachians and smaller lines steadily emerged to feed new coal fields or lumber sites."[29] The escalating demand for wood and coal to fuel the rapidly expanding industrial developments of the North made the difficult and costly routes to those mountain deposits and forests acceptable. At the same time, the expense reached beyond what assets individual investors could muster. The mergers and consolidations of railroads in the 1870s and 1880s had led to complicated financial-backing packages based on firms located in New York and abroad. Among the financial backers of Wilder's $21,000,000 3-C Railroad was Baring Brothers of London, a respected and powerful merchant bank that had also undertaken, among other projects, financing the Argentine government's programs of economic expansion.[30]

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[28]James A. Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield: A Construction History of America's Most Unusual Railroad*, 2d ed. (Erwin, Tenn.: GEM Publishers, 1989), 12 and 15.

[29]Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 117.

[30]Vincent P. Carosso, with assistance of Rose C. Carosso, *The Morgans: Private*

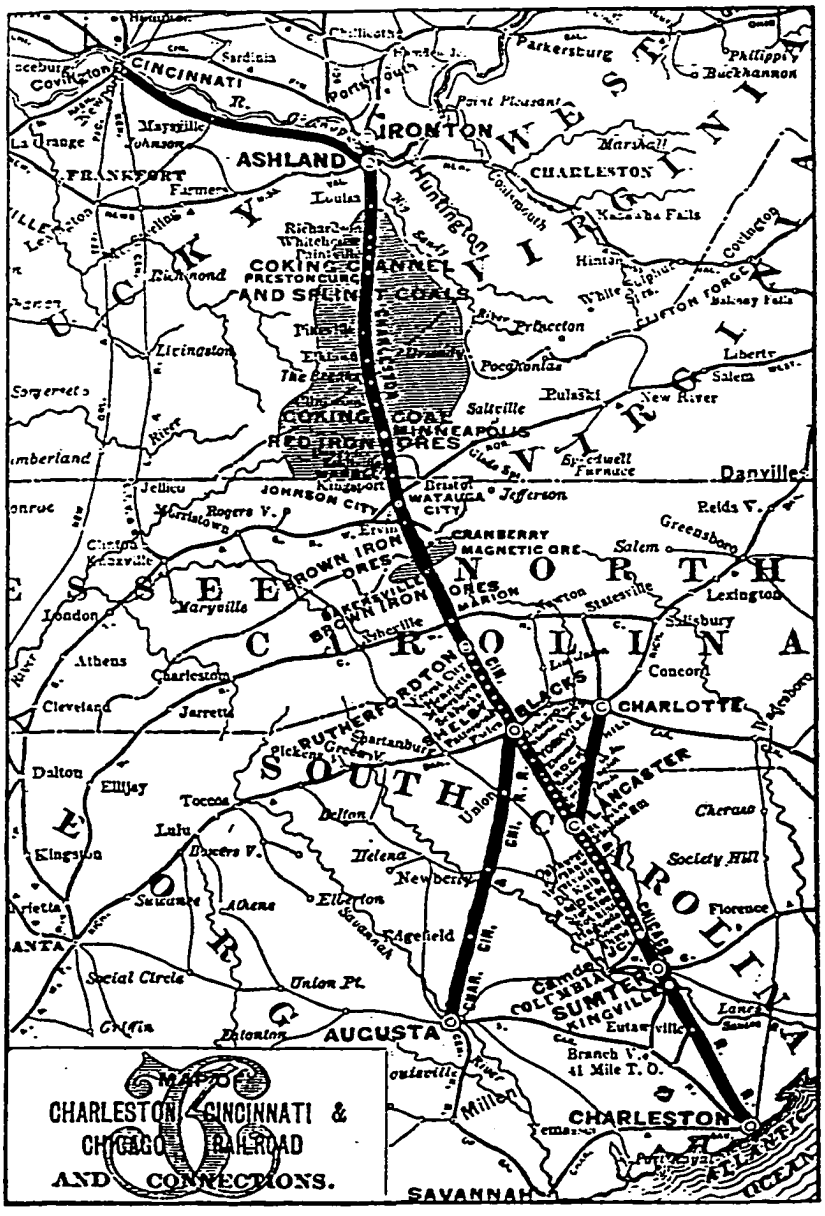

Figure 6. Map of Charleston, Cincinnati & Chicago Railroad and Connections

(Reprinted by permission of James A. Goforth, from James A. Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield: A Construction History of America's Most Unusual Railroad*, 2d ed. (Erwin, Tenn., 1989), 13.)

Railroad development between 1880 and 1890 created more than 73,000 miles of new track in the United States. New towns sprang up along the rails.[31] In picturesque regions construction began on "resort" hotels, while some established towns suffered when rail routes bypassed them. Tennessee saw a 50 percent increase in tracks to a total of 2,799 miles.[32] In the South more than 180 new rail companies formed, though some were consolidated with others almost as quickly as they formed. The new wave of mergers in the 1880s put New York companies in control of more than half the South's railroad mileage. Robert Wiebe claims that tying small towns into the national market had more significance than had linking the two coasts by the transcontinental rail lines. People supported the railroad's arrival, but "dependence arrived as abruptly as the

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International Bankers, 1854-1913, Harvard Studies in Business History, ed. Alfred D. Chandler Jr., no. 38 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 298. While Argentina's economic endeavors were successful in the 1880s, problems with corruption and speculation surfaced late in the decade and led to the collapse of that country's economy and subsequently to the downfall of the Argentine government. The liability Baring Brothers had accumulated with regard to Argentina was so massive that the firm was forced into reorganization to survive. Baring Brothers recovered from its difficulties, because of the assistance of other top banks, but the after-effects depressed parts of the British economy, and that downturn led eventually to the Panic of 1893 in the United States.

[31]Scholars commenting on differences between the rail systems of England and the United States have often made the point that England's routes connected places already established while American rail routes heading west from large trade centers in the second half of the nineteenth century often created land speculation and towns. As John C. Hudson, *Plains Country Towns* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 6, explains, "Towns were not independent of one another; rather they were interdependent components of plans formulated by the largest corporations of the day for extracting value from dependent, colonial hinterlands."

[32]By 1920, Tennessee's rail lines had expanded to 4,078 miles of track. After that time, the increasing impact of automobile travel influenced the attitudes of business and public alike and led to maintenance of extant tracks rather than new construction.

connection was made, the one inherent in the other." Shortly the local population discovered that decisions as well as goods came down those tracks.[33]

In Unicoi County and the counties adjacent to it, though, the latter 1880s seemed golden. The 3-C track construction from Johnson City reached Erwin in 1890. At nearby Unaka Springs the owner of the local hostelry adjacent to the county's mineral spring commenced planning for a new forty-room hotel. In 1889 a group of English investors had acquired more than 45,000 acres in Unicoi and Washington Counties for their Embreville [*sic*] Freehold Land, Iron and Railway Company, Limited. Company organizers completed their plans to construct a railroad from Johnson City to Embreeville for carrying out iron, and by 1892 the company had built one hundred workmen's houses for what it hoped would become a community of 30,000.[34] The New South visions of

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[33]Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860*, Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) claims these developments surfaced in Appalachia prior to 1860 and decades before the appearance of the railroad, but most scholars agree that the number of enterprises markedly increased with the railroad's arrival in this part of the South; Stover, *Railroads of the South*, 193; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 120 and 121; and Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, The Making of America / American Century Series, ed. David Herbert Donald (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 47 and 48.

[34]Thomas S. Wyman, "Tennessee Places: The British Misadventure in Embreeville," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 100 and 101; the British made numerous such investments in the years around the turn of the century, as Wyman enumerates, 99-100. The British development of Middlesboro, Kentucky, as described in Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*, presents an example of what might have happened at Embreeville had more of its investors' plans been put in place. J. Fred Holly, "The Co-operative Town Company of Tennessee: A Case Study of Planned Economic Development," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 36 (1964), 56, f. 1, states that at least eight land companies were in operation in East Tennessee in 1890.

economic prosperity based on industrial development of the South's resources had reached upper East Tennessee in full force.

The point of the extractive iron industry, however, was to bring profits to a company's stockholders. On this point the British endeavor in Embreeville failed rather quickly. Labor from the surrounding area benefited via wages paid, but there was no further talk of developing supplemental industries and a thriving community in a partnership between British investors and the local population. As C. Vann Woodward discerned, New South spokesmen and promoters imagined a South that would develop local leaders and companies as the North had done earlier, but northern and foreign investors did not desire, and therefore in no way helped to create, such developments.[35]

The Panic of 1893 put a halt to many plans. Nationwide 15,000 American businesses closed, while the panic may have forced the collapse of the Embreville [*sic*] Freehold efforts. Some failures saw their assets purchased, reorganized, and reopened under different names. In the case of Embreeville, the Embreeville Iron Company, Limited, another English firm, bought the bankrupted property in 1894, commenced mining operations again in 1895, and five years later gave up and sold the property to a company based in Virginia.[36] Some failures affected much larger areas and more people so that the need for successful reorganization was imperative. Such attempted rehabilitations, then, involved more strident measures and control than the speculative mood of the late 1880s and early 1890s had engendered.

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[35]Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 291.

[36]Wyman, "Tennessee Places," 103 and 108.

The creation of the Southern Railway system by John Pierpont Morgan in 1893 provides a clear example.[37] Morgan had followed his father into merchant banking in England where he amassed as much power as wealth through his success in procuring European funds to finance American developments, particularly railroads. As a partner in the American branch of the family firm, Drexel, Morgan & Company, Morgan became in effect a power broker from the 1880s onwards. Despising the chaos in financial markets threatened by various over-extended railroad lines, Morgan sought stability through buy-outs, reorganizations, and consolidations, the number and size of which only someone with vast sums of money at his disposal could consider undertaking. In return, these consolidations brought him further wealth, but Morgan also maintained a control in the reorganized railroad companies on a level not previously seen.[38] The results of his restructuring also made for fewer, but larger, railroad companies. Morgan created the Southern Railway System out of more than thirty smaller southern railroads with a combined total of 4,500 miles of track. In a short time he connected and expanded these

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[37]For a detailed presentation of J. P. Morgan's career and its effect on the American business world of his day, see Carosso, *The Morgans*; in that book, chapter 10, "Railroad Reorganizer and Industrial Consolidator," addresses the Southern Railway situation, among others.

[38]*The Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography*, s. v. "John Pierpont Morgan," by Robert L. Frey, 274. The process Morgan developed for reorganization even became known as "Morganization" due to the steps he always included: "First, the bankrupt railroad had money pumped into it by the House of Morgan while excessive fixed costs were eliminated and other cost reductions were enacted as necessary. Second, Morgan attempted to act as a disinterested mediator to reduce unnecessary competition between the bankrupt road and its competitors. . . . Third, Morgan, in some way, usually by a voting trust, maintained control of the company in order to maintain financial stability and to honor the community of interest concept. All 'Morganizations' involved absolute control by Morgan and his business associates for a certain time, usually five years," 275.

various railroads into 7,500 miles, making the Southern the largest railroad in the South.[39] In Tennessee three rail lines, the Southern, the Illinois Central, and the L&N,[40] gained control of almost all the tracks running through the state by early in the twentieth century.

The pieces of the Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago, still unfinished and unconnected in 1893, did not become part of the Southern Railway system, nor did the 3-C survive. The failure of Baring Brothers of London had launched the Panic of 1893, and the 3-C was one of many companies that had its promised monies disappear in that collapse. Without another source for financial backing in these economically troubled times, John T. Wilder could not complete construction of his railroad. He had made great progress in the lowland section of his route with 171 miles of railroad in operation between Camden, South Carolina, and Marion, North Carolina, by 1893. Grading in preparation for laying track had been completed from the Ohio River at Ashland, Kentucky, sixty miles south and between Johnson City, Tennessee, and Dante, Virginia, a distance of eighty-five miles. Going south from Johnson City into Unicoi County, through Erwin and beyond, another twenty miles of railroad line was up and running. Costs thus far totaled more than seven million dollars, but Wilder could not avoid

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[39]Ibid., 276, and Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 292.

[40]Following the Southern, the Atlantic Coast Line (ACL) and the Seaboard Air Line systems were created through mergers and consolidations, and by the early twentieth century these three lines were the largest in the South. In 1902 the ACL purchased controlling stock in the L&N from J. P. Morgan, who had quietly acquired 51 percent of its holdings earlier that year. The L&N name continued until 1982. George H. Drury, *The Historical Guide to North American Railroads* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Kalmbach Books, 1985), 30 and 180-81, and Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 293.

foreclosure. The route in its various stages of completion sold for less than one-tenth that amount in July 1893, when Charles Hellier offered $550,000 for it.

Clearly Hellier acted on behalf of a group of investors. Wilder had been the primary personality forging the idea of the 3-C Railroad, but, in truth, southern railroads had seen the composition of their management shift to a majority of northern financial figures by the 1880s. Initially Hellier's group continued with Wilder's planned route, and they renamed the line the Ohio River and Charleston Railroad (OR&C).[41] A schedule from 1895 shows how they utilized already completed portions via connections to other rail lines (see Figure 7) while work progressed on their unfinished sections. Within another two years, though, the management decided to change the Atlantic port terminus from Charleston to Wilmington, North Carolina, and it sold the 171-mile portion of track Wilder had built from Camden to Marion. The mountains between Tennessee and North Carolina had to be crossed, however, whether the end of the line stretched to Charleston or Wilmington. Work in the southern portion of Unicoi County had reached Chestoa, 5.2 miles beyond Erwin, before the 3-C collapsed. Now grading and track laying resumed, passing through the twelve-mile Nolichucky Gorge and beginning the climb into North Carolina. By 1899 the line extended 13.8 miles from Chestoa to Huntdale, North Carolina. Three years later, in 1902, tracks reached Boonford, twenty-two miles from Huntdale and over seven hundred feet higher than Erwin. Progress, while clearly made, proved slow and expensive. And this extension did not generate income to offset the costs. The owners decided to recover their funds by selling the OR&C in its parts to different buyers. The Chesapeake and Ohio Railway purchased the Kentucky section.

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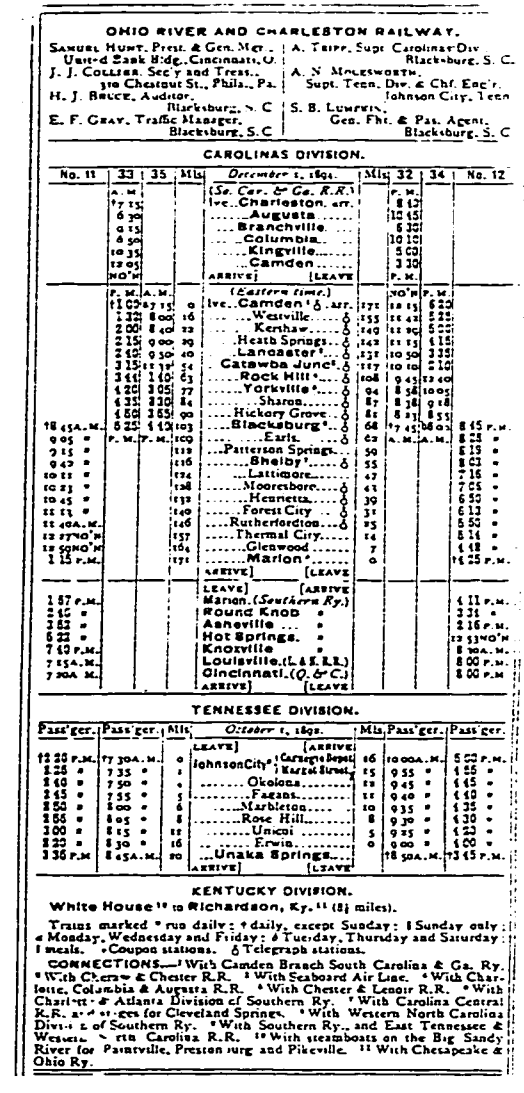
[41]For more information on northern involvement in southern lines, see Stover, *Railroads of the South*, 153, and Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 120-21 and 292-95. See Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield*, 16-18, for further details on the OR&C.



OHIO RIVER AND CHARLESTON RAILWAY.

SAMUEL HUNT, Prest. & Gen. Mgr., United Bank Bldg., Cincinnati, O.
J. J. COLLINS, Sec'y and Treas., 310 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa.
H. J. BRUCE, Auditor, Blacksburg, S. C.
E. F. GRAY, Traffic Manager, Blacksburg, S. C.
A. TRIPP, Supt. Carolinas Div., Blacksburg, S. C.
A. N. MOUSEWORTH, Supt. Tenn. Div. & Chf. Eng'r, Johnson City, Tenn.
S. B. LUMPKIN, Gen. Fht. & Pas. Agent, Blacksburg, S. C.

CAROLINAS DIVISION.

No. 11	33	35	Mls.	December 1, 1894.	Mls.	32	34	No. 12
	A. M.			(So. Car. & Ga. R.R.)		P. M.		
	†7 15			lve..Charleston. arr.		8 15		
	6 30			.....Augusta.....		12 45		
	9 15			...Branchville.....		6 30		
	6 50			....Columbia.....		10 10		
	10 35		6	.....Kingville.....		5 50		
	12 05			.....Camden.....		3 30		
	NO'N			ARRIVE] [LEAVE		P. M.		
	P. M.	A. M.		(Eastern time.)		NO'N	P. M.	
	†1 05	‡7 15	0	lve..Camden ¹ δ arr.	272	12 15	6 20	
	1 32	8 00	16	.....Westville.....δ	255	11 42	5 22	
	2 00	8 40	22	.....Kershaw.....δ	249	11 20	5 00	
	2 15	9 00	29	...Heath Springs...δ	242	11 15	4 15	
	2 45	9 50	40	..Lancaster ¹.....δ	232	10 50	3 25	
	3 15	11 35	54	.Catawba Junc².....δ	217	10 10	2 10	
	3 45	1 40	63	.....Rock Hill ¹.....δ	208	9 45	12 40	
	4 20	3 05	77	.....Yorkville ¹.....δ	94	8 56	10 05	
	4 35	3 30	84	.....Sharon.....δ	87	8 38	9 18	
	4 50	3 55	90	.....Hickory Grove.....δ	81	8 23	8 55	
18 45 A. M.	5 25	4 12	103	.....Blacksburg ¹.....δ	68	†7 45	8 05	8 45 P. M.
9 05 "	P. M.	P. M.	109	.....Earls.....δ	62	A. M.	A. M.	8 25 "
9 15 "			113	...Patterson Springs...	59			8 15 "
9 42 "			116	.....Shelby ¹.....δ	55			8 02 "
10 11 "			124	.....Lattimore.....	47			7 16 "
10 23 "			128	.....Mooresboro.....δ	43			7 05 "
10 45 "			132	.....Henrietta.....δ	39			6 50 "
11 13 "			140	.....Forest City.....δ	31			6 12 "
11 40 A. M.			146	....Rutherfordton.....δ	25			5 50 "
12 27 NO'N			157	.....Thermal City.....	14			5 14 "
12 50 NO'N			164	.....Glenwood.....	7			4 48 "
1 15 P. M.			171	.....Marion ¹.....	0			¶4 25 P. M.
				ARRIVE] [LEAVE				
				LEAVE] [ARRIVE				
1 27 P. M.				Marion. (Southern Ry.)				4 11 P. M.
2 15 "				Round Knob "				2 31 "
2 52 "				Asheville "				2 16 P. M.
6 22 "				Hot Springs. "				12 53 NO'N
7 49 P. M.				Knoxville "				8 30 A. M.
7 15 A. M.				Louisville. (L. & E. R.R.)				8 00 P. M.
7 30 A. M.				Cincinnati. (O. & C.)				8 00 P. M.
				ARRIVE] [LEAVE				

TENNESSEE DIVISION.

Pass'ger.	Pass'ger.	Mls.	October 1, 1894.	Mls.	Pass'ger.	Pass'ger.
			LEAVE] [ARRIVE			
†2 20 P. M.	†7 30 A. M.	0	Johnson City ¹ (Carnegie Depot) (Karst Street)	16	10 00 A. M.	5 00 P. M.
2 28 "	7 35 "	1		15	9 55 "	4 55 "
2 40 "	7 50 "	4	.....Okolona.....	12	9 45 "	4 45 "
2 45 "	7 55 "	5	.....Fazans.....	11	9 40 "	4 40 "
2 50 "	8 00 "	6	....Marbleton....	10	9 35 "	4 35 "
2 55 "	8 05 "	8	.....Rose Hill.....	8	9 30 "	4 30 "
3 00 "	8 15 "	11	.....Unicoi.....	5	9 25 "	4 23 "
3 20 "	8 30 "	16	.....Erwin.....	0	9 00 "	4 00 "
3 35 P. M.	8 45 A. M.	20	...Unaka Springs....		†8 50 A. M.	‡3 45 P. M.
			ARRIVE] [LEAVE			

KENTUCKY DIVISION.

White House ¹¹ to Richardson, Ky. ¹¹ (8½ miles).

Trains marked * run daily; † daily, except Sunday; ‡ Sunday only; ‡ Monday, Wednesday and Friday; δ Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday; ¶ meals. " Coupon stations. δ Telegraph stations.

CONNECTIONS.—¹ With Camden Branch South Carolina & Ga. Ry. ² With Chester & Chester R.R. ³ With Seaboard Air Line. ⁴ With Charlotte, Columbia & Augusta R.R. ⁵ With Chester & Lenoir R.R. ⁶ With Charlotte & Atlanta Division of Southern Ry. ⁷ With Carolina Central R.R. and stages for Cleveland Springs. ⁸ With Western North Carolina Division of Southern Ry. ⁹ With Southern Ry., and East Tennessee & Western North Carolina R.R. ¹⁰ With steamboats on the Big Sandy River for Paintsville, Preston burg and Pikeville. ¹¹ With Chesapeake & Ohio Ry.

Figure 7. Ohio River and Charleston Railway Schedule

(Reprinted by permission of James A. Goforth, from James A. Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield: A Construction History of America's Most Unusual Railroad* (Erwin, Tenn., 1989), xx.)

The portion in Virginia went to a local group of investors there. In June 1902, George L. Carter from southwestern Virginia bought the tracks from Johnson City to Boonford. The railroad he now controlled passed through Unicoi County.

Unicoi County residents already had gained their first benefits from a railroad connection. Prior to the Panic of 1893, the United States Congress allocated funds to research a fish hatchery site in Tennessee. The resulting report determined the project's feasibility, and Congress next approved a site beside the railroad midway between Unicoi and Erwin. This early effort at conservation began in 1894 with dirt ponds for propagating rainbow trout to be transported to spots throughout the nation needing fresh stock. As a cold water hatchery, the location at better than 1,500 feet above sea level with its fresh water even today "produces 15 million disease-free eggs annually from six strains of rainbow trout broodstock."[42] The steady supply of water comes from the nearby confluence of several creeks including the larger Dry Creek, Buffalo Creek, and North Indian Creek on their way to join the Nolichucky River just beyond Erwin. The hatchery gave Unicoi County an association with a federal government agency, and agency funds for the site, salaries of employees, and housing for the hatchery's superintendent have contributed to the county economy for more than a century. The original residence for the superintendent, a two-story, ten-room timber house built in 1903 by local carpenter George W. N. Brown, now houses the Unicoi County Heritage Museum.[43] In the same year that the hatchery house went up, the town of Erwin incorporated.

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[42]U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *Erwin National Fish Hatchery* pamphlet (n.p., 1993).

[43]*Unicoi County Heritage Museum* pamphlet, produced in the 1990s, reports the cost of the house in 1903 to have been $4,454.50. Among the reminiscences recorded in Helton, *Unicoi County*, 397, can be found a description of George Brown as "one of the

Perhaps the citizens of Erwin sensed the pace of life in their valley quickening. The railroad tracks through town had a new owner, and he continued the push to the crest of the mountains south of Boonford. In 1903 construction had reached Spruce Pine, four miles from the summit. At the same time George Carter changed the name of the rail company to the South and Western Railway and renewed grading efforts north of Johnson City near both Kingsport, Tennessee, and Clinchport, Virginia. Over the total 277-mile route, ten miles of tunnels and 17,000 feet of bridges had to be completed as well as grading and laying track along the way on both segments, north and south of Johnson City. According to James Goforth in *Building the Clinchfield*, Carter's "ultimate objective was to develop the coal fields in the Clinchfield area of south west Virginia with a rail outlet to the south Atlantic coast." Goforth repeats the notion that Carter meant his company's name change to serve as a screen, helping to obscure that goal. Such a tactic allowed him to buy up land along his route before public awareness could, and would raise the going price.[44]

Another possibility for Carter's motive behind the name change to the South and Western Railway deserves mention. The Norfolk and Western Railway (N&W), with headquarters at Roanoke, Virginia, had already firmly established itself as a coal-carrier rail line stretching between the Ohio River and the mid-Atlantic coast. One branch of this railroad connected with Tennessee rails at Bristol, where Carter had located his offices. Carter might have hoped that his company's name, the South and Western,

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best carpenters in this part of the country [who] cut the entire pattern [for the Superintendent's house] on the ground before a piece was nailed in place." The residence has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

[44]Steve King, *Clinchfield Country* (Silver Springs, Md.: Old Line Graphics, 1988), 11, and Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield*, 19.

would conjure up positive images among his financial backers who would be very aware of the successful Norfolk and Western. Or perhaps he hoped for a future merger of his "southern" line with that one to its north. The latter may not be likely, since Carter turned to the N&W more than once to hire away employees who became key figures in his own railroad's success. No matter what the reason for the name South and Western, Carter changed it in 1908. Margaret Ripley Wolfe cites a financial crisis in 1905 that sent Carter to New York backers; their support led to a new charter and name that more accurately described the railroad route: the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway.[45] And before the end of 1909, the entire line except for its northernmost thirty-five miles, went into operation (see Figure 8).

Between 1903 and 1909, several developments took place that had a bearing on Unicoi County and in particular on Erwin's future. In October 1905, construction on the southern segment reached the summit at more than 2,500 feet elevation at Alta Pass. While that achievement deserved notice, more important still was Carter's selection of M. J. Caples as General Manager and Chief Engineer in August 1905. Martin Caples came from his position as Superintendent of the N&W, and he brought with him definite ideas concerning construction standards for coal-carrying train tracks. Work initiated after his hiring followed those specifications, and upgrading to those standards commenced on previously completed segments. Carter agreed to this increase in the railroad's expenditures on construction; the long-term benefits in accelerated schedules and lower operating and maintenance costs justified the expense. Caples and Carter have been proved right over the last ninety years, since major changes have not been necessary on

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[45]Margaret Ripley Wolfe, *Kingsport, Tennessee: A Planned American City* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 16-17. The name "Clinchfield Section" applied to the coal region located in southwestern Virginia and eastern Kentucky.

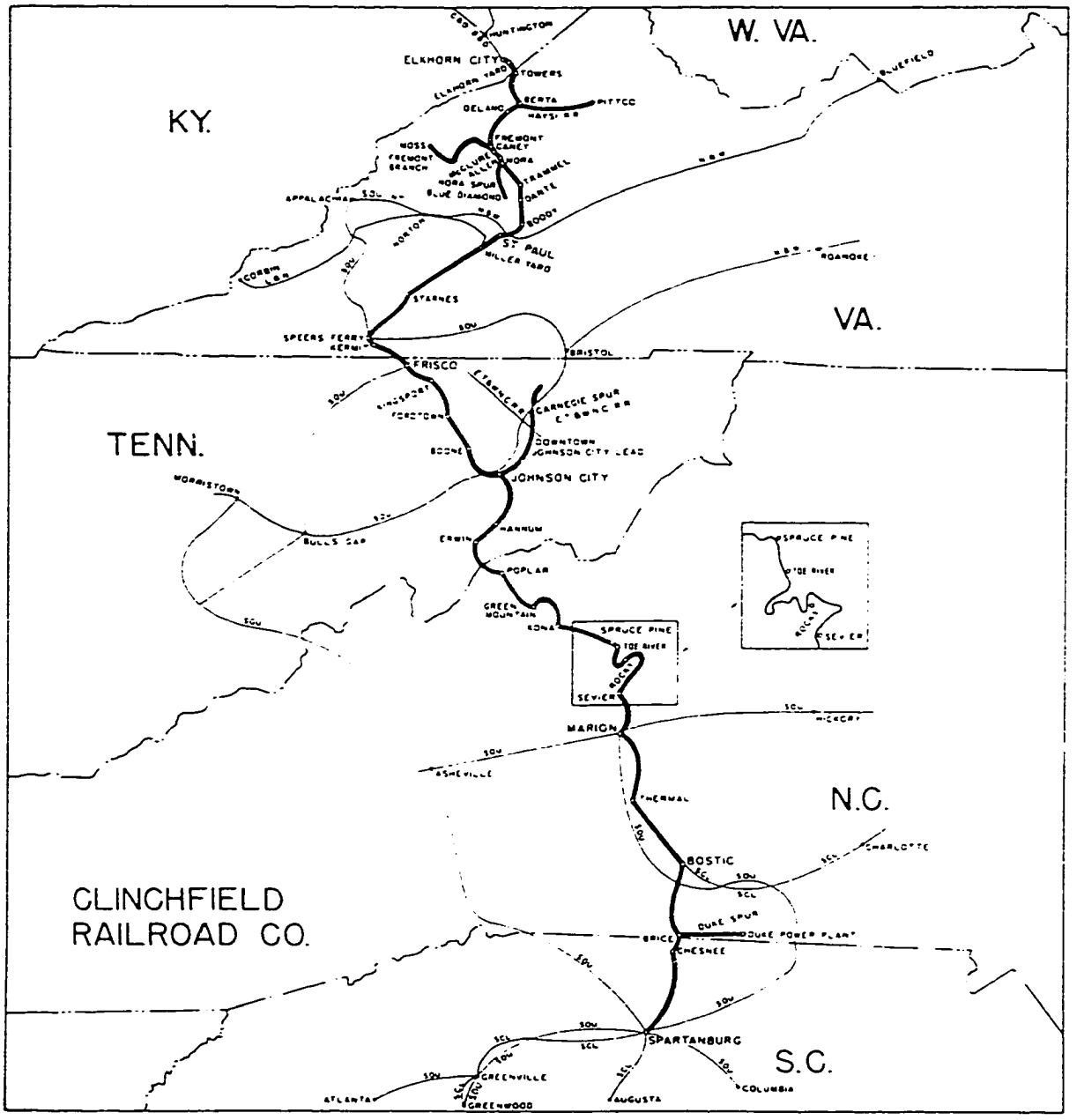

Figure 8. Clinchfield Railroad Company

(Reprinted by permission of Overmountain Press, from J. L. Lonon, *Tall Tales of the Rails: On the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio* (Johnson City, Tenn., 1989).

the railroad's "easy curves, light grades, large tunnel clearances and high capacity bridges."[46]

Caples helped secure a stable future for the railroad in another way as well. In his former position, he had worked with L. H. Phetteplace, who by 1908 was Trainmaster for the N&W in Bluefield, West Virginia. Caples sent for Phetteplace to join Carter's railroad as superintendent. Quickly promoted to general superintendent and then general manager, replacing Caples in that position, Phetteplace remained in the post until his death in 1950. In similar fashion other men joined the young rail line and advanced to top positions in their particular skills. G. F. Shull came from the N&W in 1911 to be general foreman of the railroad shops; C. D. Moss had come from the N&W in 1909 to be train dispatcher. T. G. McFall left the N&W later, in 1917, to take the position of general foreman. Each of these men devoted the rest of his career to Carter's railroad, and such longevity made for solid leadership.

George Carter made two decisions in 1906 and 1907 that had a great impact on Erwin. First, he chose to move the General Offices from Bristol to Johnson City, and they opened 1 January 1907. Carter intended to make Johnson City the headquarters of his railroad, and he had a residence built and moved his family into it. The owners of the property where he planned to build the rail yard and shops, however, asked a price he found totally unacceptable. Carter determined to thwart them in their greed by buying

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[46]Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield*, 19; Goforth's figures vary slightly from those found in King, *Clinchfield Country*, 9. Goforth claims 8 degrees became the maximum curve (King says 10 degrees) and 1.2 percent the top grade (King says 1.5 percent). Both sets of figures sound very conservative in comparison with specifications allowed in earlier phases of railroad construction. For a description of those earlier standards, reasons for them, and their results, see Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965) 102-7. Wolfe, *Kingsport*, 17, writes the CC&O cost $40 million to build.

land for these operations in Erwin instead. Work began on those buildings and grounds in 1908, the same year the railroad's name changed to the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio (CC&O). A map prepared in 1906 by the South and Western Railway (see Figure 9) shows Erwin's small size. The town's population of 375 lived along unpaved streets and gathered its water supply from wells or springs. With the opening of the shops and yard in 1909 (coal trains began running from Dante, Virginia, to Bostic, North Carolina, on 25 March), the population of Erwin grew dramatically, tripling by 1910. The Erwin Water Works opened that year; electricity had arrived even earlier; and, by 1912 the telephone reached seventy-five subscribers in town from its switchboard in Bob Robert's dining room.[47] In a very real sense, twentieth-century Erwin and the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio came into existence at the same time.

That is not to say the rail lines had been completed. Spartanburg sat thirty-two miles beyond Bostic; thirty-five miles separated Dante from Elkhorn City. Distance to the two termini, however, provided the construction crews their one feature in common. The terrain below the Piedmont region did not present major obstacles to the track laying, and completion of that part of the line occurred on 29 October. The first coal train came into Spartanburg from Virginia in early December (less than nine months after the first coal train had pulled into Bostic). The first passenger train arrived in Spartanburg two days later on 11 December 1909. The northern end of the line took years longer to complete because of the very difficult terrain. In fact, work beyond Dante did not commence until 1912, while the railroad conducted myriad surveys to try and pinpoint the best route to follow. By reaching Dante in 1909, Carter's purpose for building the railroad to open the Clinchfield coal fields was achieved, and carloads of

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[47]Helton, *Unicoi County*, 310 and 501.

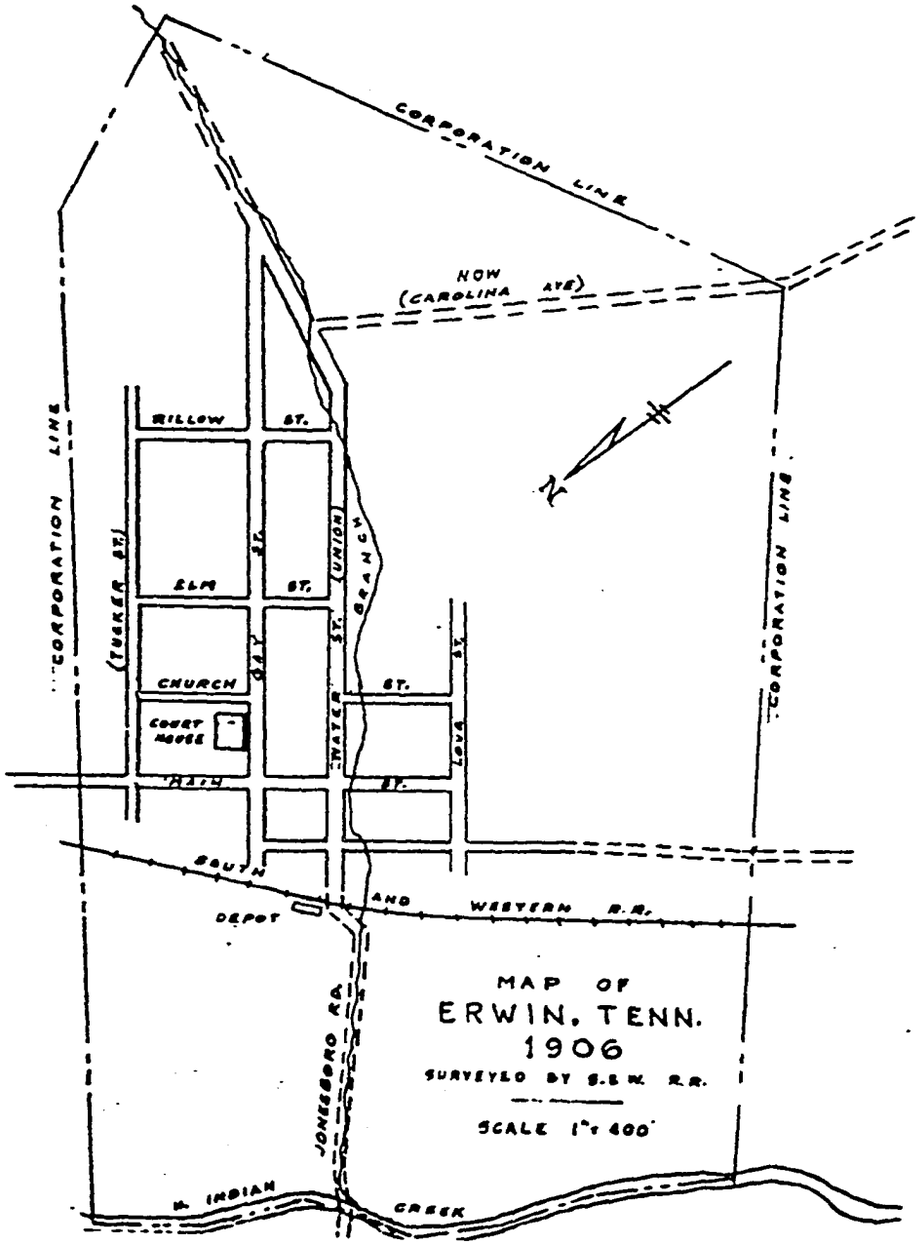

Figure 9. Erwin, Tennessee, in 1906

(Reprinted by permission of the Unicoi County Historical Society, from *Unicoi County, Tennessee And its People, 1875-1995* (Unicoi County Heritage Book Comm., 1995), 11.)

coal have moved almost daily from Dante through Erwin for the last ninety years. The railroad's management believed, though, that the connection to the Chesapeake and Ohio that would become possible once the CC&O reached Elkhorn City, Kentucky, made construction of this portion of the line north of Dante absolutely essential.[48] George Carter, who had resigned in 1911 as president of the CC&O in a move related more to his New York backers' situation than to his own age or his railroad's progress, drove the last spike into the track on 9 February 1915, more than five years after the rest of the line commenced running.

The name of the rail line changed twice more due to leasing and mergers, but the main purpose for its operation has not. After 1924 and until 1983, the CC&O functioned as the Clinchfield Railroad Company. The track lost that name when it became just one more part of the CSX system in the 1980s. Still, certain features of the Clinchfield line that made it distinct continue down to the present day (see Figure 10). "In only 277 miles it operates in five states, crosses four mountain ranges and five major watersheds. . . . Despite the rugged terrain it operates over it had one of the lowest operating ratios of any U. S. railroad and the income per mile of operated line was number 1 in the country." The Clinchfield's motto, "Quick Service - Short Route," rang true, according to George Drury. "Its strategic location and its relatively easy grades and curves--the result of construction late enough to take advantage of modern construction machinery and methods--led to Clinchfield's development into a fast freight route between the Midwest and the Piedmont area."[49]

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[48]Details of this portion of the track work can be studied in Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield*, 40-45.

[49]Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield*, 5, and Drury, *North American Railroads*, 97-98.

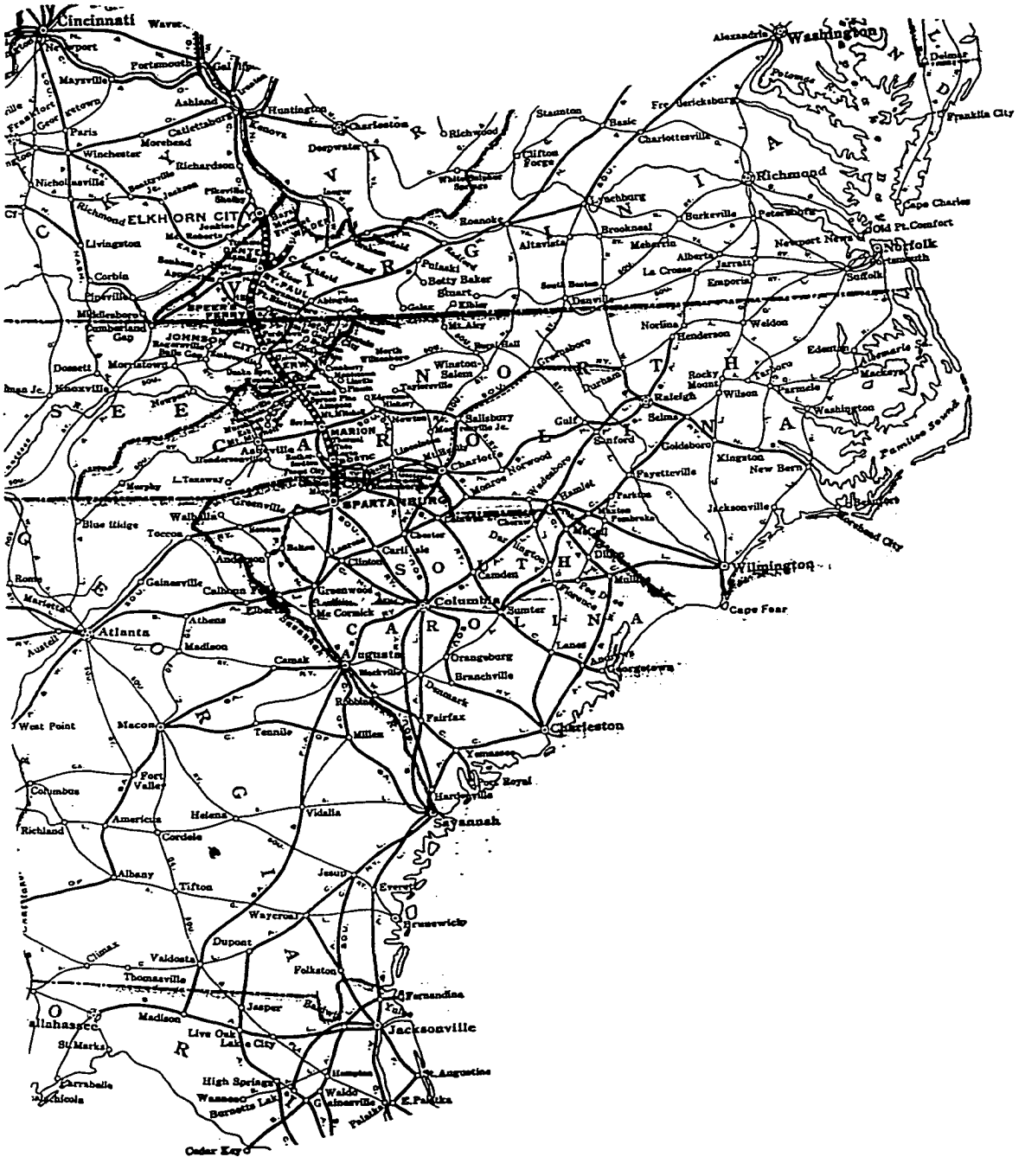

Figure 10. Carolina, Clinchfield And Ohio Railway and Connections

(Reprinted by permission of the Archives of Appalachia, from the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn.)

The presence of the railroad running through Unicoi County ended whatever independent existence this mountainous region had known; the railroad with its yard and shops at Erwin altered the town irreversibly. Upper East Tennessee contained the oldest white settlements in the state, and the population of what became Unicoi County, though not large or densely situated, was well established by the county's founding. This region fit Paul Salstrom's definition of older Appalachia, the part whose frontiers closed between 1770 and 1830. The Ervin family, among others, had roots in that period, and like their neighbors they had settled "in the fertile valleys of older Appalachia when conditions allowed most families to practice self-employment and to achieve considerable economic autonomy."[50] Even in 1875 this description fit the area. That is not to suggest that these farmsteads survived in self-sufficient isolation, but the inhabitants of the region, not outsiders, set the patterns and values they lived by. Similar to Steven Hahn's farmers in Georgia's upcountry, the residents in what became Unicoi County owned their basic productive resources, and as producers they functioned in a market governed by local custom. What Hahn's subjects discovered is what Erwin's citizens learned and what Allan Kulikoff claims all rural Americans faced, albeit at different times. The nineteenth-century transportation system that capitalists developed and that linked local, regional, and national markets "profoundly influenced exchange relations in every local community." That loss of economic control felt by the Ervins of the county had a parallel disruption in the customs they shared with their neighbors.[51]

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[50]Paul Salstrom, "Newer Appalachia as One of America's Last Frontiers," in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 96. For a different definition of "frontier," but one that works for this part of Appalachia at the end of the nineteenth century--though she says it fits even earlier--see Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*, chapter 1.

[51]Steven Hahn, "The 'Unmaking' of the Southern Yeomanry: The Transformation

In the New South, land companies buying large acreage generated excitement. Large-scale mining and timber operations created alternative employment to that of the farm or the local grist mill and saw mill. Being selected over other locations by a United States government agency brought a sense of extraterritorial visibility. The railroad introduced the age of speed, outside developers, a sense of the modern.[52] Along with all these factors affecting Unicoi County, the train shops and yard at Erwin introduced a large number of non-native, non-farming workers into the community. Any number of southern historians have explored and evaluated the impact of the spreading rail lines in the New South. Their viewpoints vary and sometimes conflict with each other. They stand united, however, in their affirmation of the railroad as a significant factor in the development of the South in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. In Tennessee, Erwin's transformation from a settlement around the Unicoi County courthouse to a town with a distinctive identity resulted from the completion and running of the Clinchfield railroad.

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of the Georgia Upcountry, 1860-1890," in *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 183, and Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (January 1989): 136.

[52]John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) examines these themes in American society.

Figure 11. Clinchfield Railroad sign

Photograph by the author

CHAPTER 3

SHAPING ERWIN'S FUTURE: PROGRESSIVE IDEAS, COMMUNITY PLANNING, AND THE GARDEN-CITY DESIGN OF GROSVENOR ATTERBURY

Born, as it were, in the New South period, Erwin, Tennessee, came of age in the Progressive era. Outsiders replaced George L. Carter, the local example of the New South spokesman, in making decisions, and their ideas and actions ushered in new developments. Not that Carter departed abruptly, but as his role lost importance so did his interest. By the time he drove in the ceremonial spike signifying completion of the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway (CC&O) in February 1915, Carter had refocused his Appalachian business endeavors outside Tennessee, and he moved away. Still, he left quite a legacy, in effect putting a number of towns on the map by completing the railroad that ran through them to other connecting lines.[1] Some of those communities, like Trammel, Virginia, and Altapass, North Carolina, existed as railroad company settlements with shotgun-style tenant residences or boarding houses. Carter had intended, though, to lift Erwin and Kingsport, Tennessee, to a status that might eventually rival or surpass Johnson City, Tennessee, or Bristol, Virginia. His reasoning had been based in part on an understanding of the demands made in this particular mountain-crossing railroad work. When Carter's departure left such plans to the CC&O

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[1]Margaret Ripley Wolfe, *Kingsport, Tennessee: A Planned American City* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 15, writes that Kingsport and the CC&O "owed their existence to Carter," while Charles J. Harkrader, *Witness to an Epoch* (Kingsport, Tenn.: Kingsport Press, 1965), 141, quoted in Wolfe, *Kingsport*, 15, described George L. Carter as "the man more responsible than any other person for bringing the industrial age to sections of Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina."

management to pursue, his replacements agreed with Carter's judgment and then matched his business acumen, in ways that fit well in the Progressive era, and transformed Erwin and Kingsport.[2]

The new leadership at the railroad brought with it a different mood, reflecting the times. The opening decades of the twentieth century displayed in a variety of ways society's dissatisfaction with the state of the nation at the previous century's close. Those reactions, collectively grouped, make up what historians call the Progressive era. After the mergers and muckraking, the extravagances and exposés, the increases in immigration and then nativism, that portion of society which saw itself as the majority attempted to curb or counter the parts it saw as extremes. What began in the Northeast as a spontaneous movement appeared also in other sections of the country.[3] Action on the part of the middle class led to reforms that included the imposition of middle-class values on the recipients of those efforts. Over time the progressive tone permeated all regions. While the South was no exception to this national sweep, different places in the region

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[2]This chapter focuses on Erwin and some of its developments in the second decade of the twentieth century, but for further information on Kingsport as it emerges in the Progressive era, see Wolfe, *Kingsport*, particularly chapters 2, "Foundation of an American Dream," 3, "Artifacts of the Planned City," 4, "Building an Industrial Community," and 5, "The Human Factor," and Edward L. Ayers, "Northern Business and the Shape of Southern Progress: The Case of Tennessee's 'Model City,'" *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 39 (Summer 1980): 208-22.

[3]Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 106, defines Progressivism as "an ambiguous term, used by countless individuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to emphasize their forward-looking views. As a movement, it stood for an intellectual critique of the excesses of capitalism; a political drive for greater popular participation in government; an increased social awareness of poverty and privilege; a middle-class effort to reorganize and rationalize the institutions of American life, fitting them to modern conditions; and a professional effort to restore a healthy order to the cities."

exhibited various and divergent examples of Progressivism. Few places south of the Mason-Dixon line could claim anything so grand in scope as what the CC&O attempted in upper East Tennessee, and fewer still bear so clearly today the influence of decisions made in the 1910s. Part of Erwin was literally shaped by the ideas and decisions that unfolded prior to 1920, because of the design prepared for the town by Grosvenor Atterbury.

Scholars dissecting the Progressive era in search of its impetus and its manifestations have found several elements at work. From among the following sampling of scholarly efforts, Robert Wiebe in *The Search for Order* attempts to look at the nation as a whole. C. Vann Woodward, George Tindall, Dewey Grantham, and William Link narrow their focus to the South. David Whisnant, Douglas Flamming, Jeanette Keith, Mary Hoffschwelle, and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and her colleagues concentrate on distinct portions of the South. Their conclusions vary, just as the timing of Progressivism in the South varies from that of other parts of the country, but certain characteristics that appear in these studies emerge in Erwin later, tying it into a larger context.[4]

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[4]Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, The Making of America / American Century Series, ed. David Herbert Donald (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Louisiana State University Press, 1951); George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism: 1880-1930*, Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native & Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Jeanette Keith, *Country People in the New South:*

Across the country and certainly in the South, reform-minded individuals and organizations in urban settings began their efforts first at the local level. Distressing matters in their own community led certain concerned members to corrective actions, tailoring the programs they undertook to specific needs of their area. In the South foreigners constituted only a small part of the population, so settlement houses like those that developed in Chicago and Boston to help immigrant families assimilate into metropolitan areas did not meet southern needs. Settlement centers did develop in urban areas in the South, however, where women reformers worked through women's departments, auxiliaries, or mission boards of their local churches to create programs to help the urban poor, people often driven to poverty from a rural environment, and particularly women. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, produced the best known efforts. In the second and third decades of the twentieth century, Methodist women organized eight settlement houses, called Bethlehem Centers, in cities in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina.[5] With almost 80 percent of the South's population remaining in rural settings, though, some reformers saw a need to situate their programs in the outlying regions. Settlement schools, not settlement houses, figured prominently in reform efforts in the Appalachian region, for example, but

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Tennessee's Upper Cumberland (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998).

[5]John Patrick McDowell, *The Social Gospel in the South: The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 87. Other denominations also developed active women's Home Mission programs, and from about 1908 Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Congregationalists, and Methodists worked together on some projects; see Robert T. Handy, *We Witness Together: A History of Cooperative Home Missions* (New York: Friendship Press, 1956).

middle-class women reformers played important roles in both settlement houses and schools. Along with church groups, segregated women's clubs with the mission of social uplift for the unfortunates of the separate races emerged in cities throughout the region and the country.[6]

While these women intended their activities to help the disadvantaged population, the capitalists and lawmakers who passed local and state legislation to support Progressive programs aimed to control that population. Progressives viewed both purposes as valid.[7] And the programs they proposed called for "experts" to run them, supporting the trend toward specialization, standardization, and the accompanying professionalization in many fields that had been developing since the latter part of the nineteenth century. Programs designed both to assist and control emerged in the areas of education and health. By requiring the availability of public schooling in every county and extending the days per year of attendance, lawmakers hoped to accomplish several objectives. They desired to educate whites, to help move African Americans toward an improved future, and to combat the practice of hiring child labor, especially in factories

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[6] Bethlehem House in Nashville, Tennessee, represented an exception in this era of Jim Crow, providing aid regardless of race; see Mary E. Frederickson, "'Each One Is Dependent on the Other': Southern Churchwomen, Racial Reform, and the Process of Transformation, 1880-1940," in *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 296-324, and Anita Shafer Goodstein, "A Rare Alliance: African American and White Women in the Tennessee Elections of 1919 and 1920," *Journal of Southern History* 64 (May 1998): 219-46.

[7] As Dewey W. Grantham writes in "The Contours of Southern Progressivism," *American Historical Review* 86 (December 1981): 1055-56, "In the early twentieth-century setting the progressives were able to function both as agents of modernization and as guardians of Southern tradition." And as agents of modernization, Grantham believes southern progressives pursued their reform ideas on the national level as well.

and mills. Campaigns to eradicate hookworm and other diseases received funding. The crusade to end abusive behavior brought on by drunkenness and alcoholism led to local and state prohibition measures in increasing numbers. The Progressives' belief in environmental determinism supported such legal action to eliminate bad influences, just as it backed programs that taught or created positive influences.[8]

Some platforms that began on local or state levels eventually swelled to national prominence. Ratification in 1919 of the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or transport of intoxicating liquors, provides one example of the change in the aim of Progressives from local or regional level to national reform policies. A few years earlier, in 1913, ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment also completed a cycle that originated among individual Southern states. Previously, political party conventions selected the candidates from whom white male voters elected government officials. By the end of the nineteenth century the corruption such a system engendered caused reformers to call for changes in state after state. Adoption of the direct primary allowed voters to choose the candidates who would then run against each other for office. Direct election of U. S. senators, as adopted in the Seventeenth Amendment, seemed the logical next step toward truly representative government.[9]

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[8]Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community*, 7, introduces this idea of positive influence; the remainder of the book delineates certain programs aimed at rural Tennesseans and evaluates reactions to and the effectiveness of those programs.

[9]Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 372, writes of the South's lead in this development. In the United States Constitution, Article 1, Section 2 sets the term for members of the House of Representatives at two years and states the people of the state should choose them. Article 1, Section 3 set the term for members of the Senate at six years and stated the state legislature should choose them. Amendment 17 removed that selection procedure from the hands of the elected officials of the people and granted the people of the state the right to elect senators directly.

The short-lived Populist movement of the late nineteenth century influenced these actions and the demands for better railroad regulation as well.[10] Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act in 1887 that created the commission to oversee the railroads, but in fact the board lacked the power to withstand railroad company challenges to its decisions. Farmers called for further regulations and others joined their cries for change until Congress passed the Hepburn Act (1906) and the Mann-Elkins Act (1910) to make the Interstate Commerce Commission more effective in the struggle to control the power of the railroads.

While each of these Progressive era developments affected upper East Tennessee at least indirectly, another piece of federal legislation had a direct impact on the area and in Erwin. The emerging conservation movement in the late nineteenth century led to establishment of fish hatcheries like the one set up in Unicoi County in 1894. The cutting of hardwoods on a massive scale had commenced in Tennessee a decade earlier, in 1885 in nearby Cocke County, and lumber companies quickly invaded other neighboring counties. By the turn of the century overcutting and then abandonment without reforesting the land caused heavy soil erosion. Growing concern for Appalachian forests and related flood control of area rivers resulted in the Weeks Act of 1911. Designed specifically for the Appalachian region, this law created the National Forest Reservation Commission and delegated it to buy land in certain designated "purchase units," including the Holston, Iron, and Unaka Mountains in upper East

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[10]Link, *Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, xi-xii, sets up what he sees as the distinctions between the Populists' point of view and that of southern traditionalists, first, and then between Progressive reformers and these people they desire to help but cannot distinguish from each other.

Tennessee.[11] Thus began the Cherokee National Forest. The Virginia Iron, Coal and Coke Company, started by George L. Carter in 1899, and Unaka Springs Lumber Company sold, respectively, 15,000 and 6,000 acres of Unicoi County lands to the Commission.[12] Acquisitions by the U. S. Forest Service continued until 1941, and today the Cherokee National Forest includes almost half of Unicoi County in its holdings.

Not all residents of upper East Tennessee or other parts of the South desired the presence of an outside authority, whether it be the U. S. Forest Service or prohibition agents. Nor did they passively accept an outside presence. From different approaches, historians William Link, Jeanette Keith, and Mary Hoffschwelle conclude that, whenever possible, community members chose which elements of reform to endorse and incorporate. Even then they adapted the changes to their own ends, often with different results from those intended by the reformers. Douglas Flamming's study of Dalton textile workers begins with the same premise, that the people in the region who became the millhands involved themselves in and thereby customized to some degree the industrialization process. The purpose of Progressive reform in the South varied from that of other regions partly because of the late arrival of industrialization and partly because of the particular elements, sometimes racial, sometimes rural, sometimes both, that comprised its population.

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[11]Bret Wallach, *At Odds with Progress: Americans and Conservation* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991), 77. Wallach devotes chapter 4 "Chivalry in the Southern Mountains," to the development of the Cherokee National Forest, and in it he includes the differences in acquisition methods of western and eastern forest lands that conservationists and Congress had to pursue.

[12]George L. Carter broke his connection with the Virginia Iron, Coal and Coke Company in 1901 after a disagreement developed between him and some of his associates, but the company continued to operate its various endeavors in Virginia and Tennessee after his departure.

In terms of the Progressive era and Erwin, Tennessee, the situation involved less reforming than shaping. After its beginning as a small county seat, the arrival of the railroad altered the town's identity rather quickly. The location of the CC&O shops there in 1909 made Erwin, in essence, a company town.[13] Such communities had existed in the United States since the days of early industrialization. The experiences and altercations other company towns witnessed over those years gave the CC&O leadership plenty to ponder as it prepared to change the very appearance of Erwin.

Worker housing became an issue in the nineteenth century when production of goods moved from the household into factory settings. Through mid-century, craftsmen had made up the majority of the manufacturers, usually working in space adjacent to their living quarters. These craftsmen employed family members and trained apprentices, with whom they customarily shared their meals and lodging. With the introduction of more complex machinery and new power sources to fuel it, this situation changed. Industrialization's mechanized operations required larger work places and more employees to meet its demands and turn a profit. Early in the industrial age the factory's location depended upon the means of power it used. Securing a worker population was secondary. In fact, throughout the nineteenth century, owner and management concerns for those workers almost always ranked below other matters. How the company housed the workers gave a good indication of its general attitude towards them.

Since early factories used water-driven mechanisms, the owners established them along rivers, usually near falls and, therefore, they were more likely to be in New England than elsewhere and not in the middle of urban areas. The needed employees

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[13]John S. Garner, *The Company Town: Architecture and Society in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3, defines this type of settlement as "built and operated by a single business enterprise."

might come off the local farms or from artisan families in nearby towns. Samuel Slater in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, began this country's first Arkwright spinning mill in 1790, and the town became an early textile center. Slater and his fellow mill owners found the needed laborers in the immediate surroundings during the first decades of operation.[14] Other enterprising individuals who built mills and factories in locations removed from towns had to construct and maintain villages with adequate single-family dwellings to lure workers. In Massachusetts a little later another textile center developed at the falls on the Merrimack River at Lowell. These mill owners drew their initial labor force from the young women of rural New England, people in the years beyond adolescence and before marriage who could be spared from the family farm. Leaving home and moving some distance to these jobs, the Lowell "girls" required housing. The plan devised for this situation presented yet another way of attracting needed workers.

The name of the site, Lowell, honored Francis Cabot Lowell of Boston, an early capitalist whose idea of locating in one community all the processing operations involved in textile preparation met with great success. He also devised a town plan he considered appropriate for such a community, but his death in 1817 kept him from pursuing the idea. When the deceased Lowell's business associates decided to develop a new location in 1832, they hired Kirk Boott who incorporated some of Lowell's ideas and modified others to fit the site. The success was such that thirty years after its beginnings, Lowell had become the nation's largest cotton textile center.[15] The young women operatives took

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[14]See Gary Kulik, "Pawtucket Village and the Strike of 1824: The Origins of Class Conflict in Rhode Island," in *Material Life in America, 1600-1860*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 385-406, for details concerning the difficulties that eventually arose.

[15]Lowell's impact on the design of other mill villages and its continued connection with blue-collar labor and factory production led in 1978 to its designation by the National Park Service as the Lowell National Historical Park, the nation's first such

lodging in boarding houses staffed by matrons to supervise them. Boott situated these buildings between their place of work, the mills which fronted on the river, and the street of businesses and churches that ran parallel to the river though some distance from it. The skilled laborers, that is the men who managed the workers or who designed and built the machines the girls operated, lived in housing, usually two-family dwellings, near but separate from the boarding houses. The owners of the mills or the managers representing them lived the greatest distance from those factories and close to the public street (see Figure 12). Margaret Crawford has observed that "the rigid geometry and tight spacing [of this design] echo the increasing regularity of the textile production process."[16]

The workers in Lowell and Pawtucket may have lived in different surroundings, but they shared similar backgrounds. The first mill workers came from settled, rural farming and artisan families of mostly Anglo-Saxon roots. Like the mill owners, they spoke English and attended Protestant churches. In the 1840s, though, a devastating potato blight in Ireland and Europe forced many in those regions who could to emigrate. Lowell, Pawtucket, and other New England factories and mills took advantage of the new and desperate labor force, hiring the Irish at low wages. If able to find other employment

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park devoted to the urban/industrial subject; see U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Lowell: The Story of an Industrial City: A Guide to Lowell National Historical Park and Lowell Heritage State Park, Lowell, Massachusetts*, by Thomas Dublin (Washington, D.C.: USDI, 1992).

[16]Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (London: Verso, 1995), 23. For more details concerning Lowell's hierarchical design for town and labor, see Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 66-72; John Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 415-17; and Allen Freeman, "Lessons from Lowell," *Historic Preservation* (November/December 1990): 33-38, 68-69.

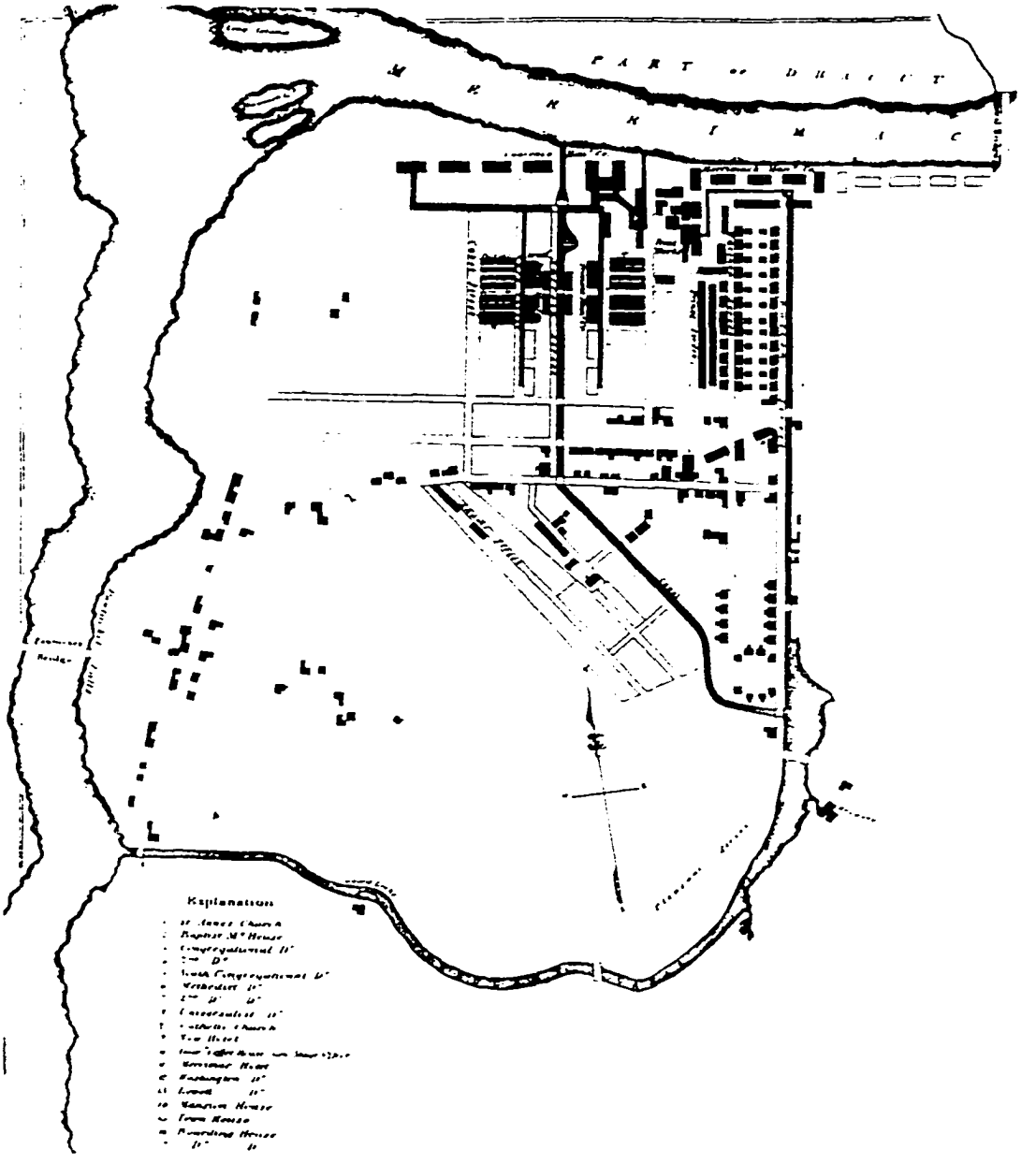

Figure 12. Plan of Lowell, Massachusetts: 1832

(Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press, from John Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton, 1965), 416.)

or to marry, the previous labor pool departed. The composition of the work force changed. Workers who accepted lower wages would accept lower living conditions, too, or so some owners reasoned. At the same time immigrants landing in cities crowded into existing housing. Landlords in urban settings acted no better than their mill and factory counterparts, and the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a decline in workers' living conditions in many parts of the Northeast. By the century's close, the overcrowded urban tenements and squalid mill village conditions so outraged middle-class consciences that the reforms of the Progressive era commenced.[17]

While parts of the Northeast slid into difficulties during the second half of the nineteenth century, the South underwent dramatic changes for different reasons. Because of its fertile lands and abundant labor supply, including slaves prior to the Civil War, agriculture in this part of the country provided the primary source of livelihood. The South's few cities had grown up along the coasts and served as ports for shipping farm produce to markets in the North and abroad. Industry hardly existed in comparison with that in the Northeast. The Civil War's conclusion meant an end to slavery and put black labor in competition with white for farm jobs. Tenancy and sharecropping emerged as farmers, urged to put all their fields into growing cotton as a cash crop, saw cotton prices fall. Farm families, many impoverished and on the verge of desperation, sought other employment. Even as these conditions deteriorated from bad to worse, northern capitalists pushed south by building railroads and consolidating what had been

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[17]The news stories and photographs of Jacob Riis provide one example of an individual driven to action. Though Riis often blamed the immigrants for their problems, he also brought to other people's attention the slum conditions he found unacceptable. See Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: C. Scribners Sons, 1891). For a history of the tenement's development, see Wright, *Building the Dream*, chapter 7, "Americanization and Ethnicity in Urban Tenements."

constructed earlier. The fall line of the Piedmont that ran through North and South Carolina and into Georgia presented accessible water power to anyone with the money to build a mill. Cheap and plentiful potential labor awaited, and the new crop of southern businessmen encouraged industrial expansion. Why not "move the cotton mills to the cotton fields"? Two- and three-story red brick mill buildings surrounded by their worker villages and situated next to rivers and railroad tracks became commonplace in the Piedmont in the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s (see Figure 13).[18]

The railroads carried bolts of cotton away for final processing in northern cities. Railroads also transported timber, coal, and iron. Extracted from mountainous regions of the southern highlands above the Piedmont fall line, these carloads of natural resources fueled northern industrial expansion. Timber camps and mining towns at the points of extraction came into existence swiftly. Their design emphasized control instead of comfort, since male laborers who worked the forests, mines, and machines comprised the majority of their population. And the management established clearly segregated sections of town, a fact found also in southern textile mill towns. The separation was racial (see Figure 14), but in some cases, in coal mining camps employing immigrant labor, for example, division occurred along ethnic lines also. Crandall Shifflett's research points out that management considered Italians prime candidates for mine work (followed by Poles, Hungarians, and Slavs), but nativist feelings resulted in separate living quarters within the village.[19]

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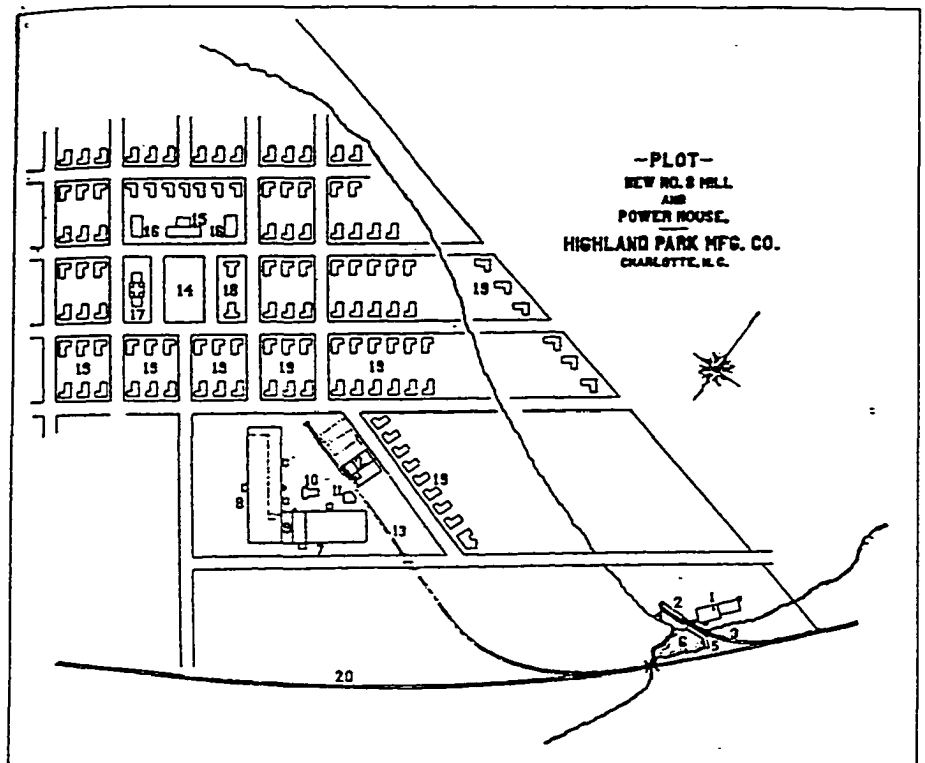
[18]For a description of some differences between mill villages of the Piedmont and the earlier ones of the Northeast, see Hall, *Like a Family*, 114-17.

[19]Richard V. Francaviglia, *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts*, American Land and Life Series, ed. Wayne Franklin (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), xix; Archer H. Mayor, *Southern Timberman: The Legacy of William Buchanan* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 65; and Crandall A. Shifflett, *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of*



Key to Plot Shown Above.

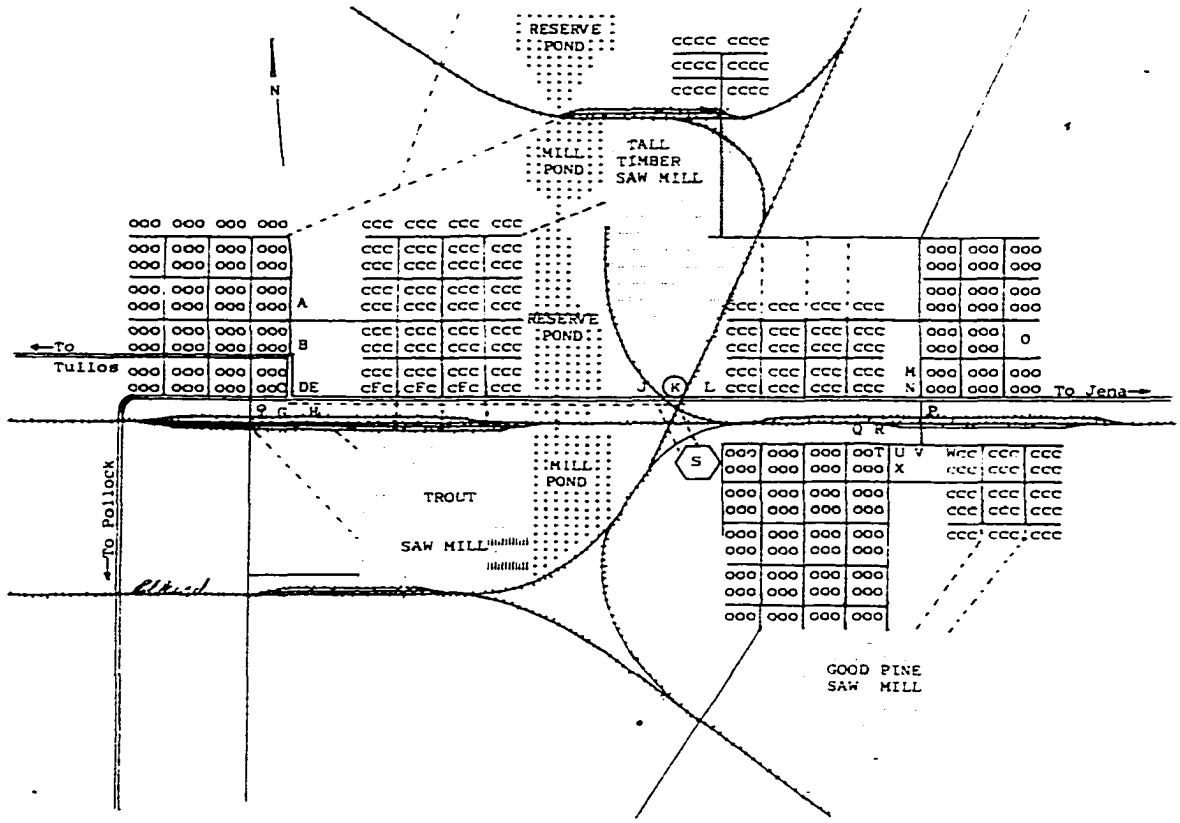
(1) Power House. (2) Coal Chute. (3) Spur Track. (4) Coal Haulage Tracks. (5) Dam. (6) Reservoir. (7) Main Mill, consisting of Lapper, Card and Spinning Rooms. (8) Weave Mill. (9) Dye House. (10) Transformer House. (11) Boiler House for Heating Plant. (12) Cotton Storage Warehouse. (13) Spur Track. (14) Village square. (15) Hotel. (16) Stores. (17) School. (18) Churches. (19) Tenement Houses. (20 Main Line Southern Railway.

Only a hundred or more tenement houses are shown on the plot, the remainder being located along the brow of the hill to the Eastward. The open space left in front of the weave room is for future extensions to the plant.

Figure 13. Highland Park #3 Mill Village, 1903
(Source: Cramer, *Useful Information for Cotton Manufacturers*, vol. 3)

(Reprinted by permission of The University of North Carolina Press, from Thomas W. Hancett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill, 1998), 109.)

PLAN OF TROUT, GOOD PINE, AND TALL TIMBER MILL TOWNS



KEY

A Masonic lodge
B Methodist church, white
C Trout hotel, white
D Doctor's office, barber shop
E Trout post office
F Trout hotel, black
G Company office
H Trout commissary
I Trout depot
J Methodist church, black
K Good Pine high school, black
L Baptist church, black
M Methodist church, white
N McIntire house (Supt.)
O Good Pine commissary
P Good Pine depot
Q Baptist church, white
R Company office
S Trout-Good Pine high school, white
T Good Pine hotel, white
U Doctor's office, barber shop, post office
V Theater
W Pressing shop
X Ranch (bachelor quarters)

LEGEND

Major highway
Street
Railroad
ooo ooo Company houses, white
ccc ccc Company houses, black
Trail

Map by James Ellard, courtesy of Leland Nichols

Figure 14. Plan of Trout, Good Pine and Tall Timber Mill Towns

(Reprinted by permission of The University of Georgia Press, from Archer H. Mayor, *Southern Timberman: The Legacy of William Buchanan* (Athens, 1988), 65.)

Though definitely male-oriented, these settings always included some female presence. Women ran boarding houses, for example, and women and children lived with their husbands and fathers. The daughters and wives of African-American miners worked as maids in the homes of white management. Mining and timber towns inevitably included the train tracks, a depot, the company office, and a company store. A post office, doctor's office, hotel, saloon, and at least one church usually existed as well. Not only small and fairly isolated, such communities offered few opportunities for the wife or children of a miner to bring in additional income when such a need arose.[20]

A sizeable portion of the South in the latter half of the nineteenth century experienced industrialization first and urbanization later.[21] Mill villages and company towns often came into being, therefore, to meet the needs of industry before the urban element had materialized for that purpose. The railroad carried the South through its early industrial age, that period of development when, observes John Garner, most company towns appear.[22] The Northeast had seen the rise of the mill village at Pawtucket and the town of Lowell in its early industrial age when rivers and canals had been the means of transport as well as power. After the harnessing of steam, industries were no longer bound to water as a conduit or a power source. Factories could locate

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Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 72 and 60-61. Shifflett does point out that the immigrant stigma was less strident than the racial one.

[20]Shifflett, *Coal Towns,* 65 and 112. Florence Cope Bush, *Dorie: Woman of the Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992) provides a first-hand account of a woman's existence in a timber camp in the Smokies.

[21]Terry Elmer Epperson Jr., "Geographic Factors Influencing The Manufactural Industries of Upper East Tennessee" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1960), 196.

[22]Garner, *Company Town*, 3.

with less concern for rivers. While railroads began to open the southern highlands and Piedmont to outside capital and burgeoning enterprises, the Midwest became the region of expansive industrial development.

In the thirty years following the Civil War and prior to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, industrialists began to face the situation of labor unions when planning their company sites. Those owners who could do so chose to build company towns designed to address their workers' needs in order to counter any appeal labor organizing might have to them. John Reps calls this block of time the second phase of town planning, which differs from Garner's early industrial age.[23] Though a variety of enterprises attempted to provide company housing for their employees, George Pullman created perhaps the best known company town, both then and now. He located the town site twelve miles south of Chicago in 1880 and named it for himself. His plans for Pullman included certain older features of company housing like racial and ethnic segregation, but new ideas surfaced here as well. Those new characteristics exemplified the trend among the captains of industry that emerged as welfare capitalism.[24]

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[23]Garner equated his early industrial age with the period Lewis Mumford had termed "paleotechnic era." (Mumford in turn got the term from the writings of Patrick Geddes.) For Mumford, this era was a period where labor-intensive operations polluted and despoiled the environment. Perhaps at first dependent on water (as the textile mills had been), the period became associated with coal, iron, and railroads as it evolved toward a more technologically advanced stage. Getting more from your workers by treating them better was an idea that occurred, as Reps points out, as town planning evolved.

Barry Thomas Whittemore, "The Rural to Urban Shift in the Appalachian South: Town Building and Town Persistence in Virginia's Blue Ridge, 1880-1920" (D.A. diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 1996), 200-7, without using Garner's, Mumford's, or Reps's terms described the different stages of Appalachian urban settings as preindustrial, industrial extraction, and industrial manufacturing-plus towns.

[24]Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home*, 5, catches the irony in this continuation of previously-held prejudices when she observes "an assumption of class

Pullman wanted to house the workers of his Pullman Palace Car Company near the railroad hub of Chicago but removed from its worst elements. For that purpose he acquired four thousand acres of land and the services of an architect, Solon S. Beman, and a landscape designer, Nathan F. Barrett. Their plan used a wide street (111th) to separate the industrial part of the town from its commercial core and residential portions (see Figure 15). In the public section Pullman allowed a theater as well as shops and an adjacent hotel. The town also had churches and a school, but the company owner prohibited saloons. His support, instead, of healthy minds and bodies was reflected in the library and athletic fields the design incorporated. The residential area extended in a grid plan in large blocks formed by four wide streets running parallel to 111th Street. On the perpendicular four major avenues shaped the rectangles, but narrow streets and green space divided each in half. Order dominated the design. In terms of housing, the buildings reflected the hierarchical labor structure. The smallest group, the managers, had the possibility of single-family dwellings. Skilled mechanics lived in brick row houses facing the green spaces. Pullman had 1,400 such units. The lowest (and largest) group of workers, the unskilled immigrants who did manual labor, were relegated to tenement apartments, of which 1,800 were built.[25]

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differences and a desire to prevent conflict engendered by those differences are inextricably bound up in the campaigns for model houses." The same could be said for model communities.

One concise definition of welfare capitalism says it "embodied worker education, profit-sharing, health and welfare measures, home economics, 'social betterment,' and, according to the Labor Department, 'improved and sanitary working and living conditions.'" From Robert Schweitzer and Michael W. Davis, *America's Favorite Homes: Mail Order Catalogues As a Guide to Popular Early Twentieth Century Houses* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 110.

[25]For one examination of the different ways in which the company and the community have represented their views of the town and workers, see Janice L. Reiff and Susan E. Hirsch, "Pullman and Its Public: Image and Aim in Making and Interpreting

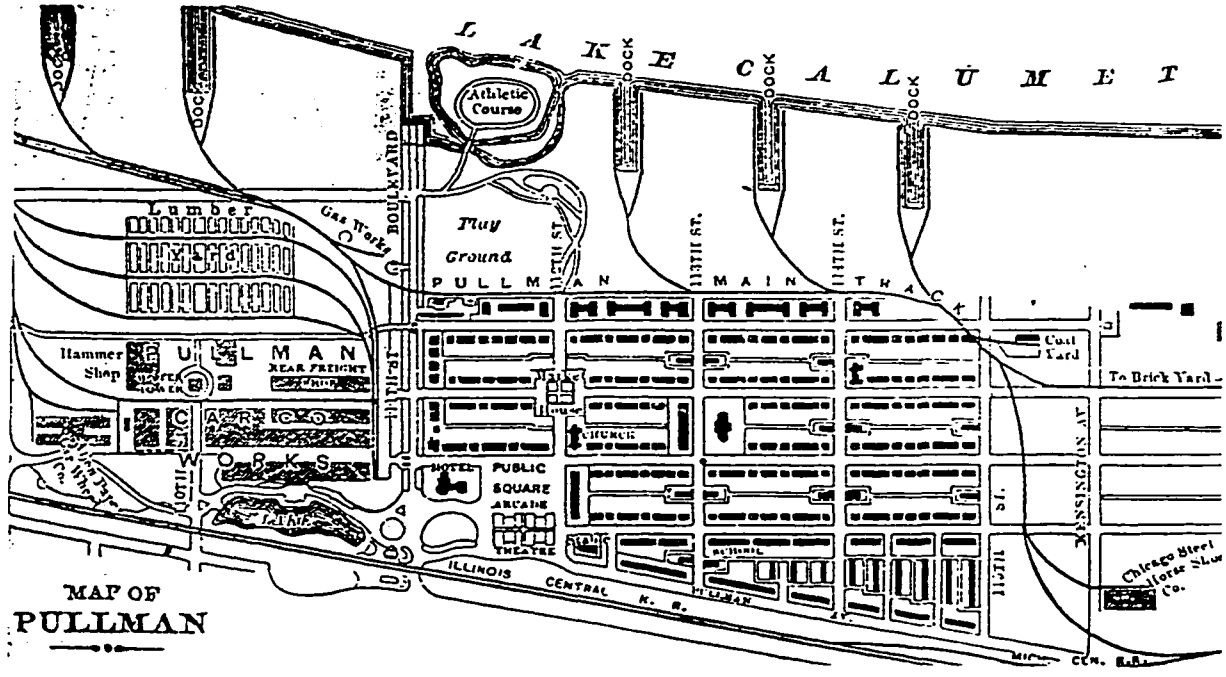

Figure 15. Plan of Pullman, Illinois: 1885

(Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press, from John Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton, 1965), 423.)

Pullman spent eight million dollars on this endeavor, resulting in impressive looking period photographs and statistics superior to all earlier company-town plans. Pullman, Illinois, failed, however, because of one problem. George Pullman owned every building in the place. Though such domination was often the case in earlier company town situations, Gwendolyn Wright argues that Pullman's "desires to convert every aspect of the model town into monetary returns [through rents] and to wield absolute authority represented an outdated, reactionary approach to industrial welfare."[26] His skilled workers, nicely housed, hated Pullman's control and their own lack of voice. Oddly enough, Pullman's lack of understanding or appreciation of this situation led to the demise of his enlightened town plan.

Reacting to the Panic of 1893 with its depressed profits, Pullman cut the wages of his employees. He did not, however, reduce the rent fees these workers owed him, nor did he respond to their pleas for reconsideration. Pullman's labor force turned to the American Railway Union. In 1894 a two-month strike of the workers began calmly but eventually erupted into violence, leading to thirteen deaths and much destruction.[27] John Reps writes that the Pullman strike scared other company owners away from the idea of carefully designed and constructed company towns, but Margaret Crawford argues that

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History," *The Public Historian* 11 (Fall 1989): 99-112.

[26]Wright, *Building the Dream*, 183.

[27]The situation deteriorated when Pullman hired strike breakers and the U.S. attorney general issued an injunction against the American Railway Union. President Grover Cleveland's order to send in federal troops escalated the tension, and the rioting then broke out. Eugene V. Debs went to prison for his leadership on the workers' behalf. The desire of residents of Pullman who had voted for incorporation with Chicago was realized when the Illinois Supreme Court decided the company should divest itself of its non-industrial real estate.

"the Pullman strike, rather than sounding the death knell for model company towns, as many historians have claimed, initiated a new chapter in their development . . . [as] models intended to represent physical and social ideals."[28] Company towns of the 1900s would be different from their predecessors in the 1800s, and because the railroad opened Erwin and Unicoi County, Tennessee, to outside influences after the turn of the century, the region benefited from lessons learned earlier elsewhere.

George L. Carter decided to locate the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway yard and shops at Erwin instead of Johnson City because of land prices. Along with getting a bargain, his change in sites made engineering sense. Erwin's position at mile marker 134 put it almost exactly halfway along the 277-mile route between Elkhorn City, Kentucky, and Spartanburg, South Carolina. Heading south along the line, the Nolichucky River valley provided the last level area before the long ascent to the crest of the Appalachian chain; that made it the first level area after the long descent for trains headed north (see Figure 16). Safe runs and strong profits depended upon the smooth operation of the machines, the proper maintenance of the tracks, and the freshness of the crew. Making Erwin the headquarters in all three areas made sense. M. J. Caples brought in good men to head the shops, yard, and crews and designated Erwin the changing point for the crews on every run, north or south.

The decision to locate in Erwin in 1908 and the completion of the yard and shops in 1909 led to a dramatic increase in the town's population. The offices of Superintendent, Master Mechanic, and car service agent moved from Johnson City in 1909, as trains began to run regularly between Dante, Virginia, and Spartanburg. A

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[28]Reps, *Making of Urban America*, 424, and Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*, 45.

LOCATION BY STATES

Mile Post	State
0 - 3.2	Kentucky
3.2 - 87	Virginia
87 - 142.6	Tennessee
142.6 - 259.1	North Carolina
259.1 - 277	South Carolina

PROFILE

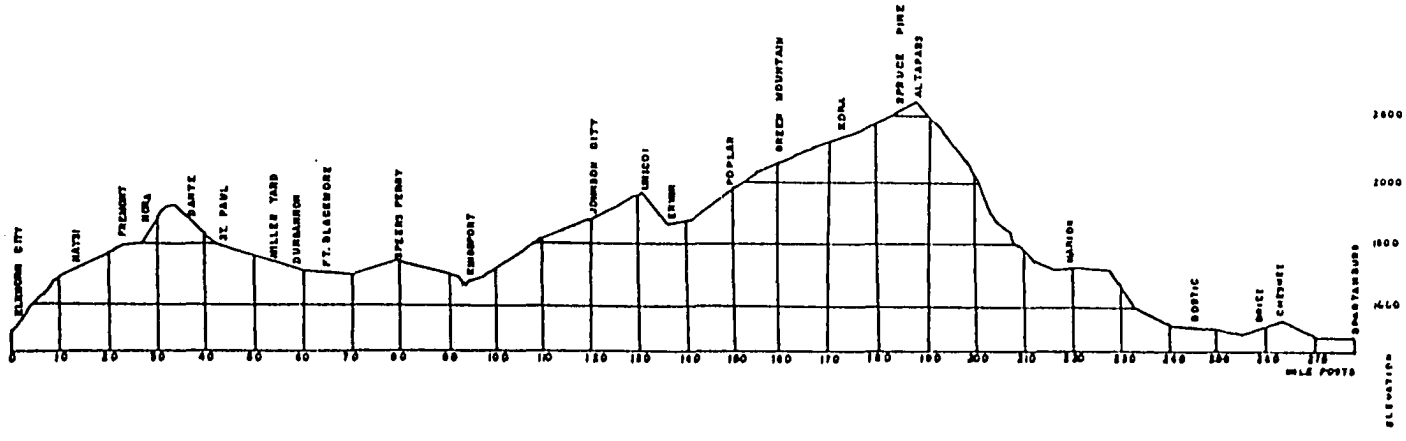

Figure 16. Profile of Clinchfield Railroad

(Reprinted by permission of James A. Goforth, from James A. Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield: A Construction History of America's Most Unusual Railroad* (Erwin, Tenn., 1989), 8 and 9.)

permanent depot replaced the old boxcar that had been used for that purpose, and workmen roomed in boarding houses or anywhere they could find that would take them.[29]

Until the rail lines reached the Chesapeake and Ohio connection in Kentucky, the CC&O management focused its attention on construction of that extension. A rearrangement in leadership saw Carter relinquish the title of president of the CC&O in early 1911. His replacement in that position, Mark W. Potter, had practiced law in New York since 1888, specializing in rail and coal matters. Potter headed the CC&O until 1920, when he resigned to accept President Woodrow Wilson's appointment to the Interstate Commerce Commission. In the meantime, however, during Potter's tenure as president of the CC&O the Progressive era arrived in Erwin, at the railroad's instigation.

John Stilgoe begins his book *Metropolitan Corridor* by saying "in the half century following 1880, the railroad industry reshaped the American built environment and reoriented American thinking."[30] Without a doubt that statement describes Erwin. The railroad meant the region's development from what had formerly been an agricultural, primarily self-sufficient economy. Though Potter and his staff could have turned their minds solely to making short-term profits, these men's actions showed instead their commitment to the Progressive philosophy whereby they would seek "to impose a greater measure of social order, to foster economic opportunity and development, and to protect the weak and unfortunate in deserving cases."[31] The pursuit of long-term investment

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[29]Figure 9 in chapter 2 shows the makeshift depot where it stood opposite what was then called Water Street.

[30]John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), ix.

[31]Grantham, *Southern Progressivism*, xvi.

coincided with a Progressive-influenced concern over housing for the railroad workers and their dependents. For these capitalists Erwin's importance to the company could not be overstated. The construction of a two-story brick railroad office building in 1915 emphasized the company's growing commitment to Erwin as the linchpin in its system (see Figure 17). The CC&O's decision to build worker housing south of Love Street also indicated its commitment. If quality housing in a careful residential arrangement helped the workers perform better at their jobs, then Erwin should have it. By 1916 management's attitude had solidified and the railroad had determined to undertake a model worker community, designed by an acknowledged leader in the new field of community planning, architect Grosvenor Atterbury from New York.[32]

Grosvenor Atterbury had an excellent reputation, in part because of his earlier success at Forest Hills Gardens on Long Island. There and on other projects, he adapted his architectural training to meet each situation's challenges. This characteristic would serve him well at Erwin. Born in Detroit in 1869, Atterbury received his college education at Yale, graduating in 1891. While enrolled in Columbia University's School of Architecture, Atterbury worked in the office of McKim, Mead and White. The

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[32]In the Carolina, Clinchfield, and Ohio Railway Records collection in the Archives of Appalachia located at East Tennessee State University, a 1914 map of the Holston Addition, as the railroad's residential area was at that point named, shows a grid pattern of lots laid out eight across and two deep in a series of blocks running from Ohio Avenue five blocks east to Florida Avenue and from Love Street seven blocks south to Holston. Sometime in the two years that followed, CC&O management shifted away from this monotonous scheme that lacked regard for topography or human reactions and decided to hire Grosvenor Atterbury for a new plan that would be seen as a model community instead.

As Margaret Crawford points out, architects "expanded the logic of environmental determinism to the scale of an entire town and, arguing that an improved environment produced better workers, used it to justify the additional expense that professional design required." Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*, 89.

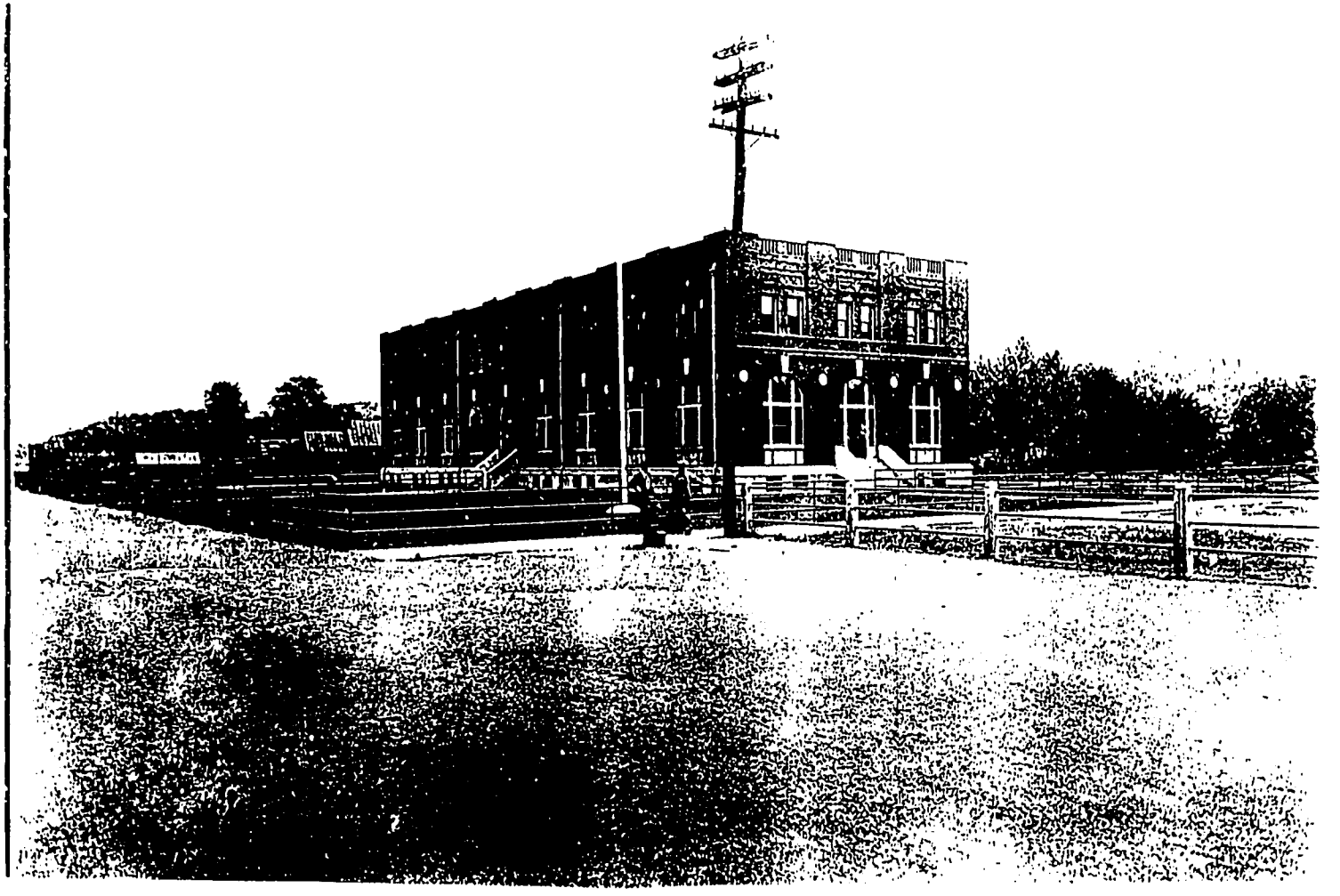

Figure 17. CC&O General Office Building

(Reprinted by permission of the Unicoi County Historical Society, from their Historical Photographs Collection, Col. J. F. Toney Memorial Library, Erwin, Tenn.)

Pullman strike in Illinois occurred while Atterbury was an architectural student, as had the White City of the 1893 Chicago fair.[33] After his graduate study, Atterbury attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and also worked in the Atelier Blondel.[34] Baron von

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[33]The design team for the Exposition included leaders in their fields. The Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, as chief of construction, worked with Frederick L. Olmsted and his partner Henry Codman on the Jackson Park site just south of Chicago. Sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, engineer Abram Gottlieb, and architects Richard M. Hunt, Robert S. Peabody, Dankmar Adler, Louis Sullivan, Solon S. Beman, Charles McKim, and William Mead, in whose office Atterbury worked, all contributed. They created an artificial but ordered city, with, as Alexander Garvin ticks off, "its own water, sewer, and utility systems, its own fire, police, sanitation, electric, telephone, telegraph service, and even its own elevated transit system." The white exteriors of the buildings and their common cornice height of sixty feet helped unify the site. Vistas and parklands had positive effects as well on visitors. The rush early in the twentieth century among cities to develop plans for monumental city centers, labeled the City Beautiful movement, resulted from the Chicago fair. See Richard E. Foglesong, *Planning the Capitalist City: The Colonial Era to the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 131, where he talks of the design contributors and devotes chapter 5, "Planning the City Beautiful," to analyzing the White City and the City Beautiful movement, and Alexander Garvin, *The American City: What Works, What Doesn't* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 430.

Daniel Burnham's later 1909 master plan for Chicago exemplifies City Beautiful efforts of that period. Burnham's design concentrated on the central business and government district, the monumental part of the city that boosters could advertise, while only vaguely suggesting placement of housing for the people who would have to work there. Park-like suburbs would do for office workers, and for those who maintained the streets and city services housing would arise beyond the parkways that would ring the city. See Thomas Schlereth, "City Planning as Progressive Reform: Burnham's Plan and Moody's Manual," in *Cultural History and Material Culture: Everyday Life, Landscapes, Museums* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 251.

[34]The influence of his stint in France showed up in several of Atterbury's mature designs. One commission for a private residence on Long Island completed in the next decade had for its forbear the French farmhouse; see Aymar Embury II, *One Hundred Country Houses: Modern American Examples* (New York: Century Co., 1909), 147.

Haussmann's plan for the city of Paris as well as impressions of events from earlier in his life would have a bearing on Atterbury's later work.[35]

Following his schooling, Atterbury settled in New York and began to build his career there, working on designs for private homes. Aymar Embury included in his 1909 book *One Hundred Country Houses* two of Atterbury's creations from his first decade of mature work. During these same years, Atterbury's restoration work for New York's City Hall, begun in 1902, continued until 1920. Based on the success he met with in that project, the Metropolitan Museum of Art selected Atterbury to design its new American Wing that opened in 1924. The facade, an early nineteenth-century building from lower Manhattan that he restored, may be his work most often viewed today. A member of the Architectural League of New York from 1901, Atterbury sat on its Executive Committee by 1908, and his reputation as an architect was firmly established. But this was New York in the midst of the Progressive era, and Atterbury, the designer of estates and restorer of public buildings, also displayed a keen interest in improved housing for working-class families.

People who created planned worker housing and company towns after 1900 usually maintained certain characteristics for that particular environment. A hold-over from Pullman and earlier planned towns was the physical plan's clear display of a pecking order within the working class. Management intended single-family house designs for skilled workers. Usually these employees were white, native-born Americans. The housing developed for unskilled workers, often immigrants and African

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[35]*Who Was Who in America*, Vol. III, 1951-1960, s.v. "Atterbury, Grosvenor"; Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 267-68; and Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 51.

Americans, frequently was inferior due to more crowded conditions in less desirable locations within the community.[36] But planners modified some of those design features in light of the shifting mood toward Progressivism. George H. Miller's plan for Fairfield, Alabama, designed in 1910 as a community for Tennessee Coal and Iron Company employees, includes examples of both attitudes. The poorest sections of Fairfield, where houses cost $1,250, recall the rigidly plain plan of the timber towns and residential layout of Pullman. The same plan, though, also exhibits the influence of the new professional planners (see Figure 18). According to Margaret Crawford, "the cost of housing rose with the elevation; in the hilliest and most expensive area, the grid turned into a pattern of curving streets and large, irregular lots . . . . While not as explicitly segregated as housing in early nineteenth-century textile towns, zoning still functioned as an obvious indication of rank within the company."[37]

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[36]Wright, *Building the Dream*, 186.

[37]Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*, 86. Reps's description of Fairfield emphasized the focal point created "by a group of civic buildings in a park-like setting" (*Making of Urban America*, 430); in combination these two authors' points suggest that the civic center in the plan serves also to separate the living quarters of the less-skilled workers from the more valuable employees.

Crawford uses the term "zoning" to mean a method of distinguishing one level of employee from another. The term can also signify the labeling of areas for distinctive purposes. Cities use zoning to control the location of certain types of enterprises. A section of town can be described as residential, commercial, industrial, or mixed, for example, and such determinations restrict what activities and types of construction occur where. This concept of zoning developed in this country in New York City and in connection with housing reforms in the early twentieth century. Though the first zoning regulations in this country arose in Los Angeles in the late nineteenth century, their development had no impact on other areas the way New York's implementation of its first zoning ordinance in 1916 did; see Relph, *Modern Urban Landscape*, 67, and Roy Lubove, *The Progressives and the Slums: Tenement House Reform in New York City, 1890-1917* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), chapters 5, "Lawrence Veiller and the New York Tenement House Commission of 1900," and 8, "Progressivism, Planning and Housing."

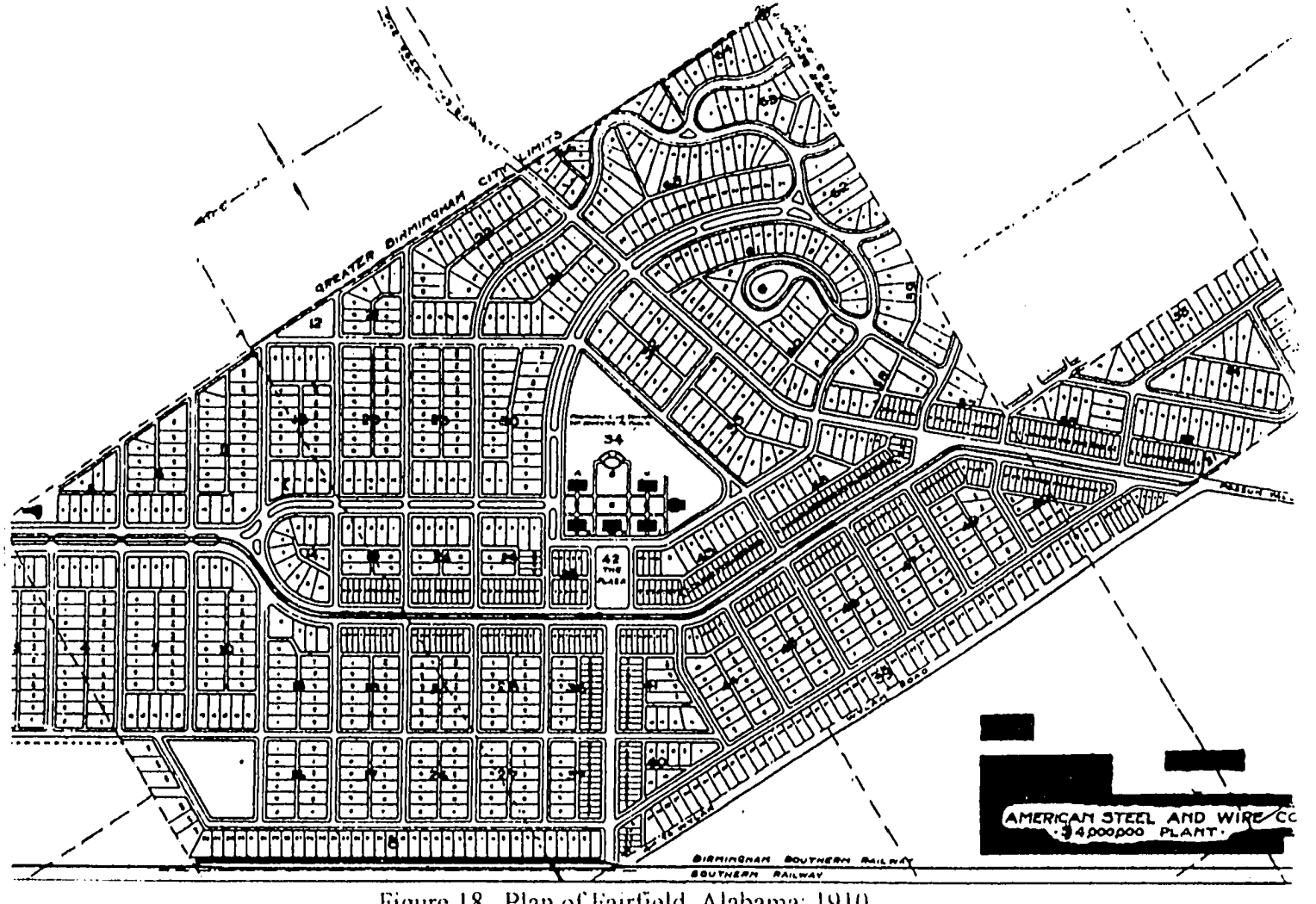

Figure 18. Plan of Fairfield, Alabama: 1910

(Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press, from John Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton, 1965), 431.)

Some other ideas that influenced Atterbury and fellow community planners had originated not in the United States but in Europe. Of those ideas the reorganization and design of central Paris ranks first in impact. This massive project, carried out under the supervision of Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, prefect of the Seine during the reign of Napoleon III, lasted almost twenty years, beginning in 1853. His network of boulevards and avenues forms the most immediately apparent feature of Haussmann's plan. He built fifty-seven miles of new streets and selected thirty-three miles of old roads to widen; together these ninety miles of grand roadways connected the main points of administration, transportation, and culture from one end of Paris to the other. The process rid the city of its central decrepit slums and tightly packed medieval structures, demolished 12,000 buildings, and displaced the poor who had inhabited them. These results made for better traffic circulation and allowed for grand vistas down major arteries and more intimate scenes in squares and plazas.[38]

Camille Sitte of Vienna objected to the straight and long boulevards of Paris, finding the scale dehumanizing. Watching Vienna's medieval defenses come down and

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[38]Garvin, *American City*, 429 and 430. Spiro Kostof, *The History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 677, notes that Haussmann claimed he destroyed 19,722 houses in greater Paris. Like Burnham's plan for Chicago, the poor would just have to move somewhere else--a vague response to a persistent problem not likely to evaporate.

Much less obvious but of tremendous importance, Haussmann's engineering of a water and sewer system for the city made for grander structures. With water pressure regulated and available to floors above ground level, buildings could and did rise to six stories. As Kostof points out (646), Haussmann's plan took the city that had grown in its different sections at varying speeds (but in human scale) and imposed a unifying order and monumental scale upon it. Americans in Paris to study at the École des Beaux-Arts in the last quarter of the nineteenth century encountered a grand vision in this landscape, and they captured elements of it in their later American-made City Beautiful movement.

the Ringstrasse being developed in its place, Sitte believed that what the ring surrounded, the Medieval core, must not be torn down as Haussmann had done in Paris. Sitte insisted too that squares could break "the reign of the street." For him a square did not equate to unbuilt land but to "a space enclosed by walls, like a room outdoors, serving as a theater of the common life."[39] His ideas appeared in 1889 in *The Art of Building Cities.*

Sitte's interest in human scale and the common life reflected his support of the craftsmen over technological advances as Austria entered the industrial age. His ideas seemed to reiterate what John Ruskin and William Morris had already published in England. By mid-nineteenth century, capitalism and industrialization had overwhelmed English society, changing the urban landscape, the pace of life, and the point of work.[40] In his writings and lectures John Ruskin criticized these developments and their negative influence on craftsmanship and values in general. William Morris and his associates, sometimes called the Pre-Raphaelites, chose to live and work in a manner reminiscent of an earlier age rather than to join the movement into mass production.[41] These critics,

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[39]Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 64, and see also Kostof, *History of Architecture*, 676. Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna*, chapter 2, "The Ringstrasse, Its Critics, and the Birth of Urban Modernism," provides an excellent look at the changes underway in Vienna late in the nineteenth century.

[40]Urban history scholars view the city as an artifact and study it as such, examining the choices people had before them when evaluating the decisions they made to meet particular problems or to address certain power relationships; see Sam Bass Warner Jr., "Urban History: A Matter of Choice," *The Public Historian* 8 (Fall 1986): 75-80, and Roy Lubove, "The Urbanization Process: An Approach to Historical Research," in *American Urban History: An Interpretive Reader with Commentaries*, ed. Alexander B. Callow Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 643.

[41]One hundred years later, the literature abounds on Ruskin, Morris, and the Arts and Crafts movement. Proper study might begin with the following possibilities, from among many: E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, eds., *The Works of John Ruskin* (London: George Allen, 1903-12); Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (Cambridge,

artists, and architects built the Arts and Crafts movement that attracted adherents not only in England but in continental Europe and the United States as well.

In different locales these Arts and Crafts followers modified the movement's characteristics to meet their own needs. Sitte in Austria had something of an artisan population with which to work. The United States had not experienced the Medieval period, but "colonies" built to foster craftsmanship popped up, for example, at Roycroft in East Aurora, New York, and at Craftsman Farms in Morris Plains, New Jersey. A lack of interest in the socialist tenets that Morris himself supported was one of the ironies produced in these spin-offs. There were others. The objects produced, both lovelier and more costly than the mass-produced competition, wound up in middle- and upper-class residences since the folk, from whom the designs originated, could not easily afford them. And numerous artisans took advantage of machinery at one stage or another of their craft production, arguing that they used the machine only as a tool and did not allow it to guide or dominate their work. Pretending that societies with mechanized industries would forsake that industrialization for a simpler world proved to be totally impractical. The whole concept had to be rethought or redesigned. In England Ebenezer Howard did just that. Grosvenor Atterbury adapted Howard's results, the garden city concept, and became its chief proponent in the United States.

Mass.: MIT Press, 1971); E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, 2d ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1977); Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise* (London: Architectural Press, 1980); Peter Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America*, In American Civilization Series, ed. Allen F. Davis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influences on Design Theory* (London: Trefoil, 1990); and Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991).

Ebenezer Howard, a court stenographer in London, had some familiarity with William Morris's ideas and those in Sitte's book, itself in part a reaction to Haussmann's ideas. Howard had also lived in the American Midwest in the 1870s, and he had been impressed by the reform ideas of Henry George and particularly those of Edward Bellamy in his 1888 fable, *Looking Backward.* Through synthesis and earnest effort, Howard developed his own response to the industrial environment that had grown without controls in England and so quickly obliterated the more human setting of pre-industrial towns. His theory did not suggest a return to an idyllic agricultural world. He found such a notion an unrealistic contemplation at best and probably an inaccurate remembrance of the past. No one could erase industrialization, but people could mitigate its harmful growth. Howard spent years working out his solution before he wrote the piece that he published in 1898 at his own expense under the title *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform.*

Reform-minded associates received Howard's ideas with enthusiasm, forming the Garden City Association in 1899 to promote them.[42] With such support Howard continued developing, revising, and refining his model environment. In 1902, thus modified, he republished his work. The new title, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, highlighted his key concept.[43] Instead of the large, congested center of factories, disease, and poverty that London and other industrial cities had become, the effective

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[42]This group has operated down to the present, though its name now is the Town and Country Planning Association.

[43]Perhaps from the socialism preached by William Morris, Howard decided upon collective ownership and control of town land and cooperative ownership of housing as elements of his garden city. See Foglesong, *Planning the Capitalist City*, 180-81, for more details of Howard's ideas and 184-85 for what arrangements actually went into effect at Letchworth, built in 1904.

industrialized community would be smaller, both in population and area, and surrounded by the farmlands needed to sustain it. Howard imagined his garden city of 6,000 acres divided between the residential, commercial, and industrial core of 1,000 acres and 5,000 acres of farms outside it. The proportion for the ideal population of 32,000 reversed the land division, with 2,000 people on the farms and 30,000 in the town. When one garden city reached this optimum size, a new one would commence development, eventually reducing the congested centers to the equivalent of garden cities as well. Howard intended the mixture of urban and rural settings in one garden city to provide the best characteristics of each without adding the pitfalls of either.[44] He used the idea of magnets and their power to attract to explain his concept in lectures he delivered (see Figure 19).

Ebenezer Howard promoted the *idea* of his garden city, but two members of the Garden City Association turned it into a competition-winning city plan with streets, residential areas, and factories. Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker designed Letchworth on a site of almost 4,000 acres a little over thirty miles northeast of London in Hertfordshire. Begun in 1904 as the first garden city,[45] Letchworth influenced later

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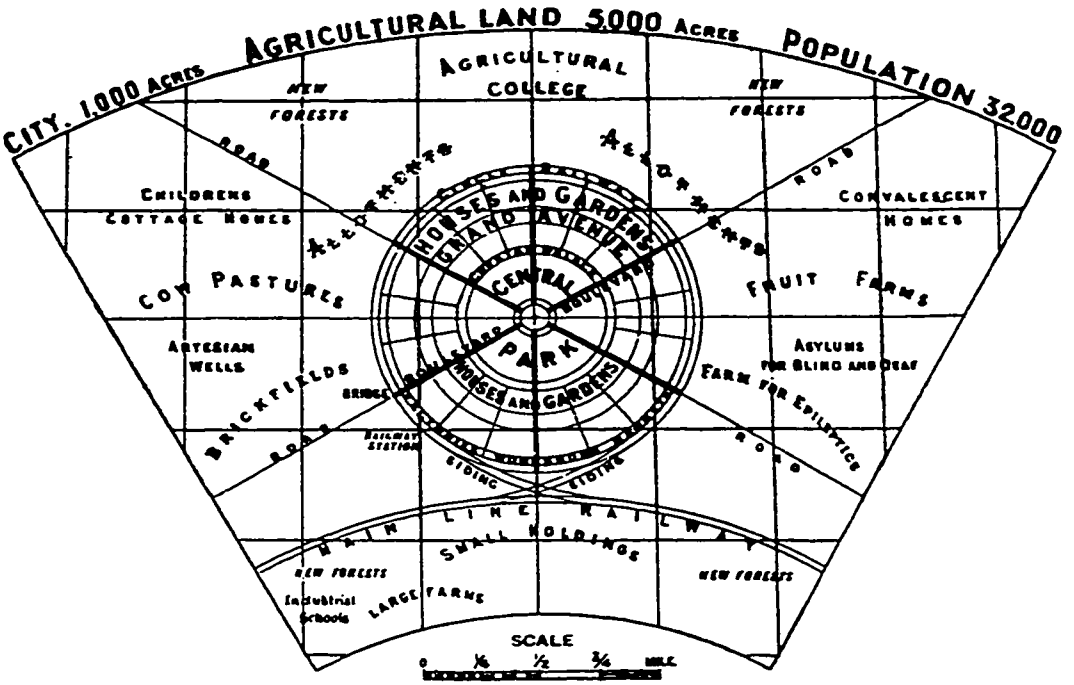
[44]The garden city ideas of Ebenezer Howard appear in articles and books related to urban planning, suburbs, worker housing, and the Progressive era. One account that places Howard's theory and its practical applications into historical context and in relation to urban developments around the globe can be found in Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), particularly chapters 1, "'Organic' Patterns," and 3, "The City as Diagram."

[45]The second garden city, Welwyn, began in 1919, but Raymond Unwin also created the plans for Hampstead earlier (1906). Because of its size and proximity to London, Hampstead does not qualify as a garden city, yet it represents well the adaptation of Howard's principles to a suburb. See Witold Rybczynski, *City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 184-85, for details on Hampstead.



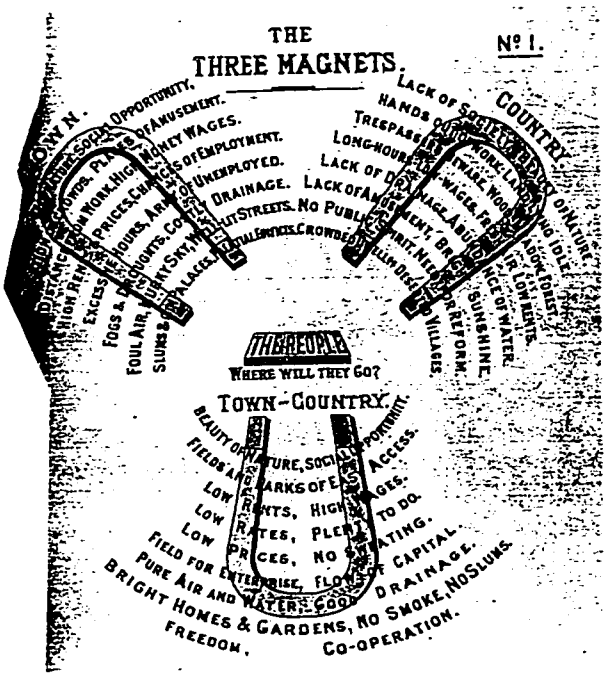


Figure 19. Diagrams of Ebenezer Howard's idea of the Garden City and Three Magnets (Source: Howard, *A Peaceful Path to Social Reform*, 1898)

(Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company, from Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History* (Boston, 1991), 203.)

planned towns and suburbs primarily through its residential sections. Unwin and Parker's use of the close (or cul-de-sac), trees and vegetation, and irregular house placement on lots created a feeling of space and individuality in housing that had been lacking in industrial cities or even enlightened company towns like Pullman. The grid was gone. By 1906 a Garden City Association of America formed in New York with hopes of changing industrialists' ideas of how to build new towns.

Among the following that Howard's ideas engendered in this country, Grosvenor Atterbury emerged as a leader. Indeed, in the first major United States garden city/suburb attempt, Forest Hills Gardens, New York, he was the equivalent of Raymond Unwin, creating the American version of the physical plan based on Howard. Atterbury collaborated with Frederick L. Olmsted Jr., the landscape architect, and the Russell Sage Foundation funded the project that began in 1909.[46] The site, a 142-acre farm located eight miles from Manhattan, offered easy access to jobs in the city via the Long Island Railroad, whose tracks formed the east boundary of the development. The residents, though, would not be factory workers or other blue collar laborers. By 1912, more than

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The garden city as Ebenezer Howard described it did not materialize in America, but planners seized upon some of his ideas and those of Unwin. Roy Lubove, *Progressives and the Slums*, 223 and 224, distinguishes the garden city from garden suburbs and garden villages, defining the suburb as "a planned residential community on the outskirts of a city . . . which lacked the self-sufficiency of garden city" and the garden village as "a residential community organized around one or a few industries." Both garden suburbs and garden villages emerged in America after 1906.

[46]The first National Conference on City Planning (NCCP) convened this same year and met annually thereafter. By 1917 the need for a national association to carry on the work and ideas raised at the annual conference led F. L. Olmsted Jr., along with Flavel Shurtleff, to organize the American Institute of Planners with fifty-two charter members, including Atterbury. For more details on the AIP, see Mel Scott, *American City Planning Since 1890: A History Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the American Institute of Planners* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

two-thirds of the heads of households in those sections of Forest Hills Gardens thus far completed held jobs in education, engineering, commerce or as architects, physicians, and lawyers.[47] The social aspects of Howard's garden city had not, apparently, survived the transatlantic crossing. The size of Forest Hills Gardens, its lack of any plans for serious, sustaining farming, and the population to which it appealed all made it a suburb of New York, not a relief for a portion of the city's working classes. Though the Russell Sage Foundation expressed commitment to developing such a residential community, Forest Hills Gardens was not to be it.[48]

Instead of comparing Forest Hills Gardens to Howard's theory, however, it should be studied with regard to Letchworth and Hampstead, Unwin's practical applications of the theory. Though distinct differences among the communities exist, similarities emerge as well. Each has a clearly identified commercial center and the separation of its train station from residential areas. Each has a few wide avenues that "become an organizing framework for the weave of roads that constitute the residential fabric."[49] Those residential areas provide a variety of housing types with detached and semi-detached single-family dwellings and row houses set at different distances from the curb.

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[47]Louis Graves, *Building Progress* (1912), quoted in John R. Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 235.

[48]Scott, *American City Planning*, 91; Garvin, *American City*, 269, does not even consider Forest Hills Gardens an example of the garden city idea and instead describes it, along with Druid Hills in Atlanta, in his section "Residential Suburbs"; and Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 230, makes the point that Atterbury did want to pursue the development of better working-class housing (and he will make two more attempts in the next decade at such communities).

[49]Spiro Kostof, *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 232.

Curving narrow roads discourage fast traffic, and common parklands form an integral part of each plan. Architectural styles suggest country cottages or medieval towns.[50] All of these characteristics taken together exhibit Forest Hills Gardens' roots in the garden city movement.

The arrangement of the Atterbury/Olmsted project begins with its entrance (see Figure 20). In the original plans, after exiting the train station, one crosses the tracks to Station Square with its shops, inn, and non-housekeeping apartments. Leading out from this architecturally designed public space, the Greenway splits into North and South branches that go on either side of the community's Green and then into and through the residential area to its southern boundary, forming an irregularly shaped oval (see Figure 21). Two parallel avenues running east and west, one from the Station Square and the other south of the Green, form the other part of the underlying framework. Lesser roads, appearing to meander through the property, help to form housing groups that back onto shared greenspaces in place of individual back yards. The innovation in house placement on lots matches Atterbury's creativity in building materials. Using Tudor-style architecture throughout, he desired an established look to accompany it through plantings and exteriors of tile and stucco that would weather. Spiro Kostof mentions his use of precast houses of concrete, an early experiment in his search for low-cost and fireproof housing that Atterbury pursued the rest of his life. John Stilgoe talks of his coordination of sidewalk pigmentation to housefronts and focuses on the idea that Forest Hills

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[50]The Tudor style is seen in some abundance, both in the United States at Forest Hills Gardens and in England. At Letchworth workman's cottages with Tudor details bring to mind the earlier English model company towns of Bournville and Port Sunlight which also used Tudor architecture in the shopping center and houses, respectively. For photographs of the towns mentioned in this paragraph, see Kostof, *City Assembled*, 73, 77, and 228; Relph, *Modern Urban Landscape*, 60; and Frederic C. Howe, "The Garden Cities of England," *Scribner's Magazine* LII (July 1912): 1-19.

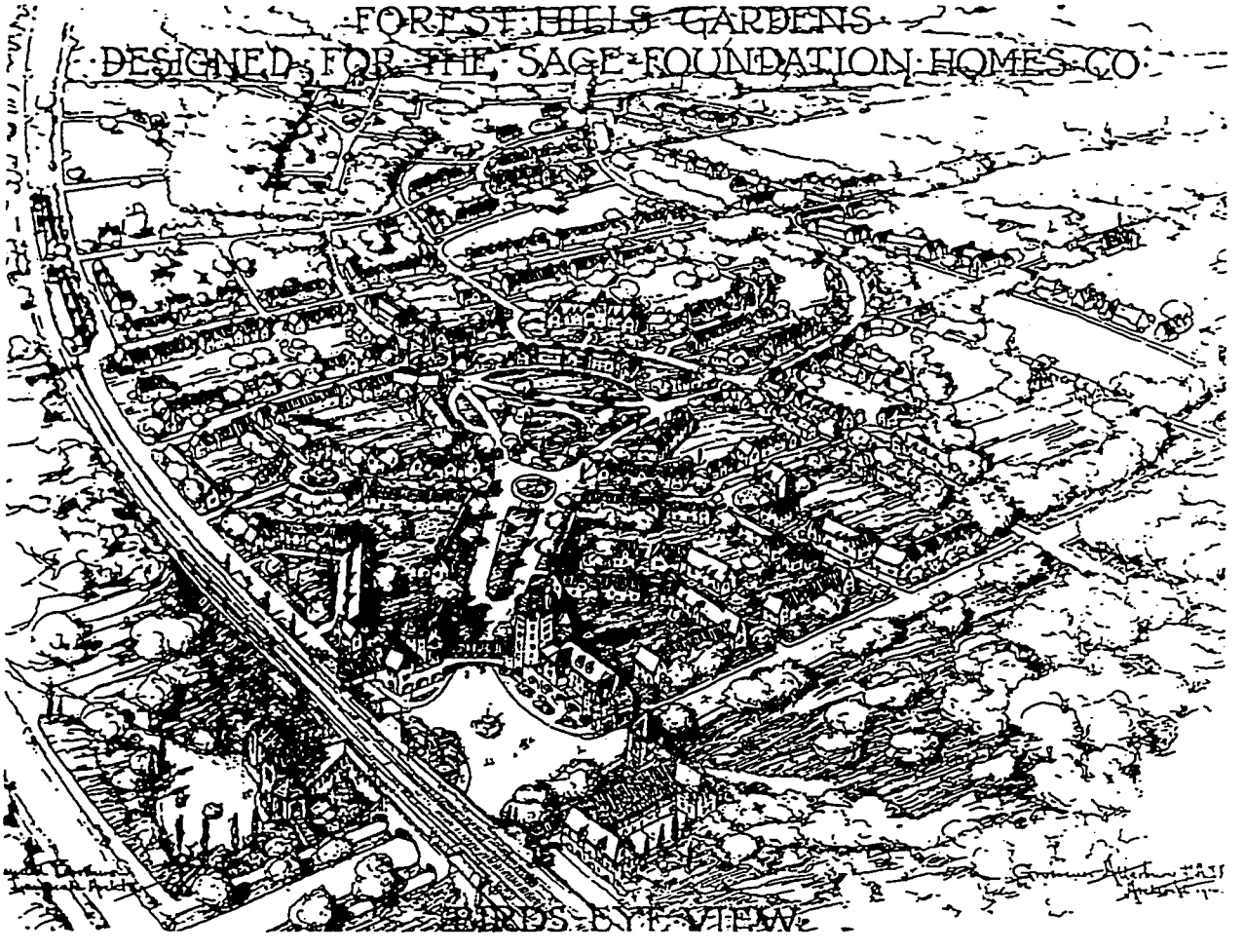

Figure 20. Forest Hills Gardens, Bird's Eye View
(Source: Grosvenor Atterbury, "Model Towns in America." *Scribners*, July 1912, 29.)

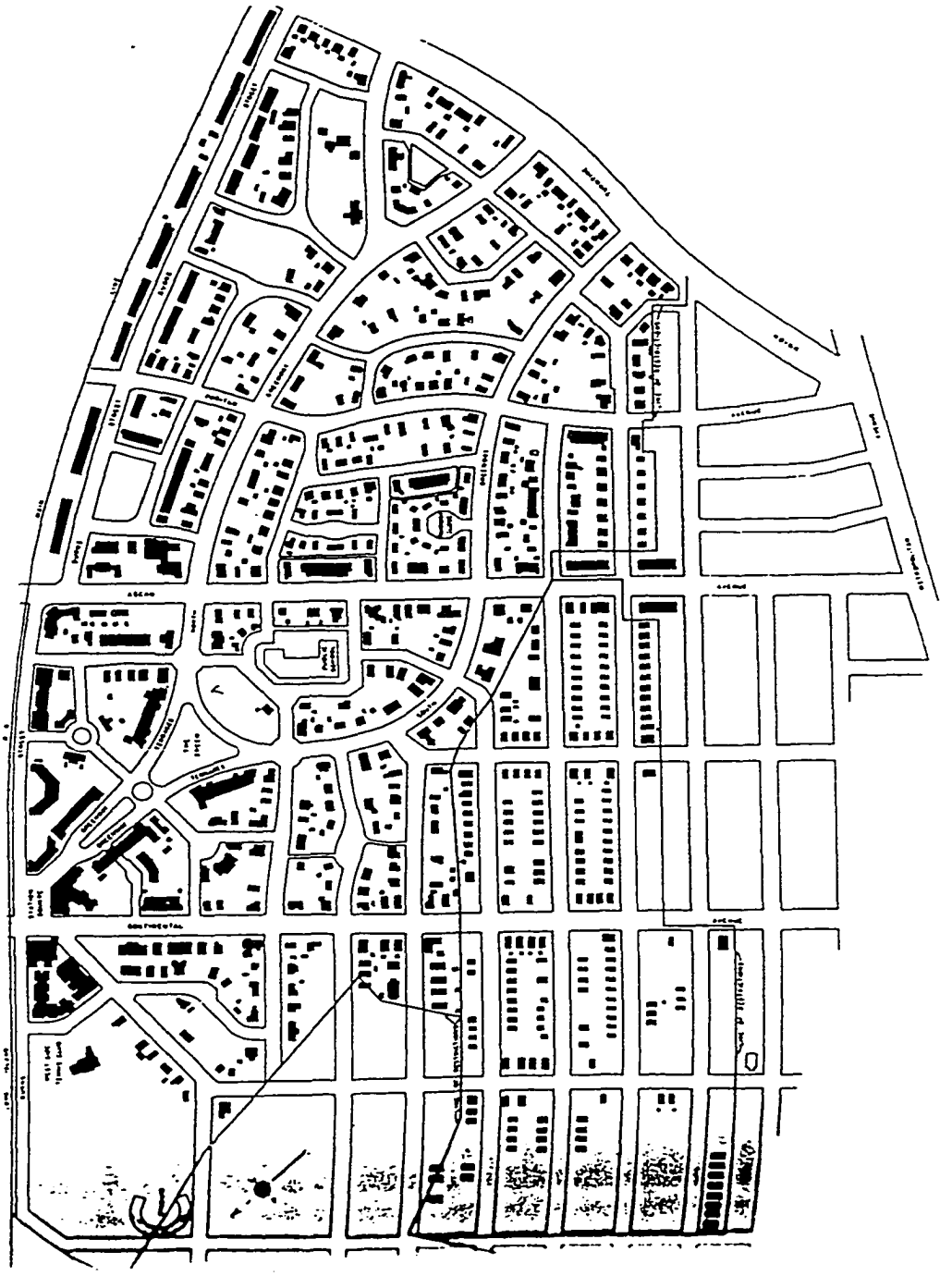

Figure 21. Forest Hills Gardens, New York, as it had developed by 1930

(Reprinted by permission of The University of California Press, from Mel Scott, *American City Planning Since 1890: A History Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the American Institute of Planners* (Berkeley, 1969), 91.)

Gardens, a "wholly designed place nearly unable to accept change," can be equated with or mistaken for a "new-model company town." In that light, Margaret Crawford's claim that it was Lawrence Veiller who convinced the Russell Sage Foundation to undertake the Forest Hills Gardens project seems ironic. As a housing reformer working with New York City's problems of overcrowded tenements, Veiller's ambition had been to decentralize the European immigrant working class living there. That his earlier wish led instead to this demonstration of controlled environment designed for middle- and upper-class occupants was an odd outcome indeed.[51]

Atterbury and Olmsted continued to work on Forest Hills Gardens, though less intensely so, from 1913 until its sale to the homeowners' group that formed there in 1921. Over these same years, Atterbury developed other projects as well, independent of Olmsted. In November 1915, *Architecture and Building* featured the new Russell Sage Foundation Building that Atterbury designed. Located at the corner of 22nd Street and Lexington Avenue in New York, the stone structure embodied stability, rising from its arched entrances (reminiscent of Richardsonian Romanesque design) for seven floors to the eaves and attic above. Atterbury designed a residence for himself in 1916 and chose to build it in Forest Hills Gardens. He also worked on designs for residences in at least two communities designed by John Nolen's planning firm.[52]

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[51]Spiro Kostof, *America by Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 57; Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 232 and 238; Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*, 75; and Lubove, *Progressives and Slums*, 131. Veiller orchestrated New York City's first zoning law in 1916--which did not end already existing housing problems and overcrowded slums of immigrants anymore than Forest Hills Gardens did.

[52]"Russell Sage Foundation Building," *Architecture and Building* 47 (November 1915): 390-95. Atterbury, a bachelor until 1923, built a three-story house of brick, stone, and half-timbered Tudor design with stained glass windows and pegged and dovetailed oak floors on a large lot in Forest Hills Gardens. Atterbury worked with Nolen's office on designs for Mariemont, a garden city suburb at Cincinnati, Ohio, and at Kingsport,

Atterbury did not, however, give up on the idea of developing good quality, affordable housing for the working class. In 1915 he designed a community named Indian Hill for employees of the Norton Grinding Company located at Worcester, Massachusetts.[53] Atterbury undertook the landscaping for this project himself, in part because of its smaller size, ninety acres, in combination with the knowledge he acquired working with Olmsted earlier. Due to his association with Forest Hills Gardens and his continuing commitment to this model-city idea, the CC&O leadership approached Atterbury with their project for housing their railroad employees at Erwin, Tennessee. Atterbury visited Unicoi County in the summer of 1916 and submitted plans for the Development for the Holston Corporation of the CC&O.[54] That same year the railroad began to put Atterbury's design into effect.

Erwin's location, sandwiched between the Nolichucky River and the Unaka Mountains, presented Atterbury a very different situation from the 142-acre farm on Long Island that became Forest Hills Gardens or the hillside above Indian Lake in Massachusetts. In this newest case the land to be developed abutted the town. As

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Tennessee.

[53]For details concerning Indian Hill, see Charles C. May, "Indian Hill: An Industrial Village at Worcester, Mass.: Grosvenor Atterbury Town Planner and Architect," *The Architectural Record* 41 (January 1917): 21-35, and Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*, chapter 6, "Americanizing the Garden City: Grosvenor Atterbury and Indian Hill."

[54]Management of the CC&O formed a separate legal entity, the Holston Corporation, in the days when George L. Carter presided over the railroad. This group purchased land for the railroad's use as right-of-ways, among other things. Later, Mark Potter organized through the Holston Corporation the land deals and the legal arrangements necessary for the model company town for CC&O employees at Erwin. For this reason, Atterbury's drawings and plats and some maps refer to the planned community as the Development for the Holston Corporation.

Lawrence Veiller wrote in his critique of Atterbury's results, "the fundamental lines of the community had already been established" by both the land features and the existing town of Erwin. The size of the projected development added to Atterbury's challenge. The forecast that Erwin would "eventually take care of 30,000 to 40,000" elicits images of Ebenezer Howard's garden city idea, but the plan had to fit into a confined space and at the same time produce "well-ordered, harmonious and attractive designing in the development of what is ordinarily so sordid a thing as a railroad shop settlement." Atterbury's solutions included the now familiar ideas of a select few major avenues, narrower secondary streets, and variously shaped lots that here permitted the development to be dropped into the existing street network. Veiller commented that "the system of main boulevards was laid out to satisfy the demands of future travel from the three valleys opening out from the townsite."[55] Though these demands failed to materialize, the lasting effect of the roadways Atterbury designed remains apparent today (see Figures 22 and 23).

Perhaps because of the immediately adjacent town with its shops, churches, and public places, Atterbury designed the planned community at Erwin as a purely residential area. His projection lacked anything comparable to Forest Hills Gardens' Station Square or Indian Hill's Community Center. The setting in upper East Tennessee called for other modifications in his garden city schema. Atterbury knew well the importance of first

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[55]Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Developments in America, Part IV, A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tenn.," *Architectural Record* 43 (June 1918): 547, 559, and 548; see also Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's Historic Landscapes: A Traveler's Guide* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 177.

As a nationally known authority on working-class housing, Veiller was commissioned to write on industrial housing developments for *Architectural Record*. His selection of Atterbury's work at Erwin as one of the four communities he highlighted implies his approval, which the article then describes in detail.

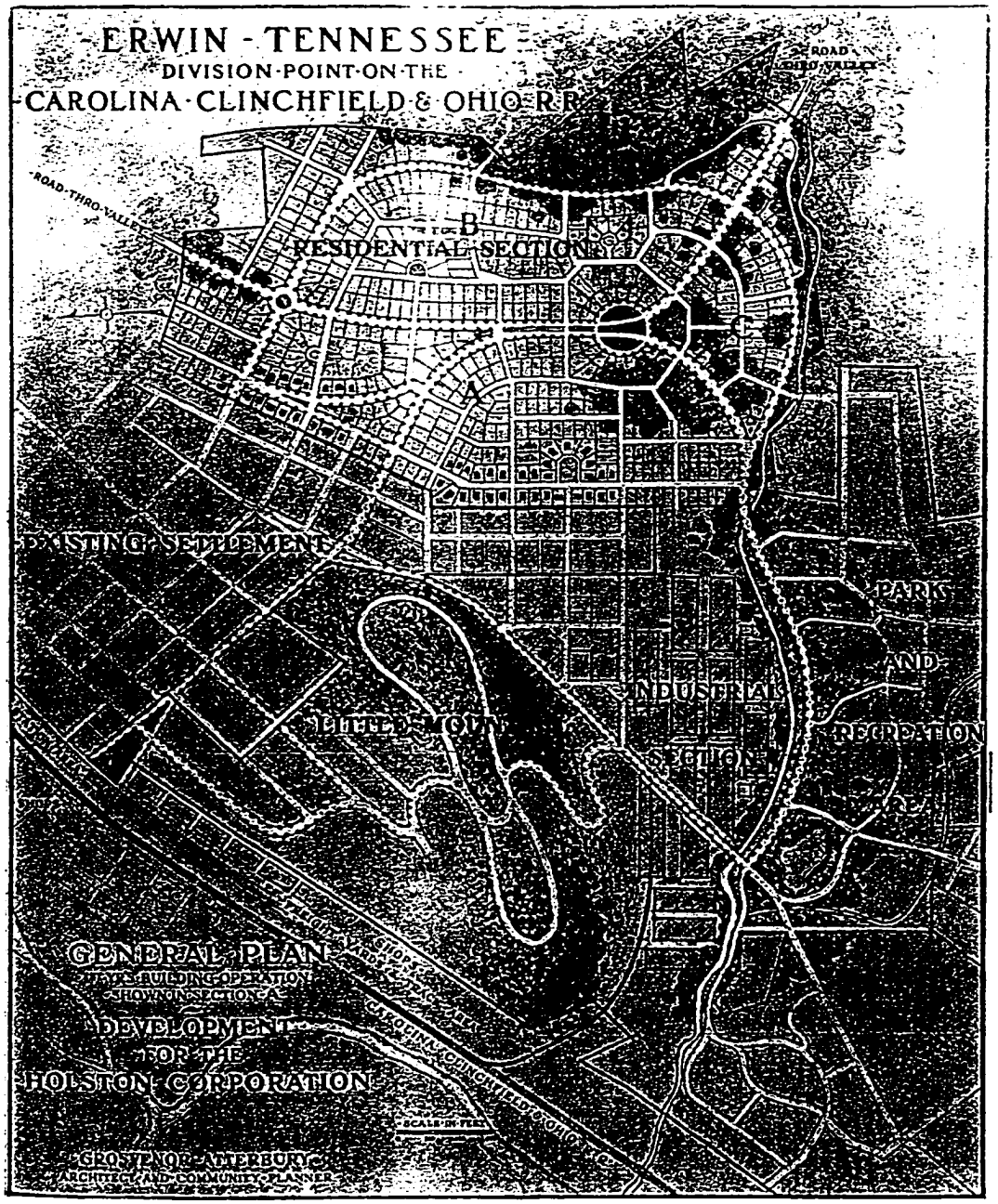
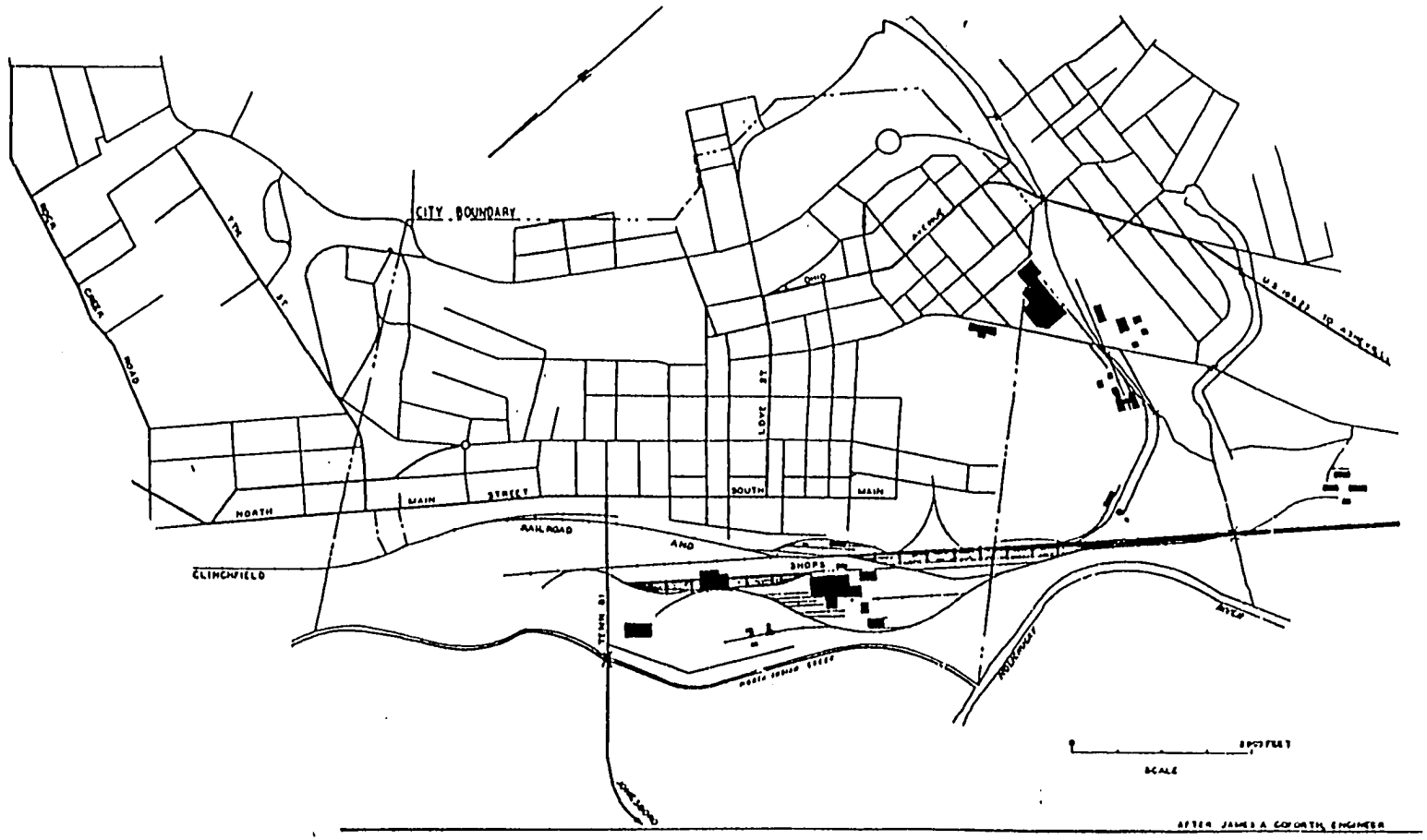


Figure 22. Erwin, Tennessee: General Plan

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 549.)



Map showing manufactural sites in Erwin, Epperson, p. 160

Figure 23. Erwin, Tennessee, in 1960

(Reprinted by permission of the University of Tennessee, from Terry Elmer Epperson Jr., "Geographic Factors Influencing the Manufactural Industries of Upper East Tennessee" (Knoxville, 1960), 160.)

impressions. On Long Island just a short ride from the bustling grid of Manhattan, he created drama by massing the stylistically uniform buildings of Station Square around the opening to the Greenway and park-like residential areas of Forest Hills Gardens (see Figure 20). At Indian Hill the Atterbury plan called for a bridge as entrance to the steep hill beside the lake (see Figure 24). In Erwin, with little room for grand approaches, he chose the terrain along Martin's Creek at the south end of the development to turn into a parkland border to his boulevard into the community. The towering mountains would overwhelm any artificial "gateway" Atterbury might build. He held back from competing with nature here, and instead used it to advantage by having the roadways undulate up the slope (see Figures 22 and 25).

The Holston Corporation agreed with its New York architect and commenced building in two nearby parts of what Atterbury labeled Residential Section A of his plan. Starting here put off work on the main boulevards that ran east and south of this section, but it made sense because this portion of the planned community sat closest to the existing town. In all, forty-five residences were built on Holston Place and along Ohio Avenue and Unaka Way. Of them, thirty houses went up on Holston Place and Ohio Avenue between Martins Avenue and Sinasta Road in 1916-1917 (see Figure 26). The Holston Corporation constructed fifteen houses on Unaka Way, the corresponding section of Ohio Avenue, and Love Street as well (see Figure 27). Every one of them functions as a residence today, over eighty years later. In the first year of building, the CC&O accomplished quite a bit (see Figures 28 and 29); Indian Hill spent two building seasons, 1915 and 1916, to put up fifty-eight houses designed by Atterbury.[56]

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[56]May, "Indian Hill," 25. The photographs reproduced here come from a collection in the holdings of the Unicoi County Historical Society. The labels with them express the common misconception that Southern Potteries built the houses pictured. See the last page of this chapter for an introduction to the pottery enterprise and chapter 4

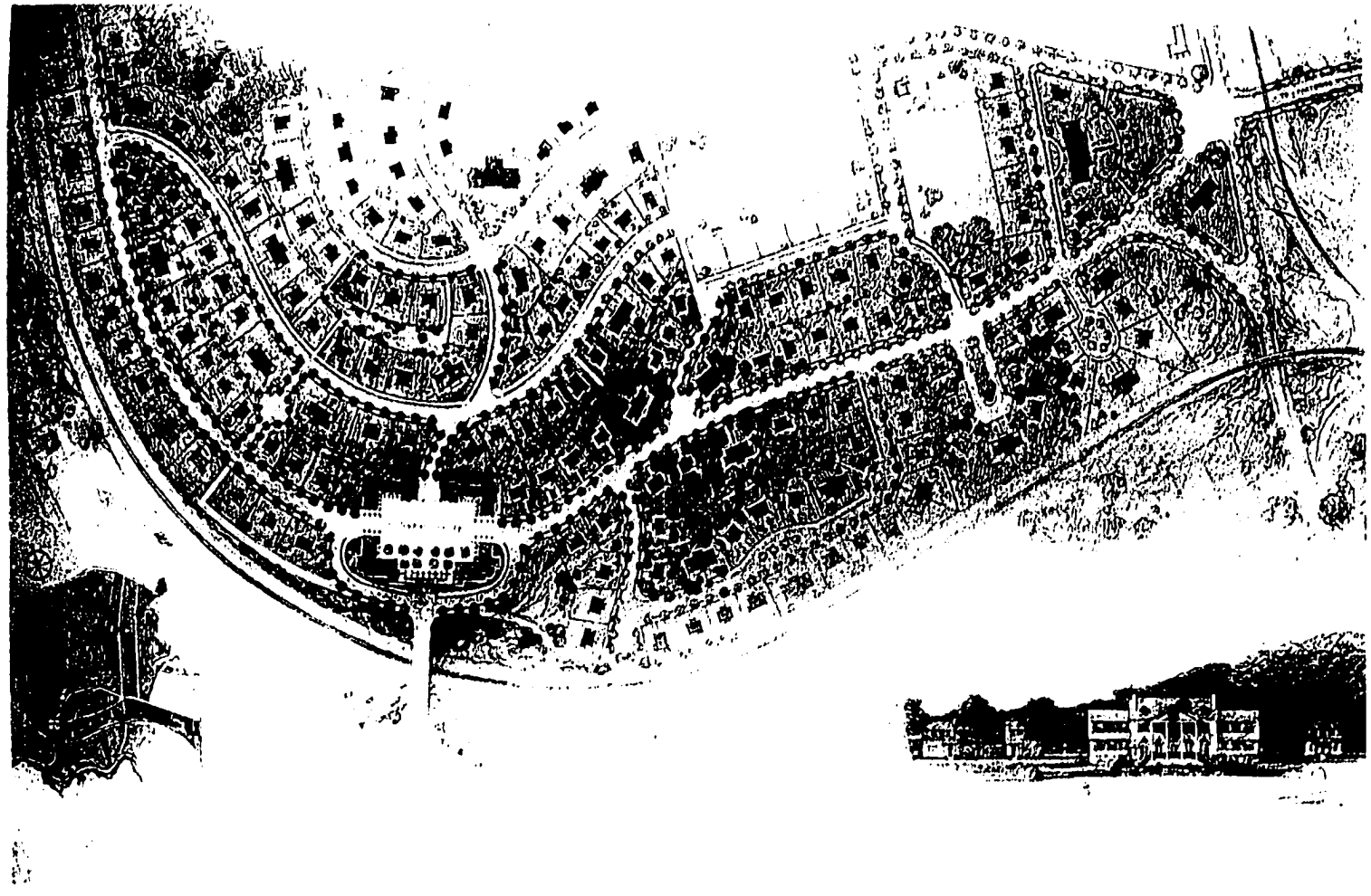

Figure 24. General Plan of Indian Hill, Massachusetts

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Charles C. May, "Indian Hill: An Industrial Village at Worcester, Mass.," 41 (January 1917), 23.)

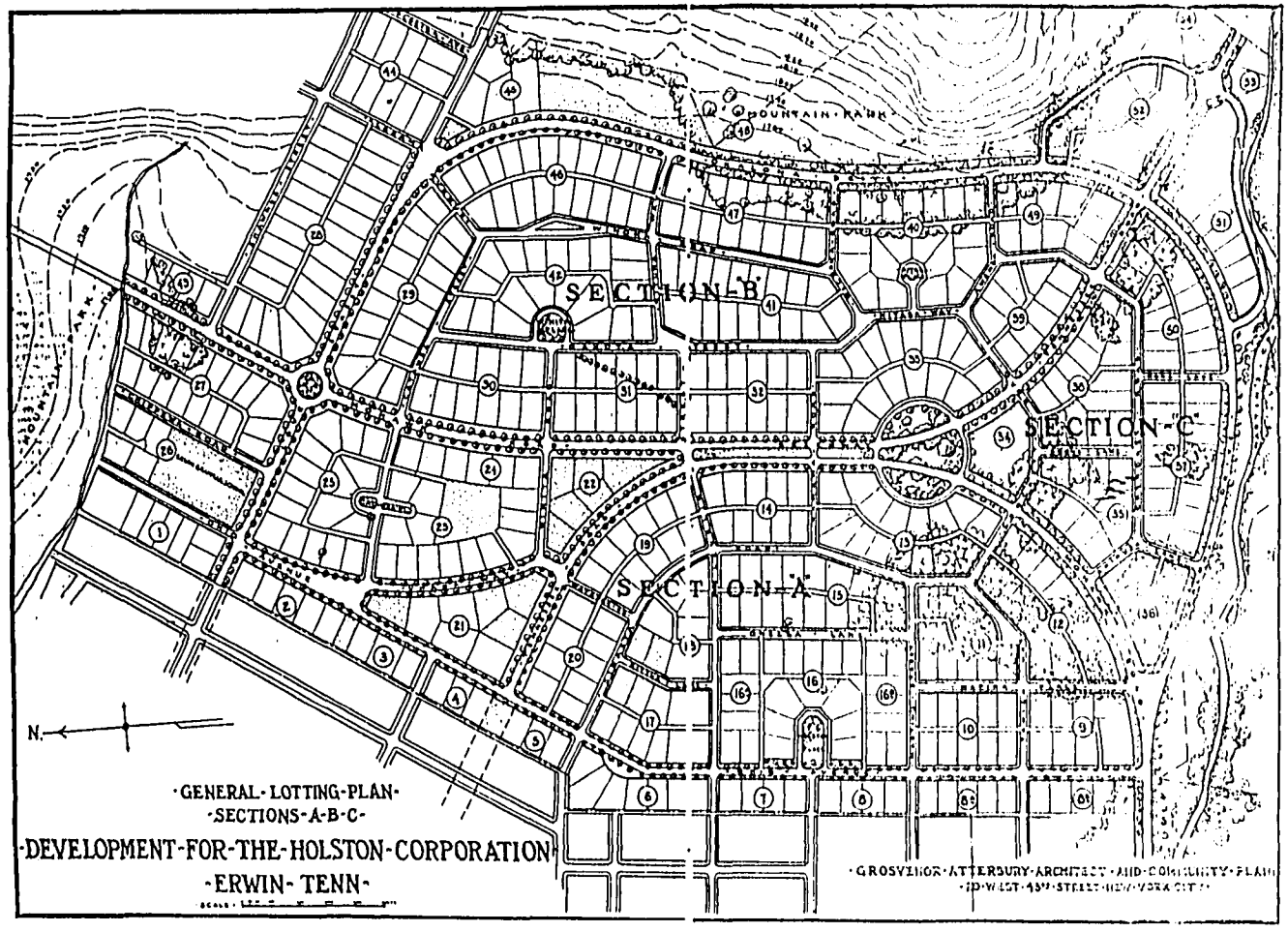

Figure 21. Erwin, Tennessee: General Lotting Plan

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 550-51.)

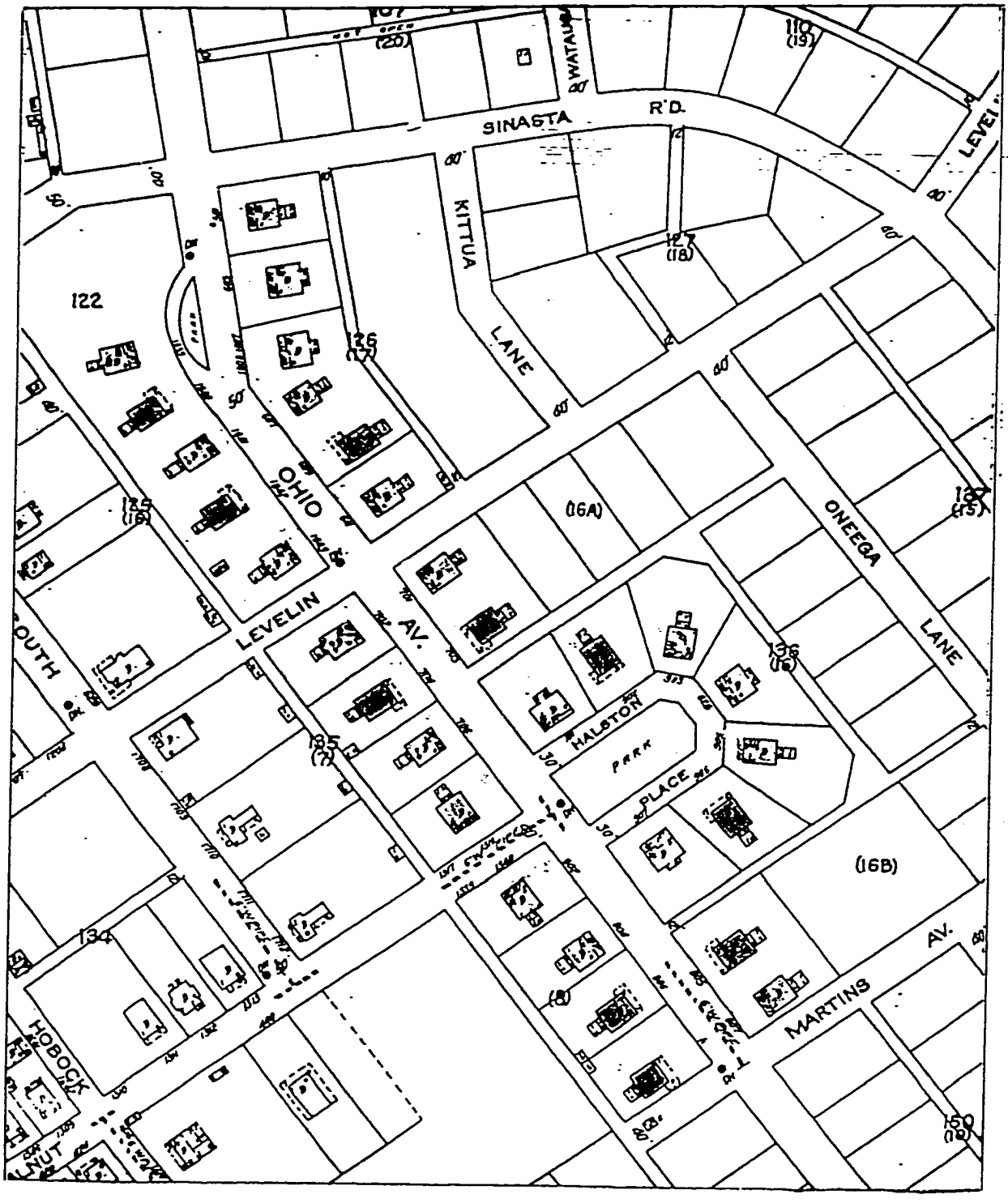

Figure 26. Holston Place and Vicinity
(Source: 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance map)

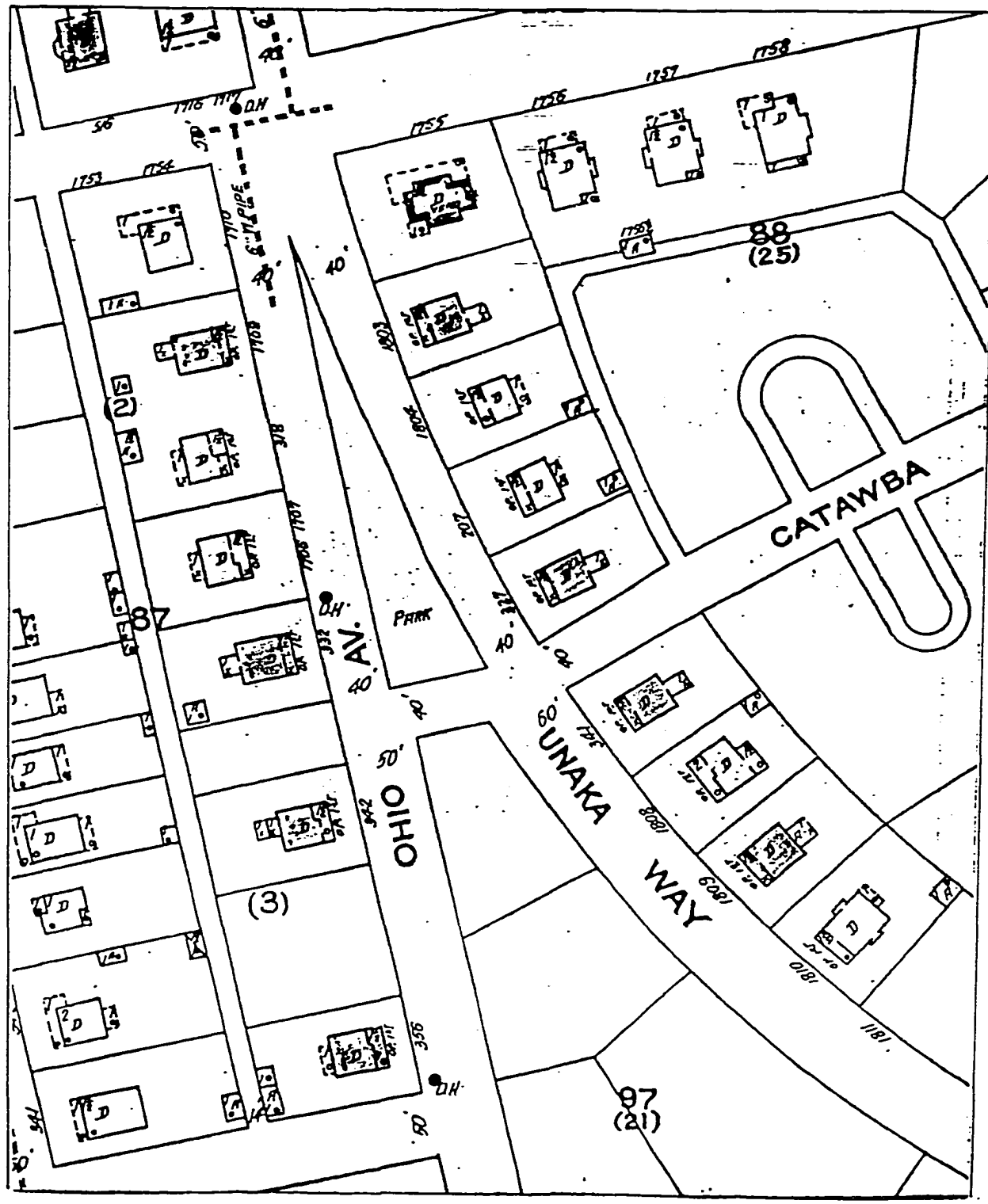

Figure 27. Unaka Way and Ohio Avenue
(Source: 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance map)

"New Addition, showing type of houses built by the Holston Corporation for the Pottery employees." This view is looking in a northerly direction toward the present day intersection of Unaka Way, Ohio Avenue and Love Street.

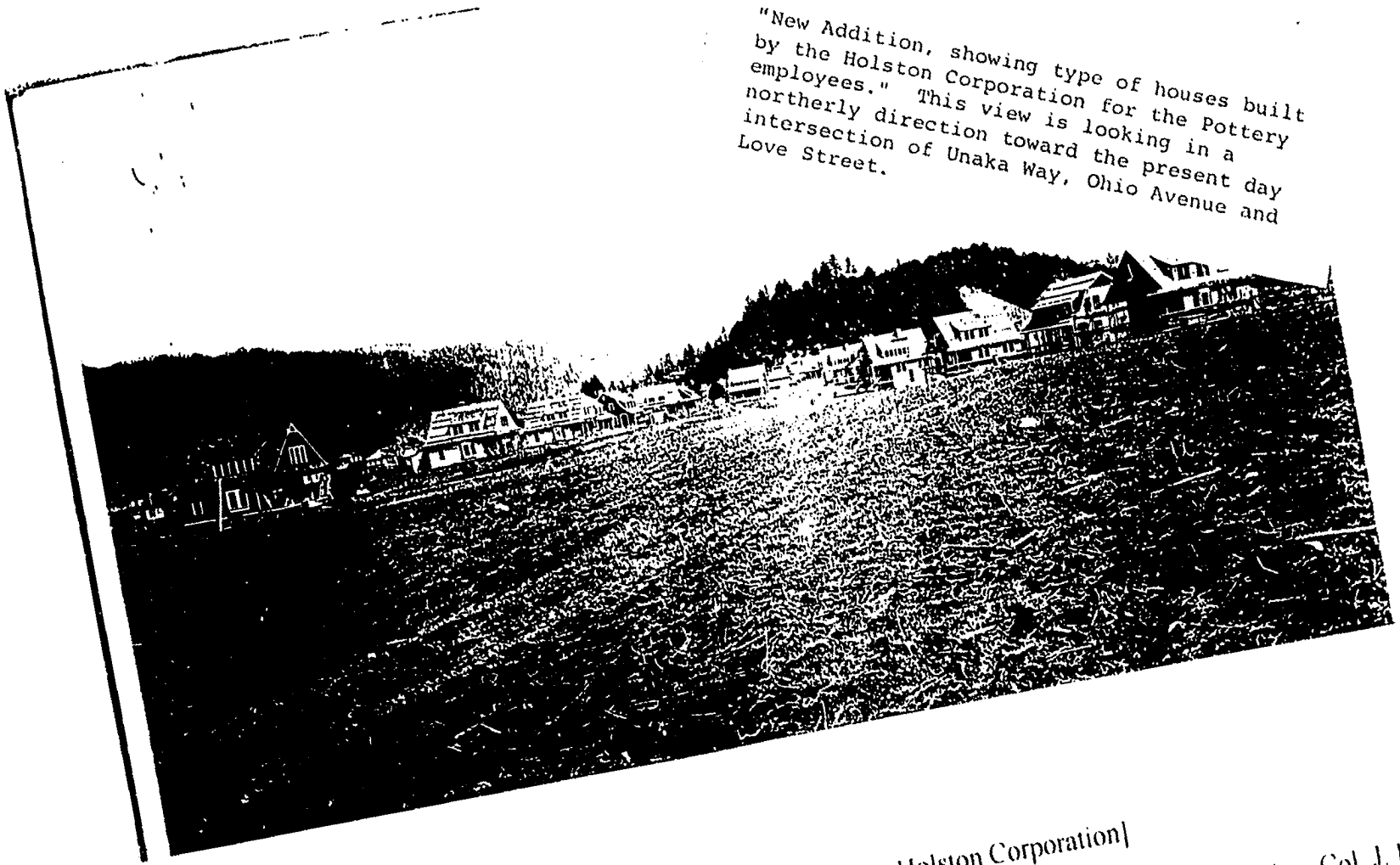

Figure 28. New addition [Development for the Holston Corporation]

(Reprinted by permission of the Unicoi County Historical Society, from their Historical Photographs Collection, Col. J. F. Toney Memorial Library, Erwin, Tenn.)

Figure 29. A Closer View of Houses under Construction

(Reprinted by permission of the Unicoi County Historical Society, from their Historical Photographs Collection, Col. J. F. Toney Memorial Library, Erwin, Tenn.)

Atterbury had defended his earlier efforts at Forest Hills Gardens when he wrote in 1912 of the "surprising effectiveness of simple, honest, and straightforward structures when designed and placed with regard to general harmony of color and mass."[57] Based on the house plans, materials, and groupings he projected in the Erwin CC&O development, Atterbury still believed in 1916 what he had written four years earlier. He drew up at least six different sets of house plans, five representing single-family dwellings, and the railroad management selected three of his submissions (designs 4, 5, and 6) for the first phase of construction. Although Atterbury presented to the Holston Corporation for their consideration plans for a semi-detached house, they decided against including it at this time or including the largest house which alone of his drawings had a garage. The added expense of this space for the idea, still emerging, of a family automobile (and in a community of railroad employees in rural Tennessee) must have seemed unjustifiable, at least at the outset of the project. Of the three plans chosen for the initial building period, one was a single-story dwelling (design 4, see Figures 30 and 31) and the others had two floors (design 5, see Figures 32 and 33, and design 6, see figures 34 and 35). All plan designs presented few but nice-sized rooms that allowed easy movement from one area to another. The kitchens and indoor baths were thoroughly modern for 1916, and each plan featured wood fireplaces. Porches provided a covered entrance and an "outdoor room" in nice weather.[58] In true Progressive fashion,

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for further details concerning it and the houses it acquired from the CC&O in 1920.

[57]Grosvenor Atterbury, "Model Towns in America," *Scribner's Magazine* 52 (July 1912): 26.

[58]The six-room floor plan included for design 6 in the Veiller article in *Architectural Record* (and shown in Figure 34 above) does not correspond to the exterior as sketched by Atterbury or as constructed at Erwin. From drawings included in Veiller's article, Atterbury's designs 1, 2, and 3 not chosen by Holston Corporation represented an

-One story floor plan
-Two bedrooms
-Combination living and dining room
-One central bath
-One fireplace between kitchen and dining area wall
-Kitchen located on back of house with enclosed porch and storage room
-Existing houses have a wrap around corner porch though plans show a full front porch

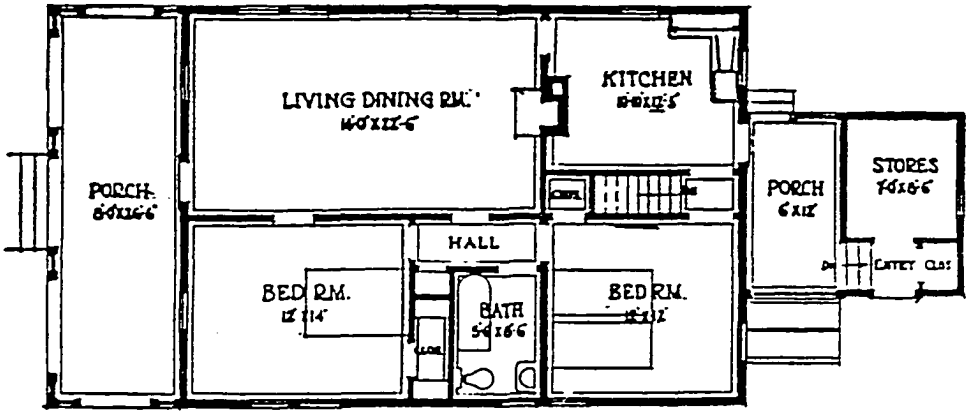

Figure 30. Plan 4 features and floor plan

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 557.)

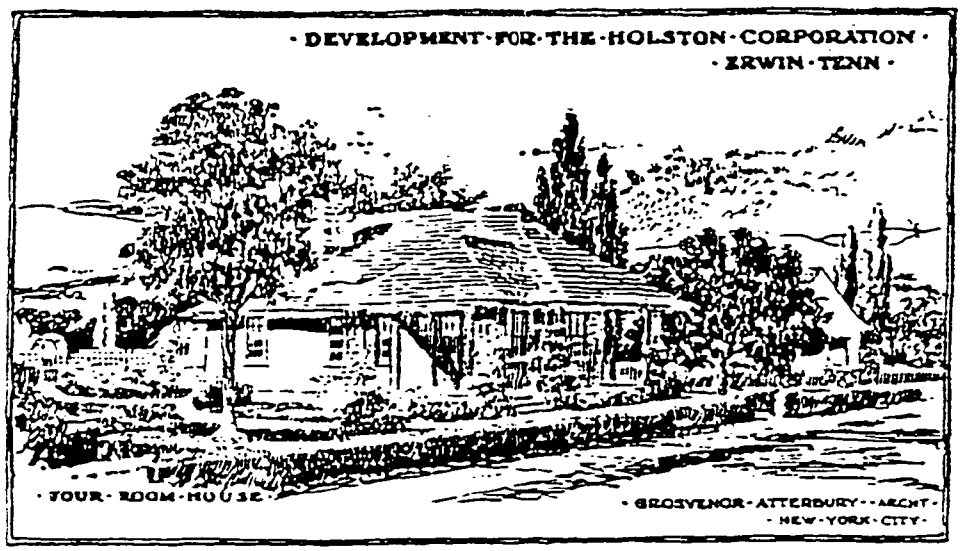

Figure 31. Plan 4 exterior and present appearance

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 557.)

Photograph by the author

-Two story floor plan
-Two bedrooms upstairs
-Large opening connecting living and dining rooms
-One bathroom located upstairs
-Corner fireplace located on interior living room wall
-Side entry hall and stairwell
-Kitchen located on back corner with enclosed porch and storage room
-Full front porch as shown in plan

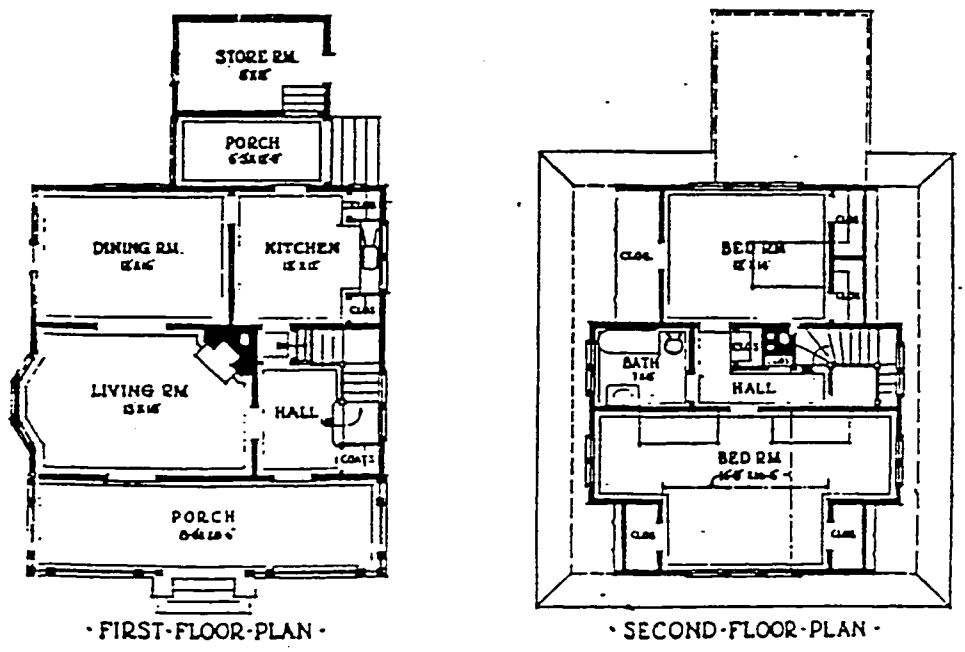

Figure 32. Plan 5 features and floor plan

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 552.)

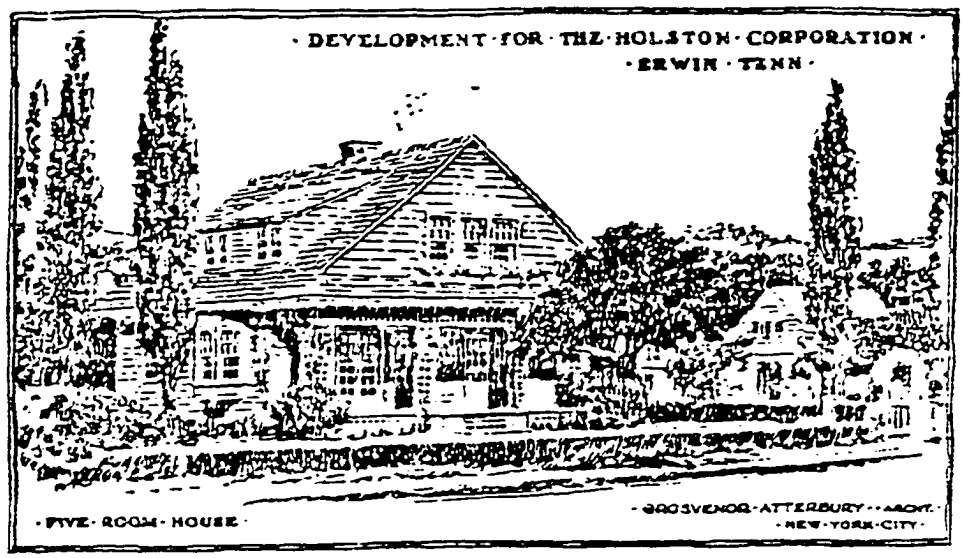

Figure 33. Plan 5 exterior and present appearance

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 552.)

Photograph by the author

-Two story floor plan
-Three bedrooms upstairs
-Separate living and dining rooms downstairs
-One bathroom located upstairs
-Two corner fireplaces located on exterior walls
-Central stairwell
-Kitchen located on back corner with enclosed porch and storage room
-Existing houses have a full front porch though plans show a half porch

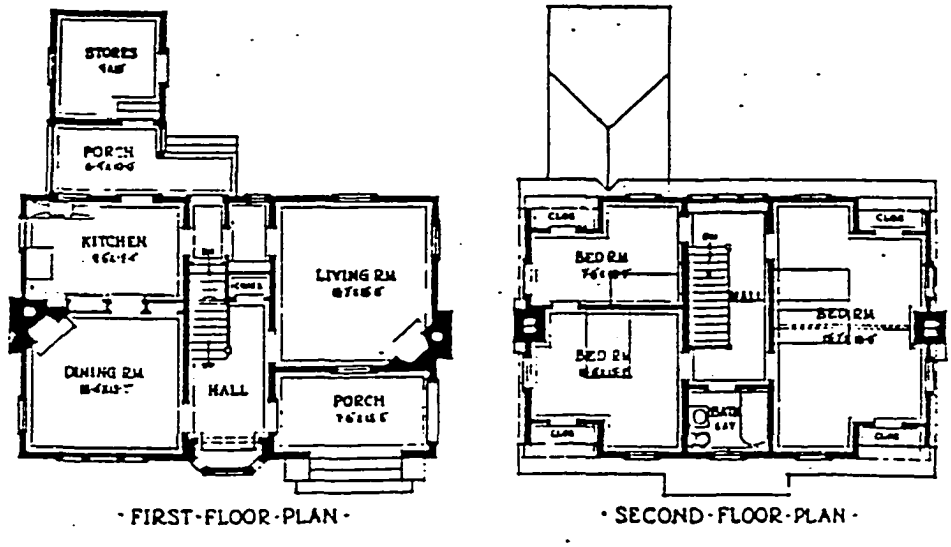

Figure 34. Plan 6 features and floor plan

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 553.)

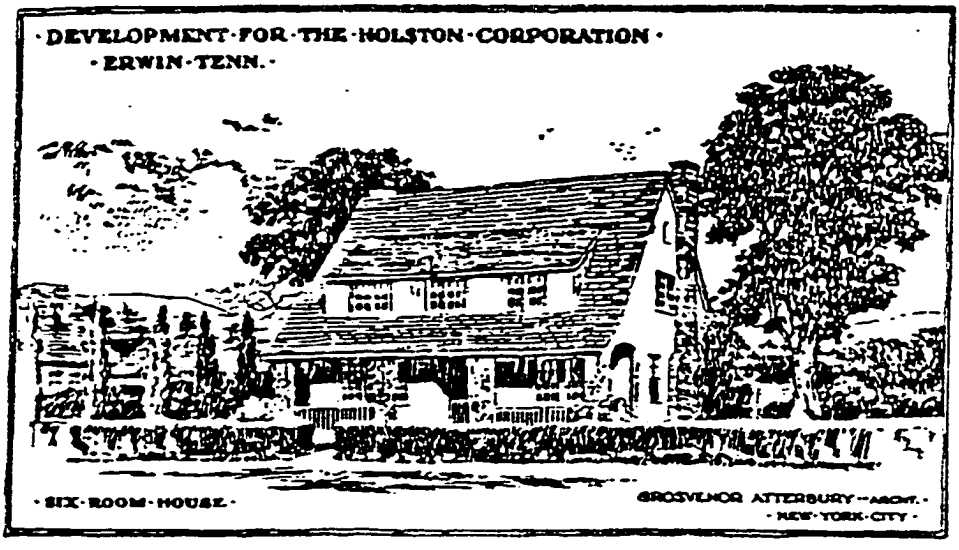

Figure 35. Plan 6 exterior and present appearance

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 553.)

Photograph by the author

Atterbury applied "scientific, aesthetic, and economic principles and methods to the problem of housing civilized humanity."[59]

Such Progressive ideas coincided with those of Gustav Stickley, whose magazine *Craftsman* proclaimed his American interpretation of the English Arts and Crafts movement of William Morris. The Craftsman period came on the heels of and in

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eight-room house, a duplex featuring seven rooms in each half, and another six-room house that had a bay window in its front elevation. Based on that Atterbury drawing, one can surmise that Veiller was somehow given the floor plan of the six-room house not selected by Holston Corporation instead of the floor plan for the six-room house that was chosen and built in Erwin.

[59]Ibid., 21. In the case of Erwin, Atterbury did so at a cost of ten cents per cubic foot. Both Lawrence Veiller and Charles May attributed this excellent situation to the location of the development and the timing of its construction. "Of course, this could not be repeated in the North and in these war times" [1918] writes Veiller, "Industrial Housing Developments," 559. May, "Indian Hill," 35, says the cost of Atterbury's Massachusetts houses which are comparable to those at Erwin had risen to nineteen cents in 1917 from sixteen cents in 1916, or from one and a half times to almost twice the price of the Erwin construction.

For those company owners conscious of their budgets and on tight construction schedules, the possibility of prefabricated housing represented one newly-available aid to their planned environment. The combined earlier developments of balloon-frame construction and a national railroad network meant materials could move from a central supply point to any place the tracks ran in the country. The mail-order catalogue supplier, Sears, Roebuck and Company in 1908 introduced twenty-two such balloon-frame houses, and for thirty years showed plans that could be ordered by its customers. The true leader in the field, however, both in terms of number of houses built and in years of operation was a company almost unknown today. Aladdin began operations in Bay City, Michigan, two years before Sears published its first house plans. Firmly established by the time World War I erupted in Europe, Aladdin supplied housing for companies like DuPont meeting war needs. The low cost of each unit made catalogue homes attractive to company owners while the variety of available designs kept these quickly-created company towns from looking monotonously regular. In this case, the prefabricated residences filled a niche created by extraordinary circumstances, but they did not have much effect upon the design ideas of company towns. For more details about prefabricated houses and the companies that made them, see Schweitzer and Davis, *America's Favorite Homes*, chapter 4, "Plan Books and Catalogue Homes."

reaction to the preceding Victorian era and covered roughly the years from the turn of the century to World War I.[60] Stickley had featured the Forest Hills Gardens development in a 1911 issue of *Craftsman*, and Atterbury, whose work Stickley "admired," designed bungalows with certain Craftsman-like features for Erwin. Similar to Stickley's own designs, Atterbury's in Tennessee emphasized a "respect for craftsmanship and . . . elimination of extraneous detail," two characteristics that appealed to the railroad officials then and that survive to this day.[61]

The exteriors of the houses might be of stucco, wood shingle, or some combination of the two. Such materials hark back to Craftsman characteristics and fulfill Atterbury's stated desire in model towns to demonstrate "the value of ornamental construction instead of constructive ornament, of the intelligent use of common inexpensive materials whose decorative value . . . ordinarily goes unrecognized."[62] The porches sported railings and lattice work; the roofs were to be wood shingles or tin. Because of the similarity in materials from one residence to another, the placement of the houses on their lots seemed aesthetically important. Atterbury made plans for this aspect, too, and combined it with his reasoning for economic purposes. As he had already

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[60]Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home*, 234-35, analyzes this shift in taste and decides five principles are at work to create this move to the "minimalist" model house: "The technological system became more complex, more costly, and more important as a criterion in house design. The kitchen became a central focus for the designer, and a different kind of room. Houses became simpler in outline and ornament, inside and out. Square-footage was dramatically reduced and, as the number of rooms and partitions declined, the floor plan opened up. Finally, houses became more alike in their plans and their general appearance, as the individuality of each dwelling (and, supposedly, that of the occupant) became less frantically emphasized."

[61]Mary Ann Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), 145 and 141.

[62]Atterbury, "Model Towns," 26.

argued in his 1912 article concerning Forest Hills Gardens, if he did not place houses in the same spot on every lot along a straight street, they might seem less rigidly alike and some of the lots might get by being smaller in dimension. A garden city design included space for parks as well, so the resident on the smaller lot should suffer no adverse effects. Efficient did not equate to detrimental in outcome in Atterbury's plans.

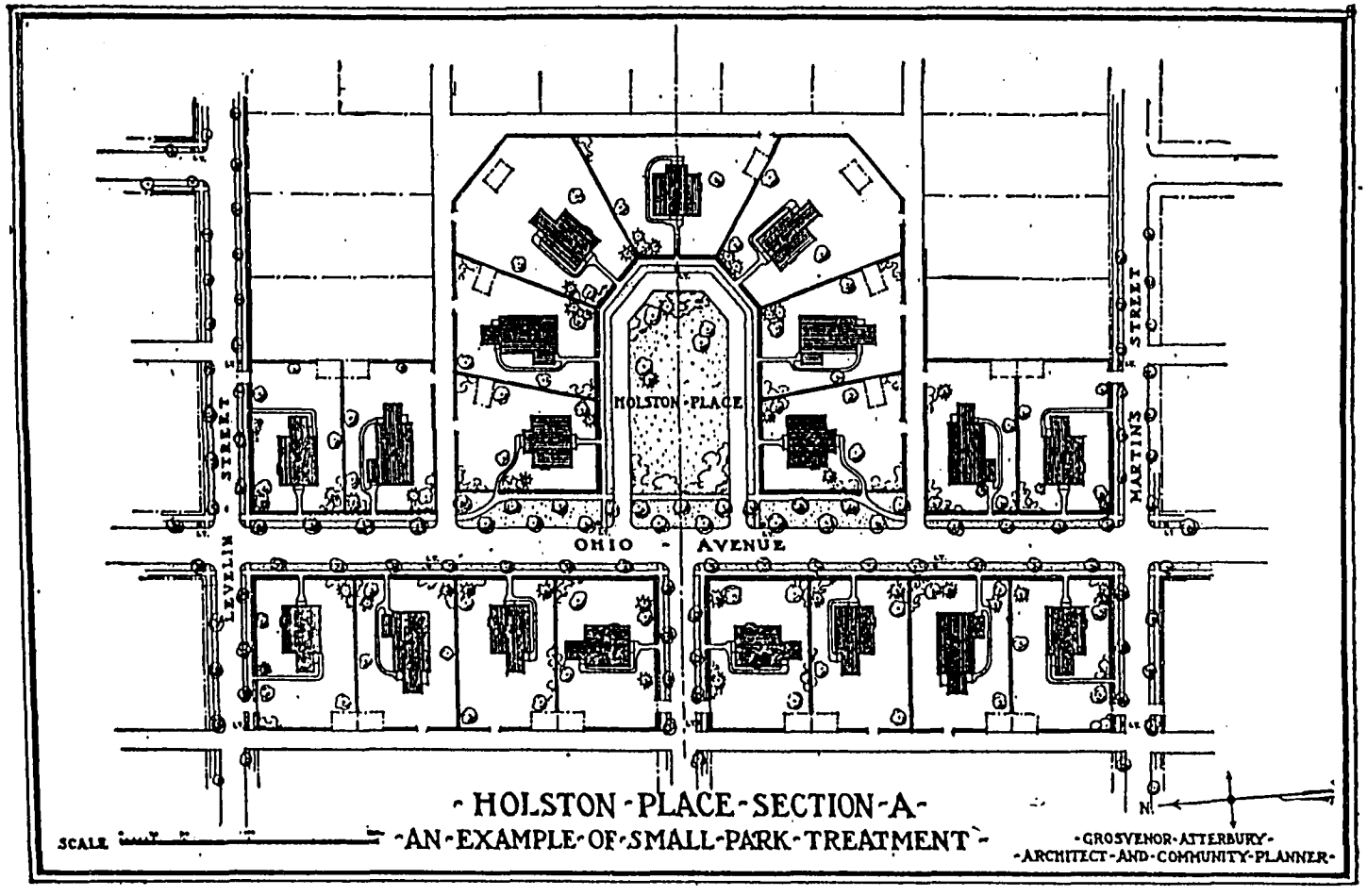
In terms of interior space, the three designs selected by Holston Corporation shared certain characteristics. In all three designs Atterbury placed the kitchen in the rear of the house, and no design included more than one bathroom. That being said, the three plans differed in size. Design 4, labeled a bungalow by Veiller, was smallest while the three-bedroom design 6 had most square footage. Over half of the forty-five residences built in the first stage copied design 5, the two-storied, two-bedroom house. Beyond those twenty-four buildings of design 5, the railroad company erected eleven of the largest and ten of the smallest. All ten of the design 4 can be found along Ohio Avenue near and in Holston Place and none in the section constructed along Ohio Avenue and Unaka Way facing it. There only two-story houses went up.

In the Holston Place and Ohio Avenue section (see Figure 26), the ratio of house types worked out to be five of design 6 (largest) to ten of design 4 (smallest) to fifteen of design 5 (medium), that is 5:10:15. The smallest design comprises one-third (10) of the houses in this stretch of the development; the remaining two-thirds (5+15) are two-story houses but set at different angles. In design 6, the roofline runs parallel to the street. In design 5, the gable end of the house faces the road. As a result, one-half of the houses in this section of the plan have rooflines at right angles to the curb (the fifteen of design 5) and half of the houses (the five of design 6 and the ten of design 4) have rooflines on the same axis as the road (since the bungalow is topped by a pyramidal roof). On the closely packed lots in this section of the planned community, such careful scaling and

arrangement makes for a visual mixture that creates a pleasing sense of more variety and space than is actually there.

The gem of the group from the beginning was the collection of seven houses on Holston Place (see Figure 36). Several different ideas at work here help to make the setting special. The road itself departs from and curves back to Ohio Avenue, shaping a tiny park in its middle upon which the houses look out. The seven lots fan out around that park and the house placement on each lot directly fronts its view of the green space. The chosen house-plan arrangement creates a mirror image as well. Whichever way you enter Holston Place the first, fourth, and seventh houses are copies of design 6; copies of design 5 sit opposite each other, as do copies of design 4. By design number, the group arrangement runs 6, 4, 5, 6, 5, 4, 6 from the corner of Holston Place and Ohio Avenue . Order without rigid repetition stands as the key and standard here. Atterbury planned other enclaves as well; two facing each other just east of Unaka Way are examples (see Figure 27). His plan also included one roundabout close to the northern end of the development and a repeat of its shape in a larger circle in the southern half of the plan (see Figure 25). This round green appears rimmed by house lots; it was cut across and encircled by two of the three major roads Veiller had described. This circling shape still dominates the landscape today just as Atterbury had intended. The house construction that commenced on the development's western side, though, did not continue as planned into the interior of Atterbury's model community, and houses did not rise around Atterbury's circular green space.

America's involvement in World War I and the weakening of the Progressive era after its conclusion played a part in the end of the Holston Corporation development. How much so has never been gauged. Certainly, though, the momentum needed to envision a community housing 30,000 or more people had dissipated. The forty-five



SEVEN HOUSES GROUPED AROUND A GREEN.

Figure 36. Seven Houses Grouped Around a Green

(Reprinted by permission of *Architectural Record*, from Lawrence Veiller, "Industrial Housing Development in America. Part IV. A Colony in the Blue Ridge Mountains at Erwin, Tennessee," 43 (June 1918), 554.)

residences constructed in 1917 during the project's first stage remained its only structures. The United States' active involvement in the war in Europe that year refocused the attention of railroad companies on helping to make the war effort successful. Lawrence Veiller had noted that even prior to Grosvenor Atterbury's involvement the CC&O intended to sell off undeveloped holdings. The idea of selling off land was retired, though, after Mark Potter brought the architect into the situation. Potter's resignation from the presidency of the CC&O and the Holston Corporation in 1920 following his appointment to the Interstate Commerce Commission may well have factored into the railroad's declining interest in the model community. Clearly a combination of changes beyond the control of people in Erwin ended any idea of completing the planned community that Atterbury had designed.

The Holston Corporation decided to sell the extant housing, and some resident renters bought their homes. T. G. McFall, for example, who came to the CC&O as general foreman in 1917, bought his Atterbury house (design 6) at 412 Unaka Way and lived there until his death in 1964 (see Figure 37). The railroad hoped to interest some other business enterprise in those houses the occupants did not buy. In April 1920, what had been Owen China Company in Minerva, Ohio, received a charter as the Southern Potteries, Inc., under E. J. Owens, president and plant manager, for its recently established location in Erwin, Tennessee. The new industry in town wanted rental housing for its skilled workers. At this point, the CC&O successfully extricated itself from its real estate venture by selling to Owens's company thirty-five of the Atterbury homes.[63] They have been referred to as the pottery houses ever since.

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[63]Albert L. Price, "Southern Potteries, Incorporated," in *Around Home in Unicoi County*, ed. William W. Helton (Johnson City, Tenn.: The Overmountain Press, 1986), 68, and West, *Tennessee's Historic Landscapes*, 177.

Figure 37. House type 6, former T. G. McFall residence on Unaka Way

Photographs by the author

CHAPTER 4

SEEKING INDUSTRIES, SETTING UP SHOP: ERWIN'S CIVIC CAPITALISM AND THE OPENING OF SOUTHERN POTTERIES

Erwin, Tennessee, stood transformed in 1920 from what it had been in 1900, and the momentum continued throughout the ensuing decade. The local leadership in the young county seat that had welcomed the railroad at the beginning of the twentieth century saw its vision of the community give way to new and different images that arrived with the New South and Progressive entrepreneurs. What had been a rural setting acquired urban characteristics. Historian Lisa Tolbert addresses the difficulties in using the terms "rural" and "urban" when talking of small towns, and she insists that "using the material, architectural evidence of change . . . can help to overcome the central problem of definition. . . ."[1] Though she concentrates on the antebellum town, Tolbert's solution applies to towns of later eras as well, as Margaret Ripley Wolfe's examination of Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee from 1890-1929 corroborates. Wolfe's definition of "urban" includes as one component the change in mood leading to the physical differentiation from "what had existed previously in the locale."[2] The changes in Erwin

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[1]Lisa C. Tolbert, *Constructing Townscapes: Space and Society in Antebellum Tennessee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 5 and 6.

[2]Margaret Ripley Wolfe, "Changing the Face of Southern Appalachia: Urban Planning in Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee, 1890-1929," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 47 (July 1981): 253. As Wolfe says, "Urban is relative." Comparison between Appalachian towns and Northeastern ones produces less insight than thinking of urban in terms of "the concentration of a few hundred or thousand individuals in a limited spatial arrangement wherein a sense of community or identity within that unit exists. It includes also the presence of a concerted attempt by some agency to provide for such basic human needs as shelter, transportation, food supply, health care, utilities, and gainful employment."

from "what had existed previously" provided visible manifestations of the civic capitalism that George L. Carter first introduced into upper East Tennessee in 1902 when he bought and reorganized the South and Western Railway. The later CC&O management and Erwin's business leaders continued to seek after new enterprises to bring to the region, and the arrival of Southern Potteries would, in turn, bring further transformations to the community.

"Civic capitalism" labels a specific economic and social phase in a place or region's development. Every part of the United States experienced this phase, though for varying lengths of time, before moving into what John Cumbler calls national capitalism. In his study of Trenton, New Jersey, Cumbler designates the last two decades of the nineteenth century as the height of that city's period of civic capitalism. His explanation of the age works well for other places too. Elemental to his definition of civic capitalism are like-minded entrepreneurs using technological advances to control their particular industry's markets and workers. These local captains of industry support their colleagues in other, adjacent enterprises, sitting on each other's boards and drawing in local elites who own banks and newspapers. Together this tightly intertwined knot of people plans and acts, though for diverse reasons, for the community's best interests. These are "the makers and the shakers," seemingly in cooperative control of their present economic situation and responsible for the future of the community, while also caring first and

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By inference, Wolfe's definition for the southern Appalachian region links urbanization to industrialization, making them, in Richard Wade's words, "almost two sides of the same coin of modernity," a view he warns does not hold true in every region; see Richard C. Wade, "An Agenda for Urban History," in *American History: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. George Athan Billias and Gerald N. Grob (New York: Free Press, 1971), 367-98, quotation from 372.

foremost for their own companies' best interests. National capitalism marks the economic shift away from that local autonomy.[3]

As railroads helped spread capitalism in rural regions, those areas underwent experiences similar to Trenton's.[4] The South's later development of towns following its long period of agricultural dominance meant its phase of civic capitalism emerged a little later (but the shortness of the lag provides an example of the speed-up effect produced by industrialization). In his study of four urban areas in the New South, Don Doyle uses the phrase "business class" to mean the same as Cumbler's New Jersey entrepreneurs exercising civic capitalism. Doyle's "local business leaders became a class, a social entity bound by a similar view of the world, by common interests, and by associations and instruments of power that could advance those interests. . . . a class imbued with shared values that welded self-seeking individualism to ideals of community progress."[5] Doyle examines these "new men" in the cities of Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, and Mobile in the New South era. The differing results of their efforts reflect less upon their civic capitalist characteristics than upon their respective locales with their own distinctive histories. And though the urban South met with some success in this first period of boosterism, the recurrence of booster periods in the twentieth century suggests

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[3]John T. Cumbler, *A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics, and Work in Trenton* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 3-5, and see chapter 2, "The Golden Era: Civic Capitalism," with regard specifically to Trenton.

[4]See Carroll Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier: Billings and the Yellowstone Valley in the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993) for an example of civic capitalism in the high plains during the late nineteenth century.

[5]Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*, Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 19.

that the move into national capitalism either took longer in this region or was not recognized as such until recently.[6]

In upper East Tennessee, civic capitalism arrived along with Carter's railroad tracks, and its chief proponent supported its tenets both at Erwin and Kingsport. Carter's background made him a native son of the region, since he hailed from Hillsville, county seat of Carroll County, located in southwestern Virginia.[7] After initial monetary success through mining developments in Virginia, Carter's business endeavors spread to West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, where he purchased railroads and vast acreage along proposed train routes. He embodied Doyle's definition of a business leader, in a non-urban setting, and he attracted men who thought in similar fashion. In fact, Kingsport, Tennessee, grew into an excellent example of full-blown civic capitalism because of Carter's associates who settled there.[8]

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[6]Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South 1920-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 126, examines this booster impulse of commercial-civic leaders during the 1920s and finds them "anxious to reconcile growth with order, diversity with unity, and change with stability--to guide their cities into a metropolitan world while retaining control of that world--through notions of *local* patriotism, civic consensus, and a corporate urban community."

The realization that the South is part of the nation's "sun belt" has created the most recent period of booster activity. In each of these cases, the idea of retaining local control while simultaneously building profits and power through out-of-region markets remains both an important and impossible achievement.

[7]Carter desired privacy, as noted by James A. Goforth, *Building the Clinchfield: A Construction History of America's Most Unusual Railroad*, 2d ed. (Erwin, Tenn.: GEM Publishers, 1989), 102. A full biography of George L. Carter, therefore, has yet to appear, but some information on his family background and his business accomplishments up to age 50, can be found in *Men of Mark in Virginia*, 1906-09, s.v. "Carter, George Lafayette."

[8]For the best source for detailed information on Kingsport's development, see Margaret Ripley Wolfe, *Kingsport, Tennessee: A Planned American City* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987).

One associate, Carter's brother-in-law, J. Fred Johnson, came from the region, being a native of Hillsville, Virginia, like Carter. The other, John B. Dennis, born and raised in Maine, brought financial connections through his years working for Blair and Company in New York City. These two men, already in place by the time Carter cut his ties to Kingsport in 1914, developed the small town into a small city through their Kingsport Improvement Corporation (KIC). As model civic capitalists, Dennis and Johnson recognized the importance of the CC&O railroad both because it ran through their community and because its stockholders invested in that community. They also understood the need to entice other industries to locate to their portion of track siding. By the end of 1915, Dennis and Johnson had contacted landscape architect John Nolen of Cambridge, Massachusetts, regarding a design for the city they envisioned. Over the next five years some industrialists brought by KIC to view Kingsport decided to build plants there. George Eastman's decision in 1920 to construct an Eastman Kodak complex at Kingsport looked even then like the coup for Kingsport it turned out to be. The facility's production of chemicals used in the manufacture of photographic film introduced a modern industry with a long future into the region. The next year, Johnson's efforts to run a branch of Lee Highway (later U.S. 11W) through the town succeeded. This route, labeled U. S. Highway 11, stretched from New Orleans to New York City and meant the arrival in Kingsport of automobiles and their passengers from distant places. A federal highway also ensured at least one paved road in town. The men of the KIC involved themselves in providing utilities, separate medical facilities for blacks and whites, and building supply companies for Kingsport. Improving services meant better appeal to companies looking to locate there, and by 1931 fifteen large industries operated in Kingsport.[9] Such industrial expansion meant more business for the business leaders'

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[9]William Way Jr., *The Clinchfield Railroad: The Story of a Trade Route across*

already established endeavors. And the KIC attempted to maintain control through its personal connections via board involvement in the different enterprises.

Erwin, Tennessee, did not have the equivalent of a KIC, but it experienced civic capitalism nonetheless. For example, when members of the First Baptist Church of Erwin organized a school in 1907, the CC&O donated the land for it. Having a good school that included grades 1-12 might attract industrialists interested in an educated work force. Unaka Academy added a dormitory in 1914 and named it Holston Hall, perhaps reflecting another connection with the railroad's Holston Corporation. Two years later in 1916, the county purchased these academy facilities for its first public high school.[10] A new public high school replaced the Unaka Academy site in 1929, on land given by the Holston Corporation adjacent to Atterbury houses on Unaka Way.

The decision by the CC&O's Holston Corporation to seek a development design from Grosvenor Atterbury in 1916 parallels the decision to employ John Nolen in Kingsport to lay out that community. The Progressive attitude of environmental determinism overlapped with civic capitalism's position of meeting simultaneously the community and the companies' best interests. In Erwin the Holston Corporation requested of Atterbury a planned residential area capable of housing thirty thousand to forty thousand people, though the railroad would never need so many employees. Instead, Carter's successors continued his strategy for populating the region and supporting the railroad by encouraging industries to locate along its route. In 1916, as Margaret Ripley Wolfe recounts, "representatives from Villa and Brothers, a silk

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the Blue Ridge Mountains (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1931), 207.

[10]William H. Helton, *Around Home in Unicoi County* (Johnson City, Tenn.: Overmountain Press, 1986), 82 and 83.

company on Madison Avenue in New York City" turned down the idea of setting up shop in Kingsport.[11] Eventually the management at Villa and Brothers reconsidered their decision and modified it by establishing a silk mill facing Carolina Avenue in Erwin. Their Tennessee branch, called A. P. Villa & Bros., paid 125 employees (mostly women) in 1924, making it Erwin's third largest employer at that time.[12]

The railroad's payroll dwarfed all others (see Appendix 3), but Southern Potteries functioned as Erwin's second largest industry throughout its existence. Representatives of these two business enterprises signed an agreement on 10 July 1916 (see Appendix 2) with regard to construction by the CC&O of a side track to the pottery site, not far from where A. P. Villa would later locate. Potters were in place within a year, and in 1920 Southern Potteries bought from the railroad thirty-five of the Atterbury houses situated a few blocks from the factory. By 1922 when the original owner of the pottery, E. J. Owens, sold it to Charles W. Foreman, demand for the dinnerware produced there justified the construction of two additional kilns. Three feldspar grinding factories, some lumber mills, along with a furniture factory, a porcelain manufacturing plant, and the silk mill went up near Southern Potteries, "the first pottery plant established south of the Mason-Dixon line," in the early 1920s.[13] These enterprises located along the railroad tracks, but in 1923 much talk circulated through the community about a highway planned between Cincinnati and Asheville. Moccasin Gap Road, if it became a reality and its route went through Erwin, would put the town on road atlases and surely bring it more

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[11]Wolfe, *Kingsport*, 90.

[12]Edwin L. Webb, *City Directory of Erwin and Suburbs* (n.p., 1924), Preface page (see Appendix 3).

[13]Ibid., and Way, *Clinchfield Railroad*, 208.

attention among the growing group of car owners who traveled away from home in their automobiles.[14]

The building momentum led Erwin's business leaders to invest in several projects over the next few years. In 1924, Edwin L. Webb, an officer and director of the Toney Insurance Agency in Erwin compiled a city directory. Along with names and addresses, the directory included statistics and the claim that Erwin's population of "approximately 5,000" showed a gain of 96 percent since 1920 (see Appendix 3). Boosters viewed such an increase as an advantage in attracting industries. Shortly after the directory's publication, the leadership in the town's businesses formed a Chamber of Commerce and elected as its first president the general manager of the pottery. In 1926 a new building constructed for the YMCA greatly increased its space.[15] The Presbyterian Church expanded and redesigned its sanctuary at about the same time.[16] Here was a town on the march.

A map of Erwin drawn up in 1906 by Carter's South and Western Railway had shown a town, three blocks long and four blocks wide, with roads petering out toward the corporation lines (see Figure 9). That small area remained Erwin's central core in the

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[14]*Erwin Weekly Magnet*, 15 November 1923. The placement of the story in the front-page column for major news in this weekly paper indicates the excitement generated by talk of such roads. Nothing, however, came of the plans for the Moccasin Gap Road.

[15]This information comes from studying the 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Erwin that shows its old YMCA space on the second floor of a building facing Union Street and the new brick, two-story YMCA building with gymnasium at the corner of Tucker and Main. The very fact that Erwin had its first Sanborn maps drawn in 1925 speaks to its growing size and importance.

[16]The new sanctuary was dedicated on 24 July 1927, as reported in the *Erwin Magnet-Times*, 26 July 1927.

1920s and continues as such to the present time. The courthouse, situated and constructed in 1876, did not command the town's most central location. Its placement at the corner of Gay and Main Streets facing the main thoroughfare (instead of being circled by it) added to the linear aspect of the town and made it similar to counterparts in neighboring counties.[17] Erwin fronted on the confluence of Indian Creek and the Nolichucky River in a mountain valley surrounded by mountainous terrain. This topography suggests a long and narrow town plan, what Richard Francavaglia calls a river town plan.[18] But Erwin's original layout stretched as far away from the river as it did along it. The railroad's presence from the beginning of the twentieth century immediately overshadowed the river in importance. The placement of the tracks resulted from the area's topography, but the site of Erwin's first depot helped determine the

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[17]Central courthouse squares, for which Tennessee is known, developed in Middle Tennessee before the Civil War but did not appear in upper East Tennessee. For more information on central courthouse squares, see Edward T. Price, "The Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat," in *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, 124-45 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's Historic Landscapes: A Traveler's Guide* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 339; and Tolbert, *Constructing Townscapes*.

[18]Richard V. Francaviglia, *Main Street Revisited: Time, Space, and Image Building in Small-Town America*, American Land and Life Series, ed. Wayne Franklin (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 92, writes: "There is a distinctive river town morphology. . . . Main Street usually runs parallel--but is one block away from--the river; thus the backs of the stores, rather than their facades, face the river. Oftentimes the railroad will lie between the waterfront and the first block of businesses. Rather than relating to a public square or park, Main Street and the commercial district stretch along the river in a decidedly linear arrangement. If a river town were also a county seat, the courthouse would likely be peripheral to Main Street for two reasons. First, many river towns gained county-seat status after they were well established. . . . Second, it is highly unlikely that a river town would morphologically develop around any square, since the focus of the town is a linear interface with the river.

downtown's future development. Historian John Hudson's description of the "crossed T" town design could have been written for Erwin. That railroad-town plan evolved in the high plains, appearing first in 1905, and its timing matched Erwin's emergence as a railroad center. Placement of the tracks and adjacent depot between the river and Main Street allowed future growth to extend Main Street both north and south. Because the depot was a block off Main Street, however, an equal emphasis in land development occurred on the side streets near the depot crossing Main.[19] The 1909 depot's location between the cross streets of Gay and Water (later Union) helped them to develop with Main Street into Erwin's business core. The 1925 Sanborn map of Erwin (see Figure 38) clearly shows that development along with the new site of the 1925 depot a bit south of the old depot's location.

Grosvenor Atterbury, the architect whom the railroad hired in 1916 to draw a General Plan, made clear his reading of the railroad's importance in the town (see Figure 22). He proposed tying in his residential section (located some distance southeast of Main Street) to the existing settlement via landscaping along Opekiska Street, and this road terminated near the railroad station, a good three blocks south of the courthouse. In Atterbury's plan Opekiska became one side of a triangularly-shaped public park placed in front of what Atterbury proposed as the site for a train station. By this design, the

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[19]John C. Hudson, *Plains Country Towns* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 90, explains: "The single business street of the T-town lacked sufficient differentiation along its length to permit one intersection to stand out as more important. In 1905, the Soo line began a variation on the T-town form by platting business lots a few blocks up the cross street away from the principal intersection. . . . The "crossed-T" form was a better anchor on business locations and produced a tighter cluster nearest the center, where lots were most expensive. Banks were almost forced to locate on one of the corner lots at this intersection, following the popular idea that this is where they belonged."

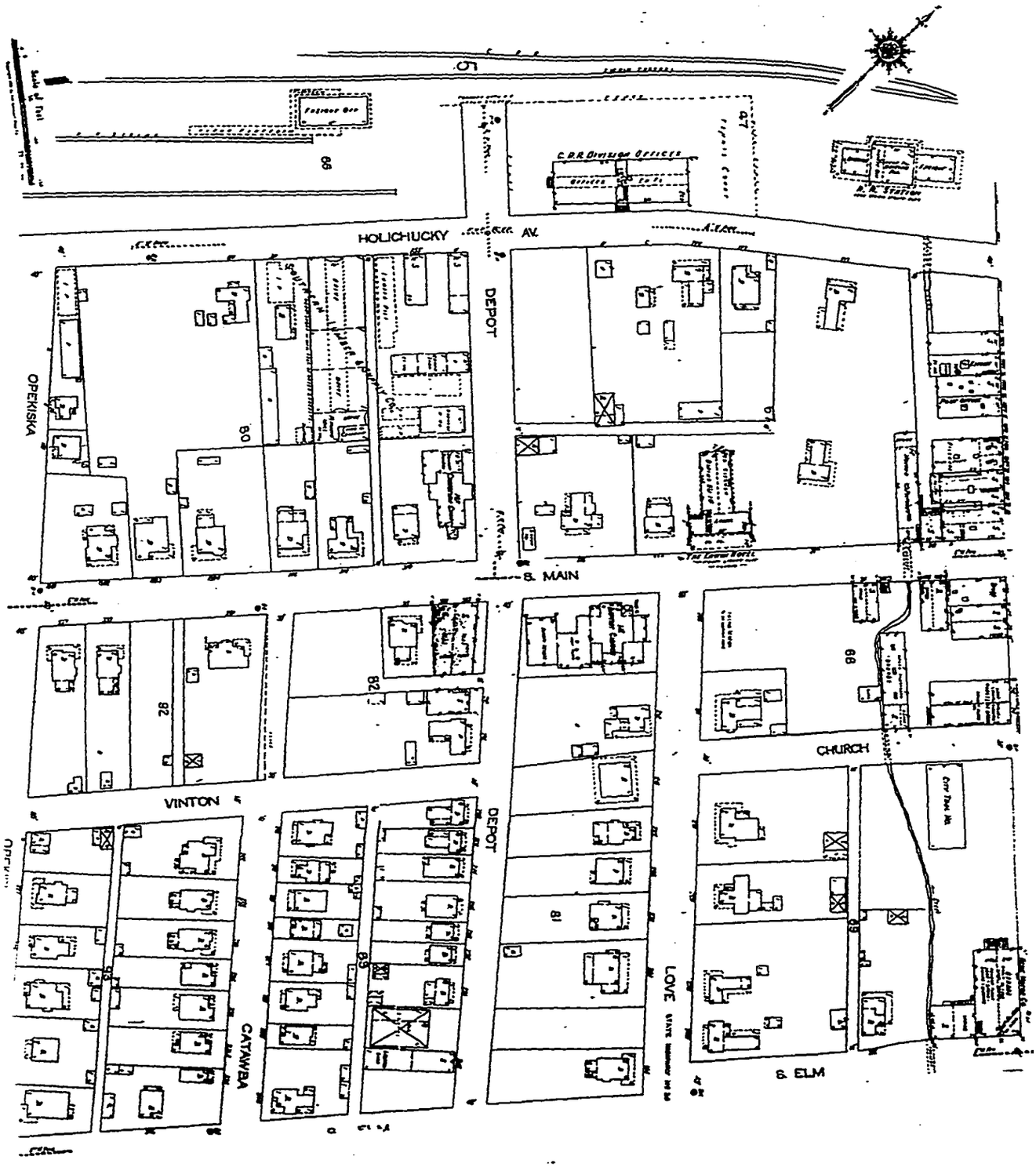
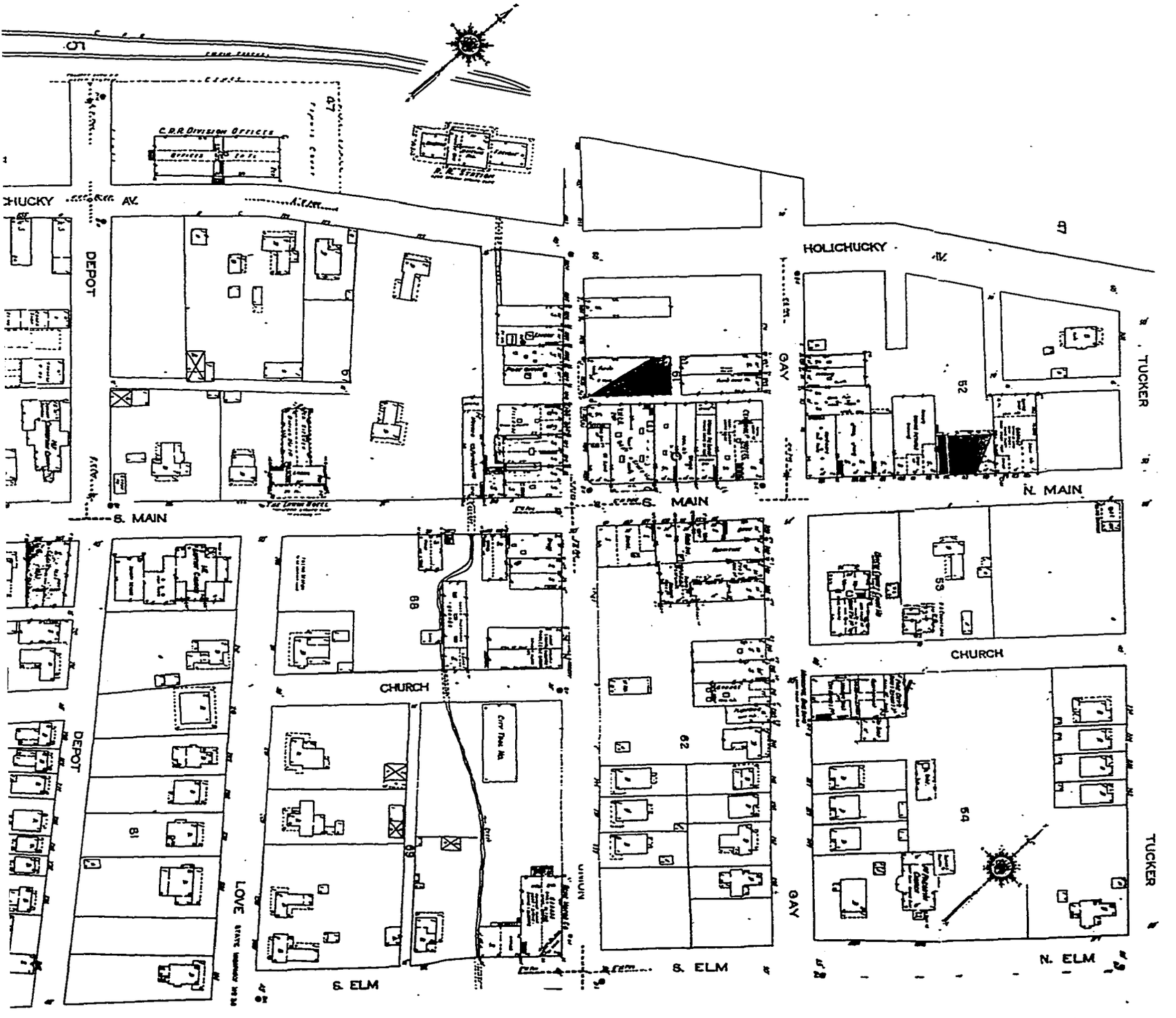


Figure 38. Main Street, Erwin
(Source: 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance map)



in Street, Erwin
m Fire Insurance map)

railroad provided Atterbury another gateway and approach to his planned model community, but, in effect, Atterbury's idea suggested the railroad's centrality without making a similar nod to the courthouse. As matters turned out, though, this portion of Atterbury's drawing did not materialize. The depot in the 1910s became the freight office and was moved when the railroad built a new station that opened in 1925 during Erwin's boom period. Instead of placing the new station near Opekiska Street, however, the railroad sited it just south of Union Street. As a result, a number of businesses chose to maintain their locations along Union between the new depot and Main Street. The Erwin Hotel went up just south of the business area and in front of the station, but the area around Opekiska remained residential.

In this town led by men committed to capitalism, the center was commercial, with government offices, churches, schools, and the oldest residential areas ringing it.[20] The railroad, however, was its driving force, expanding the town along its tracks to the south in the 1910s in order to create an industrial section and a new model residential area adjacent to it. Physical evidence of the railroad's continuing commitment to its own needs and to its town's arose during the 1920s as well. The new station of 1925 differed

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[20]The commercial enterprises clumped along the south side of Main between Gay and Union Streets and along the north side of Main from its intersection with Tucker south to its intersection at Depot. Businesses also located west of Main on both sides of Gay and Union Streets going towards the railroad corridor and river beyond it, which stopped further expansion in that direction. If one imagines the block of Main Street from Gay to Union as the core, then radiating out from it appears first the County Courthouse and the Municipal Building, going east on Gay. Next comes a "ring" of churches, with the Methodist and Presbyterian sites north and east and the Baptist and Christian ones south of the core. The Erwin community built its schools and the hospital (the first one began in a former school building) beyond the churches. From north to south, the Elm Street and Love Street Elementary Schools and the County High School serviced the residential areas constructed outside the center in response to the town's growth in population.

from its predecessor by being considerably larger and by featuring Craftsman elements that made it more attractive than the plain building it replaced (see Figures 39 and 40). Just south of the new station, the railroad's General Offices building, built ten years earlier in 1915, received a third-floor expansion and other improvements, and in 1926 the rest of the railroad offices that had operated in Johnson City since 1907 moved permanently into this new space in Erwin.

The town's newspaper, called the *Erwin Magnet-Times* in this period, highlighted both the apparent progress and the natural appeal of the community in its 30 May 1927 major front-page article entitled "Industrial Survey of The City of Erwin." The impressive statistics of this piece, designed to attract clients, encapsulate the booster mentality.[21] Town and business leaders had reason to feel proud. In the fifty years since its founding in 1876, Erwin had absorbed change via the railroad, survived, and recently prospered. Beneath the standard headings in the newspaper article, pointed comments attempted to articulate Erwin's distinctiveness, while in some places making it appear instead like the stereotypical New South and Progressive eras town. For example, under Labor:

> Erwin has an abundant supply of native white labor which is, to a high degree, efficient and adaptable for all classes of industries. White labor only, is used in our industrial plants. Labor conditions are ideal. Industries of this section draw their labor supply mainly, from the mountain flok [*sic*] who are of the purest Anglo-Saxon stock. These people have had little means of livelihood and they

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[21]The headings within the article include: Location, Climate, Typography, Population, Passenger Transportation (including Railway, Motor Bus, and Highways), Financial Data, Communication Systems (including Telephone, Post Office, and Western Union Telegraph), Power Supply, Water Supply, Sewage System, Labor, Raw Materials, Adaptability of Erwin for Ceramic and Textile Industries, Cost of Living, Educational Facilities, Hospitals, Theatres and Amusements, Newspaper, Taxes, Churches, Chamber of Commerce, City Government, Agricultural, and Industrial.

Figure 39. Clinchfield Depot (constructed 1925)

Photograph by the author

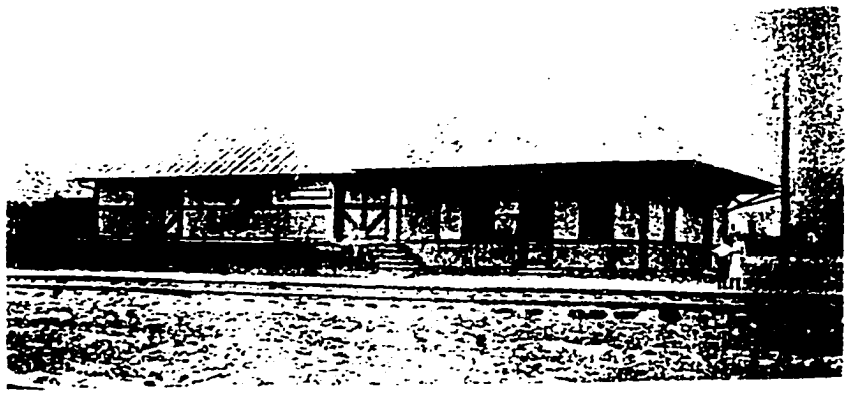

Figure 40. 1909 depot in Erwin

(Source: *Erwin Observer*, Clinchfield Goodwill Edition, 25 July 1940

> welcome the opportunity of moving into an industrial community. Once established, they rarely go back to the mountains or leave the city to seek and engage in other lines of work. Our type and class of labor is admittedly the best, most satisfactory and most efficient in all respects, that can be obtained. Our labor is free from the influences of a foreign element and is not prone to be swayed by radical views.[22]

Company owners with a desire to avoid union activists, immigrant labor, or an African-American presence had nothing to fear in Erwin.[23]

Even as the town displayed these various signs of successful southern civic capitalism, however, the demise of local economic control was already well underway. Erwin's largest employers brought into action what John Cumbler calls national capitalism, "with its home offices and stockholders and managers and self-generating finances [that] eclipsed civic capitalism's local entrepreneurs."[24] In 1924, the CC&O owners reached an agreement with the Atlantic Coast Line and its subsidiary, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. The resulting lease of the 277 miles of CC&O track by the two larger entities ended both the CC&O's autonomy and its name. In a curious twist the line's new official name reflected George L. Carter's original focus: the Clinchfield region of Virginia and Kentucky that he hoped to open to mining. As part of

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[22]H. K. Fox, Secretary, Chamber of Commerce, "Industrial Survey of The City of Erwin," *Erwin Magnet-Times*, 30 May 1927, 2.

[23]Sinclair Lewis, *Cheap and Contented Labor: The Picture of a Southern Mill Town in 1929* (New York: United Textile Workers of America and Women's Trade Union League, 1929), 14, in explaining why the small business men do not support workers' demands for more wages gives a less complimentary description of civic capitalism in southern mill towns: "the mills control the banks, the banks control the loans to small business men, the small business men are the best customers of the professional men. . . ." As the bottom layer in such a pecking order, Lewis would disagree with the description that Erwin's "labor conditions are ideal."

[24]Cumbler, *Social History of Economic Decline*, 5.

the lease agreement with the ACL and L&N, from 1 January 1925, everyone called the tracks that ran between Elkhorn City and Spartanburg the Clinchfield Railroad.[25]

Although much smaller than the Clinchfield in terms of employment figures and income generated, Erwin's second largest industry, Southern Potteries produced its own impact upon the community. As an industry, manufacturers of pottery have distinctive characteristics. Their dependent relationship on tariffs, for example, puts potteries that produce significant quantities of dinnerware in large part outside the domain of local economic factors. Southern Potteries' presence and successful operations by the 1920s, therefore, helped draw Erwin into the national market economy beyond local business leaders' control. But they could brag about the pottery's achievements in order to generate interest in Erwin among other company owners. The opening line of the "Industrial Survey" article from the *Erwin Magnet-Times* read "Erwin, Tennessee, 'Ceramic Center of the South,'" and in terms of whiteware mass produced for dinnerware the claim rang true.

Along with that economic impact, the development of the pottery had other effects on Erwin. The arrival of E. J. Owens and his skilled potters from Ohio introduced a new element into the population. The incoming workers were British in origin and were skilled employees trained in a craft tradition. As Frank Thistlethwaite observed in

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[25]This first step towards absorption was not followed by another for over half a century, but the merger in 1982 of the L&N and Seaboard Coast Line into the Seaboard System Railroad ended the Clinchfield's separate identity, and it became a division of that system. In under two years the Seaboard System abolished the Clinchfield Division, so that by 1984 the railroad offices in Erwin lost all significance. The Seaboard System itself ceased to exist following its merger into the CSX in 1987; see George H. Drury, *The Historical Guide to North American Railroads* (Milwaukee: Kalmach Books, 1985, second printing 1988), 98. Though CSX remains Erwin's largest single employer in the 1990s (tied, ironically, for that position with Nuclear Fuel Services), its payroll of 300 is much reduced from the almost 2,000 employees listed in the 1924 Erwin city directory.

Economic History Review, establishing America's pottery industry required relatively small expenses in facilities and equipment, but success depended upon "the immigration of 'practical potters', men with generations of potting in their blood, journeyman-graduates of an exacting apprenticeship, with an instinct for the chemistry of clays, sensitive to texture and form, skilled in throwing, turning, in the making of moulds and in decorating."[26] The British had dominated the pottery industry at home and abroad throughout the nineteenth century, but émigrés to the United States had enabled pottery centers that emerged in Ohio and New Jersey to seize the majority of the American market by the century's close. In 1917, Owens brought his group to the South. Although some parts of the pottery-making process had been mechanized by 1917, industrialization did not automatically connect Southern Potteries with other types of operations that also underwent mechanization in the South. The levels of expertise displayed by people working in a pottery factory varied from those required in textile mills and tobacco factories. While the railroad's encouragement of industries from outside the region to locate in Erwin made the town appear typical of the times, the pottery actually helped to distinguish Erwin from other New South and Progressive era towns.

"Potters traditionally have been wanderers," and E. J. Owens proved Thistlethwaite's point.[27] Born in England around 1865, Edward J. (or Ted) Owens learned the potter's craft in Stoke-on-Trent, the central town of the Potteries region of North Staffordshire in England. Within thirty square miles are located the pottery factories that Richard Whipp claims "accounted for almost one-third of the world's

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[26]Frank Thistlethwaite, "The Atlantic Migration of the Pottery Industry," *Economic History Review*, Second Series, ll, no. 2 (1958-59): 265 and 269.

[27]Ibid., 269.

ceramic export market" in 1900. But Stoke's population and purpose proved to be even more concentrated. With four-fifths of the nation's pottery employees residing in the immediate vicinity of Stoke-on-Trent, this region and these workers accounted for 90 percent of Britain's pottery production at the time.[28] The pottery industry had dominated this part of Staffordshire for more than two centuries, particularly after the innovations and marketing by Josiah Wedgwood in the mid-eighteenth century.[29] His pottery's development of cream-colored earthenware, or creamware, led not only to its rise to preeminence in the field but also to more and rapid improvements in dinnerware production and design.[30] Pottery owners' attempts to install labor-saving machinery in the 1840s failed, but in the face of that threat a sporadic exodus of potters to America

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[28]Richard Whipp, *Patterns of Labour: Work and Social Change in the Pottery Industry* (London: Routledge, 1990), 11.

[29]For some examination of Wedgwood's techniques in both ceramics and selling, see George L. Miller, "Classification and Economic Scaling of Nineteenth-Century Ceramics," 173, and Mary Praetzellis, Adrian Praetzellis, and Marley R. Brown III, "What Happened to the Silent Majority? Research Strategies for Studying Dominant Group Material Culture in late Nineteenth-Century California," 194, both in *Documentary Archaeology in the New World*, ed. Mary C. Beaudry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[30]From creamware the English shortly developed pearlware in the 1780s. Both represented purified or highly refined types of earthenware, and the American colonies and later the new republic imported these wares and regarded them as signs of wealth and class. American settlers also knew well the red earthenware that required less grinding and advanced preparation and could be fired at a lower temperature. Because of its easy production, most American-made pottery used daily through much of the nineteenth century consisted of some type of red earthenware. See James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1977), chapter 3, "All the Earthenware Plain and Flowered," for further information on earthenware developments in England and in America as well as for Deetz's analysis of America's cultural "re-Anglicization" beginning in mid-eighteenth century.

occurred for the rest of the nineteenth century. These wanderers encountered higher wages but also lowered expectations of craftsmanship. Although they did not avoid the push for mechanization by immigrating, that fact did not halt their movements.[31] British potters went to American potteries, which had located near the natural resources necessary to meet the needs of a commercial pottery. Prior to 1850, suitable clays in Bennington, Vermont, Jersey City, New Jersey, and East Liverpool, Ohio, led to successful potteries producing yellow tableware and toiletware.

The British, however, commanded the largest part of the American market in tableware in this time. Following their progress in creamware and pearlware, the English had perfected ironstone, a dense, hard-bodied ware with a pure white body. Ironstone provided one type of whiteware, a general term that could be applied as easily to white earthenware as to semi-porcelain. As the preparation and firing techniques of the English improved and resulted in fewer distinctions among their pottery types, differentiation among English pieces depended upon their decoration instead. Before 1850, the highest-priced decorated dinnerware resulted from transfer printing. This method made it "possible to have intricately decorated and exactly matching pieces at a cost far below similar hand painted pieces."[32] After 1850 in the United States, however, Herman John Stratton claims undecorated ironstone became just as popular as the English pottery with

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[31]Roland Tappan Berthoff, *British Immigrants in Industrial America, 1790-1950* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 75, and Thistlethwaite, "Atlantic Migration," 274-75. In fact, as Thistlethwaite notes (272), in 1872 immigrant English potters and their families comprised almost all of the population of 2,500 of East Liverpool, Ohio. More than twenty years later in 1895 in East Liverpool, wrote Thistlethwaite (276), "the very great majority of the population of 15,000 were first or second generation English."

[32]Miller, "Classification and Economic Scaling of Nineteenth-Century Ceramics," 174 and 175.

transfer printing had been, and then the Civil War deprived Americans of imported tableware. In combination, these various factors led to marked changes in the goods produced by American potteries in the second half of the nineteenth century.[33] The opportunity to expand their share of the dinnerware market compelled these businesses to master whiteware production. In this endeavor New Jersey led the way, and Trenton emerged as its leading pottery city. The East Liverpool, Ohio, potteries ventured into whiteware only in 1872, while Vermont potters chose not to join in this latest round of competition.

Almost as soon as the New Jersey and Ohio potteries mastered the undecorated whiteware desired by the American consumer, however, they had to make modifications to keep that market. A change in the public's attitude toward dinnerware occurred as a result of the ceramic displays at the Philadelphia Exhibition. This fair, officially titled the United States Centennial International Exhibition of 1876, commemorated the centennial of the Declaration of Independence while it also signaled the United States' desire to be viewed as a world power equivalent to European nations. Exhibits to emphasize the latter placed foreign and domestic goods in close proximity, and their appeal to visitors, whatever their nationality, complemented each other. Two nineteenth-century ceramics authorities differed, though, in their evaluations of the impact of the Centennial Exhibition on the American pottery industry. The United States Potters' Association report from their third convention, held in 1877, indicated that dealers viewing American pottery in Philadelphia had found it equal in quality to English

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[33]Herman John Stratton, "Factors in the Development of the American Pottery Industry, 1860-1929" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1929), 10-11 and 5-6, and Thistlethwaite, "Atlantic Migration," 272-73.

products.[34] Historian Edwin Atlee Barber recalled, however, in *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, that "the revelations of the Centennial Exhibition set our potters to thinking and stimulated them to greater competition."[35] Exhibits from Germany, England, France, and Japan, among others, caught the attention of the fair's visitors, leading to almost immediate results in increased interest in china painting as a hobby.[36]

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[34]Don A. Shotliff, "The History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry: The National Brotherhood of Operative Potters-International Brotherhood of Operative Potters, 1890-1970" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1977), 25; see also 20-21 regarding the creation of the USPA in 1875. Shotliff writes that "underlying the organizational thrusts of this initial convention [in 1875] was the desire to speed and enhance the development of the American pottery industry so as to rival that of Europe. Hitherto, most if not all American ware were copies of English or other European designs. The assembled potters, believing that sufficient talent existed in America to originate designs suitable to American tastes, resolved to discontinue the previous practice" (21). Did these USPA members really believe so much had changed by their convention in 1877? Or was their report of the Centennial Exhibition results an exaggeration in order to boost morale and to validate the young organization's existence?

[35]Edwin Atlee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States: An Historical Review of American Ceramic Art from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), 304. Barber's thoughts continue: "Never before was such an impetus given to any industry. The best productions of all nations were sent here and exhibited beside our own modest manufactures, and it was only too apparent that America had been left behind in the race. Up to that time there had been a few sporadic instances of attempts at originality, but comparatively little had been accomplished of a really artistic nature. The existence of a true ceramic art in this country can be said to have commenced with the Fair of 1876, because greater progress has been made since that important industrial event than during the two centuries which preceded it."

[36]For further discussion of the impact of the fair's exhibits, see Regina Lee Blaszczyk, "The Aesthetic Moment: China Decorators, Consumer Demand, and Technological Change in the American Pottery Industry, 1865-1900," *Winterthur Portfolio* 29 (Summer/Autumn 1994): 126-28, and Cynthia A. Brandimarte, "Somebody's Aunt and Nobody's Mother: The American China Painter and Her Work, 1870-1920," *Winterthur Portfolio* 23 (Winter 1988): 210.

The brilliant glazes and full-blown patterns on display piqued popular taste in other ways too, and by the mid-1880s the demand for decorated plates, tea sets, and tureens mushroomed. The economist Stratton in his 1929 dissertation on the pottery industry in the United States attributed this renewed interest in decorated tableware less to the Philadelphia Exhibition than to calculated English efforts and their results. American consumer interest in English wares that initially revived when availability increased again after the Civil War decreased because of the tariffs of 1875 and 1883, as government officials imposing them intended.[37] To offset this negative consumer development, the English energetically put forward decorated pottery as an alternative to the American-made plain dinnerware. The marketing scheme worked.

> They [the English] succeeded so well in converting the buying public of the States to ornamented ware that soon American potters were forced, against their will, to set up decorating departments. Whatever merits in principle or practice the tariff of 1883 may have had, it performed a service for the American consumers by putting decorated tableware within the reach of all. The result was, of course, unintentional. Our tableware manufacturers were drawn along unwillingly in the wake of the movement.[38]

Whether reluctantly or not, Trenton potteries rose to preeminence as the United States' leaders in the decorated dinnerware production. East Liverpool potteries quickly decided that second place did not offer enough rewards and redoubled their efforts with the idea

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[37]Stratton, "Factors in the Development of the American Pottery Industry," 11, and Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," 16. The tariff of 1883 included a 55% ad valorum duty on undecorated china and white ware as well as a 60% ad valorum duty on decorated china and white ware. With such an increase in cost to the American consumer, the British realized they could not compete with the American pottery makers unless they provided a product the domestic market could not.

[38]Stratton, "Factors in the Development of the American Pottery Industry," 12.

of surpassing their eastern rivals in market shares. By the 1890s, Trenton's dominance gave way, and East Liverpool took the title "America's Crockery City."[39]

The developments and competition reverberated through the pottery industry and changed it in several ways. The decision to make tableware exclusively and in large numbers particularly influenced the pottery workers since this line of goods required specialized jobs. In the past young employees had eventually learned all stages of pottery making, but now hired laborers who performed specific tasks replaced the apprenticeship method and disabled the old apprentice/master model. Employers and their labor deemed certain operations skilled and others unskilled. The stratification that occurred in the pottery labor force reflected the effect of mechanization, while improved technology and industrialization increased the pace of production (which increased the expected output of finished goods).

Stratton draws a connection as well between this shift to dinnerware production and the number of pottery factories that survived. "The number of processes involved, the technical knowledge and the skilled workmen required, barred extremely small plants from engaging in the business. It was not large scale production which resulted, far from it, but neither was it any longer possible for men to engage in the pottery business as a casual side issue to some other enterprise." The total value of pottery factory output increased, though, even as the number of factories shrank by half from their 1860 total. At the same time, these potteries required many more workers so that the kilns could

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[39]Ibid., 7. After the turn of the century, potteries opened in several other towns in that eastern section of Ohio without hurting East Liverpool's standing as the most important ceramic center. Adjoining Columbiana County, where East Liverpool was located, to its north in Mahoning County the town of Sebring developed potteries, and in Stark County to Columbiana County's west in the towns of Minerva and Alliance potteries were established.

function at full capacity. As Stratton's research points out, the average number of kilns, the average number of workers, and the average value product all expanded after 1860, doubling after the shift to an emphasis in dinnerware.[40]

Toward the end of this period the English potter Ted Owens made the journey to the United States. By 1902 he decided to settle in Minerva, Ohio, a town without a pottery before his arrival. Details on the Ohio years of his life remain sketchy, and a precise biography of Owens does not exist.[41] City directories and local historical

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[40]Ibid., 25, 38, and 39.

[41]Even the inclusion of the "s" on the end of Ted Owens's name varies from one source to another. In the 1920 census (where the name lacks the "s"), his son, Edward J. Owen Jr., reported his age as thirty and his birth state as Ohio. That should place his father and mother (also English by birth but deceased before the 1920 census) in Ohio by 1890, when the elder Owens was twenty-five years old. A description of The East End Pottery Company of East Liverpool, Ohio, lists among its founders in 1894 a local potter named Edward Owens. Certainly when Owens arrived in Erwin, Tennessee, he brought with him potters from East Liverpool, so he had some connection with that pottery center. See U.S. Census of Population, 1920, Enumeration sheets: Unicoi County, Tennessee, in U.S. National Archives and Records Service, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: NARS, 1993), reel 1768, and William C. Gates Jr., and Dana E. Ormerod, *Historical Archaeology* 16 (1982): 40.

At the same time, however, Edward Owens may be a fairly common name in a predominantly English society. There could have been more than one Ted or Edward Owen or Owens in Ohio. A note in one Minerva (Ohio) Historical Society monthly newsletter reports that Ted Owen "came to Minerva from England to begin the Owen China Company." This contradicts what the 1920 census suggests, but then the newsletter's date for the Owen China Company founding ("around 1905") contradicts other sources that place the pottery's opening in 1902 (Heald and Lehner), 1903 (Wehner), and 1906 (Bagdade). The seal for Local Union 70 of the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters in Minerva, Ohio, gives as its date for organization 15 June 1903. See *Minerva Historical Society Monthly News & Views* 2 (August 1994): second page; Edward Thornton Heald, *The Stark County Story*, vol. 1, *The First 76 Scripts* (Canton, Ohio: Stark County Historical Society, 1949-50), 583; Lois Lehner, *Ohio Pottery and Glass: Marks and Manufacturers* (Des Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1978), 68; Ralph J. Wehner, "A History of Minerva, Ohio, 1944," TMs (photocopy), 19, Vertical Files, Local History Room, Minerva Public Library, Minerva, Ohio; Susan Bagdade and Al Bagdade, *Warman's American Pottery and Porcelain* (Radnor, Pa.:

narratives confirm the Owen China Company that Ted Owens created in Minerva produced dinnerware for close to thirty years and expanded its facilities at least twice before the Depression led to the factory's closure. Prior to its demise, Owens moved to Tennessee and founded Southern Potteries, which began operations in 1917.

E. T. Heald records that, in the meantime in Minerva at Owen China Company, one Charles W. Foreman "took over the control. . . . In 1922 he built a new plant with 11 kilns."[42] And in Minerva's first city directory, issued in 1924--the same year Erwin's first directory came out--a full page advertisement opposite the title page read:

The Owen China Co.
MAKERS OF
"Gold Medal" Dinnerware
THE "WARE THAT WEARS"

THE POTTERY
A good place to work, steady employment
for Men and Girls--skilled and unskilled.

MINERVA, OHIO

Two 11 kiln Plants South of Town
Telephone Main 130.[43]

Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1994), 213; and correspondence from local union members at Cronin China Company to leadership at the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters office, TLS, 1942, International Brotherhood of Pottery and Allied Workers Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Library, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio (hereafter cited as IBPAW Collection).

Perhaps the Edward Owens mentioned with regard to The East End Pottery Company in East Liverpool is not the same as Ted Owens of Minerva's Owen China Company, but the latter is the same as the E. J. Owens who moved to Tennessee.

[42]Heald, *Stark County Story*, 583.

[43]J. E. Harriman, *The Official City Directory of Minerva, Ohio and Malvern, Ohio* (n.p.: The News Publishing Co., 1924), opposite title page. In terms of information implied in the advertisement, as Bagdade and Bagdade, *Warman's American Pottery*,

During its best years the company employed between three and four hundred potters (male, skilled) and liners or decorators (girls, unskilled). As a local historian later described, when the company closed in the early 1930s, "Minerva was frantic; for the pottery supported perhaps more people in Minerva and vicinity than [a]ll the other industries combined."[44]

The practical experiences Ted Owens acquired in Minerva accompanied him to Tennessee. Some of his skilled subordinates may have as well, and Owens did not lose touch with Foreman when he moved away. The Owen China Company under Foreman's leadership in Ohio built a new plant in 1922, and that same year Charles W. Foreman bought the Southern Potteries facilities in Tennessee from Owens. Prior to Foreman's appearance in Erwin, the pottery factory built by Owens had already made an impact there. Though Owens moved skilled workers from Ohio to Erwin, he hired unskilled labor, both men and women, from the immediate vicinity to be trained in particular tasks. Of the 146 individuals listed in the 1920 Census of Erwin who identified Southern Potteries as their employer, ninety-nine were male and just under half that number, forty-seven, were female. Of the women workers in the census, seven listed themselves as

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213, explains, "The Ware That Wears" refers to the company's underglaze and overglaze decorations applied to its semi-porcelain, hotel china, and tea and dinner services; and from Lehner, *Ohio Pottery*, 68, "Gold Medal" refers to an award received in St. Louis that became the basis for the china company's mark of a "square type of shield with a helmet and above the shield 'Owen-China' and 'Minerva' below."

[44]Wehner, "History of Minerva," 19. The facilities eventually reopened, two or three years later, after the Cronin family of East Liverpool purchased them. The five Cronin brothers had previous pottery experience and successfully ran the dinnerware plant until 1955. In 1956 the U. S. Ceramic Tile Company bought the pottery site and began producing square wall and floor tiles. See Bagdade and Bagdade, *Warman's American Pottery*, 101, and "Cronin China Company," *Living Out Our Heritage*, 142, Vertical Files, Local History Room, Minerva Public Library, Minerva, Ohio.

finishers, and five each were dish dressers and laborers. Four worked as ware dressers, while three each functioned as brushers, liners, or kiln drawers. Two described themselves as dish brushers, and the census listed one each as stamper, cup dresser, cup maker helper, dresser, fireman, or assigned to the decorating room. The largest number of female employees (nine) worked as decorators, and their ages, ranging from sixteen to nineteen, and place of birth typified the whole group of women workers. All but six of the forty-seven women came from Tennessee (twenty-six), North Carolina (eleven), Virginia (two), Kentucky or South Carolina (one each). Among the fifteen job descriptions open to women, four of the more menial categories (fireman, ware dresser, kiln drawer, and laborer) might also be filled by men, and the males in those jobs were from Tennessee or North Carolina. A fifth category, that of decorator, comprised one male from Ohio; in all likelihood he instructed and supervised the nine local girl decorators.

Male employees of Southern Potteries living in Erwin during this census gave thirty-eight different job listings, including the supervisor and the vice president of the pottery, in their responses. Among the male employees, a clear division between skilled and unskilled positions emerges through the census information on place of birth. People born outside the region held the most skilled positions. The thirteen potters listed had been born in Scotland (three), Missouri (one), West Virginia (two), Pennsylvania (two), or Ohio (five). The five kiln placers came from these last three states. Of the two clay workers, one was born in Ohio and the other in England. The same is true of the two mould makers. The one identified glazer came from Ohio, but one of the four foremen came from Tennessee. In all, thirty-nine of the ninety-nine male employees at Southern Potteries had been born in England, Scotland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, or West Virginia, and they held the majority of skilled positions. Fifty-seven Tennessee and North Carolina

male natives and one each from Arkansas, Missouri, and Virginia worked in a variety of jobs.[45]

Where the employees lived presented an interesting picture as well. Unicoi County was divided into twelve civil districts at the time of the 1920 census. Of those districts, no Southern Potteries employees resided in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, 6th, 9th, or 10th districts. Two laborers for the pottery lived in the 11th district, two laborers and a dish dresser lived in the 7th, and three laborers lived in the 8th. In other words, Southern

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[45]United States Census of Population, 1920, Enumeration sheets, Unicoi County, Tennessee, reel 1768:

job description	Male	Female	job	M	F
auditor	1		handleman	1	
bad out	2		jiggerman	3	
bookkeeper	1		jiggerman helper	2	
brusher		3	kiln drawer	5	3
carpenter	1		kiln dresser	1	
castor	1		kiln placer	5	
castor helper	1		laborer	25	5
clay carrier	1		liner		3
clay worker	2		mould maker	2	
clay maker	1		mould runner	3	
cooper	1		moulder	1	
cup dresser		1	office	1	
cup maker helper		1	packer	1	
decorating shop		1	potter	13	
decorator	1	9	sagger maker	3	
dish brusher		2	sagger maker helper	1	
dish dresser		5	salesman	1	
dish maker	1		stamper		1
dish moulder	1		superintendent	1	
dresser		1	vice president	1	
engineer	2		ware dresser	1	4
finisher		7	warehouse man	2	
fireman	3	1	warehouse runner	1	
foreman	4				
glazer	1		TOTALS	99	47

Potteries employees congregated in the 5th and 12th districts, near the plant itself. The residences of thirty-six employees fell within the town's corporation lines in the 5th district. Their jobs ranged from that of the pottery's vice president to laborer. Almost half of the men, though, held skilled positions (and were from outside the region) and almost all the women were decorators, liners, or finishers. Outside the corporation lines, in the remainder of the 5th district, lived eleven employees from Tennessee and one from North Carolina. In the 12th district along Martin's Creek, a cluster existed of forty-one pottery employees, all from Tennessee or North Carolina with one each from Virginia and Arkansas. The Martin's Creek area developed because of the town's push for industry, and these pottery employees who moved in may not have been born and raised in Erwin, though they were native to the region. Southern Potteries' remaining forty-nine employees lived in thirty-one residences along Walnut and Ohio Avenue with Atterbury houses occupied by the skilled workers from outside the region. Nine of the potters, all four foremen, the glazer, salesman, a saggerman, kiln placers, jiggermen and mould makers lived in close proximity to each other and within blocks of the factory in 1920. The railroad had swelled Erwin's population more than a decade earlier, and Southern Potteries seemed destined to have the same effect. Living adjacent to, but outside the old core of the town, would these pottery employees be incorporated into the community in the same manner as the railroad employees were? Erwin's 1924 city directory lists 250 pottery employees, an increase of one hundred people from the time of the census. If the ratio from inside region/outside region remained the same as it had been in 1920, the bulk of these new hirings resulted in local people joining the pottery.

Besides the employment opportunities offered to local people, the opening of Southern Potteries also led to the formation of a local chapter of the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters (NBOP). The seal used on union correspondence gives

2 April 1917 as the date of organization for Erwin's Local Union 103 of the NBOP.[46] Though the compiler of Erwin's city directory of 1924 failed to include this union in the publication's labor information, an article in the *Erwin Times* of 18 June 1926, concerning a speech given by one Sam Brady to the NBOP annual meeting in Canton, Ohio, claimed Erwin's Local Union 103 had 135 members.[47] That group must have included at least some of the women employees of Southern Potteries, given the numbers discussed above. In this matter the NBOP outshone other contingents within the American Federation of Labor at this time,[48] but even the NBOP leadership held the tasks assigned these women in fairly low regard.

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[46]Correspondence from local union members at Southern Potteries to leadership at the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters office, TLS, 1942, IBPAW Collection.

The National Brotherhood of Operative Potters was not one of the larger unions in the American Federation of Labor; for example, in 1914 the NBOP membership of 7,700 made up only .38 percent of the 2,020,671 total membership in the AFL. Perhaps its smaller size is a reason that it has received little scrutiny from labor historians. The figures above come from Lewis L. Lorwin, with assistance by Jean Atherton Flexner, *The American Federation of Labor: History, Policies, and Prospects* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1933), 481 and 486.

[47]*Erwin Times*, 18 June 1926, 1; the city directory did list eight unions, all of which would be associated with the railroad and its yards in Erwin, and none of which would have women members: International Association of Machinists, B.R.T. Brakemen, B.R.T. Conductors, B.R.T. Engineers, B.R.T. Firemen, B.R.T. Flagmen, B.M.W.C., and Boilermakers' Union. [Based on Lorwin's tables, B.R.T. stands for Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and B.M.W.C. is Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees.]

[48]The Women's Trade Union League pointed out in 1924 that "3,156,600 women working at trades which come under the jurisdiction of the national and international organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor [were represented by] no more than 200,000 of this number in [AFL] membership. . . ." See Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement: From World War I to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 137.

The potteries in Ohio had employed women to put the designs on the dinnerware, and Owens continued this practice in Tennessee. During the first two decades of its existence, Southern Potteries marketed its products as Clinchfield Pottery, usually with gold trim (known as lining) and decal decoration (called decalcomania) applied on top of the glaze. Potteries across the country that concentrated on mass production used this method of decorating and classified it as unskilled work, in part because it lacked any creative element. Pottery owners therefore considered local women and girls eligible for such employment. Once hired, these women workers received instruction in lining and decalcomania techniques before going to work on actual merchandise. In the early days of Southern Potteries, these lessons occurred in a room set aside for the activity in the A. R. Brown and Company building on Main Street in the center of Erwin, roughly a mile from the pottery plant.[49] Following their training these female employees worked in the decorating room at the factory that fronted on Martin and Watauga Avenues, just blocks from the Atterbury houses.

The process of making pottery involves the manipulation of clay into a vessel shape that it retains by being baked to hardness. Though the process has undergone refinements over the centuries and even mechanization of certain portions of it in the last one hundred years, the actual stages involved have remained virtually the same throughout this time. Southern Potteries in Erwin, Tennessee, represented the southern version of an enterprise dependent upon natural resources and therefore found in places where the proper raw materials existed in good quantity. In upper East Tennessee (and western North Carolina) deposits of kaolin, feldspar, and clays made the area a favorable

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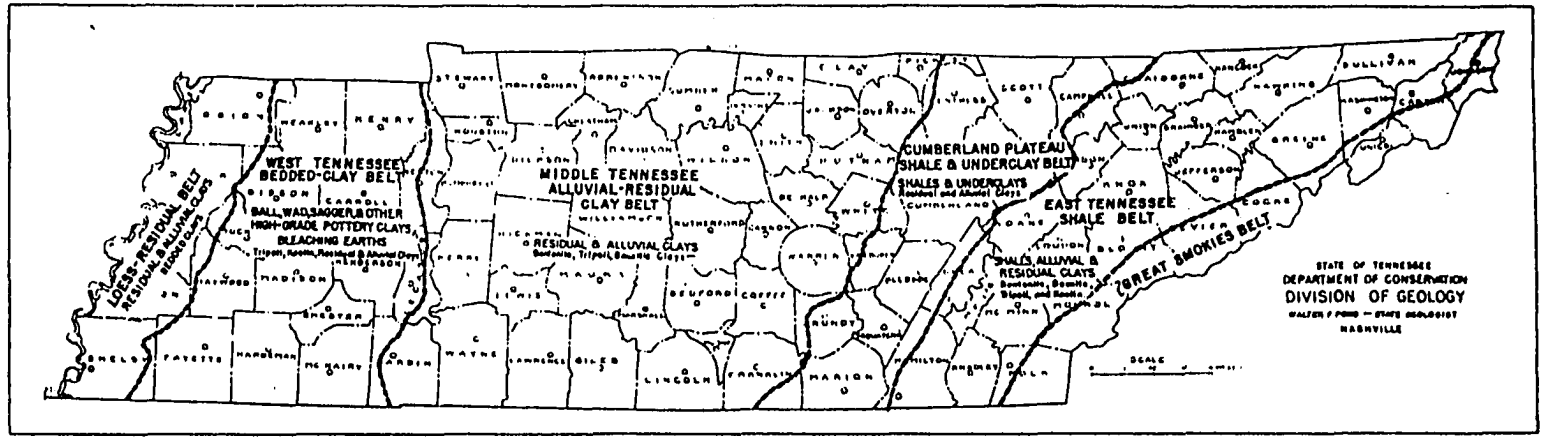
[49]Betty Newbound and Bill Newbound, *Southern Potteries Inc. Blue Ridge Dinnerware*, rev. 3d ed. (Paducah, Ky.: Collector Books, 1996), 9.

one for a pottery (see Figure 41). The Clinchfield Railroad easily hauled supplies from their sources to the factory site, but locating the factory near those sources helped keep transportation expenses low. Owens showed good business sense in his desire for a side track leading directly to his factory.

The arrangement of rooms in Owens's Southern Potteries building clearly displays the stages of pottery making and the order in which they occur (see Figure 42). Beginning at the opposite end of the structure from Watauga Avenue, the first third of the building was devoted to the creation of the pottery pieces. The clay mixture and preparation occurred in the slip room, and space adjacent to it held moulds (or molds) and provided room for the making and repairing of those moulds. The large clay room dominated the first part of the pottery-making procedure, because here the skilled potters transformed the lumps of clay into distinctive shapes, plates or cups or vases, for example. In pottery factories the moulds enabled standardization within each shape category, and use of moulds created distinct duties for different potters. A "batter out" took a quantity of clay, flattened it so that it might be shaped to a mould, and put it on that mould. The "jiggerman" operated the potter's wheel. With the clay and mould centered on the turning wheel, he shaped the clay to the mould and at the same time created its reverse-side profile with a tool cut to that design. These two categories of pottery employees, batters out and jiggermen, ranked highly among the skilled workers, since their labor determined whether the subsequent stages in the pottery production could be successful. Mould runners moved the prepared pieces from the clay room to the green room where the clay dried and from which saggermakers could place the clay pieces in "saggers," or containers.

The operations carried out in the next set of rooms in the pottery factory made the clay pieces hard and impervious to liquids. By building different ovens or kilns for each



Outline map of Tennessee showing clay belts and ceramic resources of each belt. Principal resources shown in large type; minor resources in smaller type.

Figure 41. Outline map of Tennessee showing clay belts and resources for pottery

(Reprinted by permission of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, from Samuel D. Smith and Stephen T. Rogers, *A Survey of Historic Pottery Making in Tennessee* (Nashville, 1979), 14.)

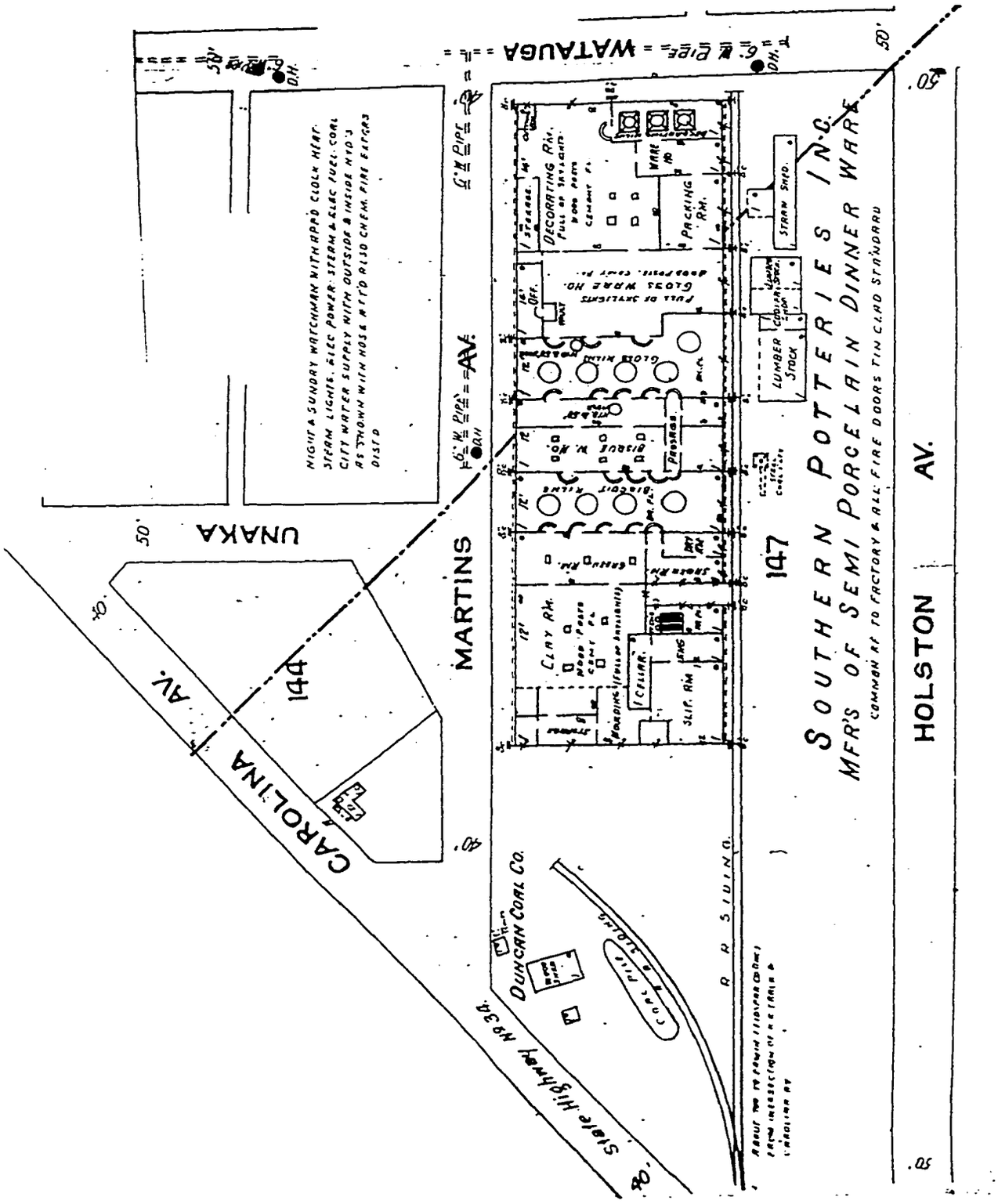


Figure 42. Southern Potteries
(Source: 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance map)

step, the factory could maintain a flow of pottery pieces through the various stages at all times. The biscuit kilns, then, near the clay room produced the first firing that made the clay shapes hard. After cooling and removal to the bisque warehouse, dippers applied glaze to these hardened pieces. A second firing, this one in the gloss kilns, coated the pottery's surface with the melting glaze so that liquid placed on or stored in it later could not soak into the clay. Only after a second cooling, sorting, and finishing off of rough spots would the decorators get to work on the pieces.

Women finishers and ware dressers contributed a female presence in the earlier stages of the whole process, but women dominated the last third of the factory space as the decorators of the pottery. Here too a final firing "set" their work before the packers assembled the finished products in the barrels made by the cooper for transporting the pottery to market.[50] The Southern Potteries letterhead of the period depicts the exterior appearance of the factory (see Figure 43), and its three sets of coal burning kilns clearly stand out and indicate the division of the areas beneath the roof.[51]

Period photographs of pottery factory buildings in other locales exhibit similar characteristics, and photographs of work carried on inside these factories show men in certain spaces at particular jobs and women in others.[52] Management positions, where

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[50]A more detailed account of the various stages involved in a pottery factory can be found in Stratton, "Factors in the Development of the American Pottery Industry," 103-9 and in Appendix 1. An even more detailed account with excellent illustrations of the stages involved in an individual potter's operations can be found in Nancy Sweezy, *Raised in Clay: The Southern Pottery Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 34-48 passim.

[51]A postcard published by Erwin Drug Company bearing a photograph of the Southern Potteries plant (taken from the north and looking at the building's Martin Avenue elevation) also shows the varying dimensions of the chimneys belonging to the three types of kilns operating at the factory in the 1920s (see Figure 45).

[52]Whether the photographs come from the Knowles, Taylor and Knowles Pottery

Figure 43. Southern Potteries Inc. letterhead

(Reprinted by permission of the Archives of Appalachia, from the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn.)

people with initiative could advance, fell within the male domain but outside the factory floor activities. Ted Owens presented one of the rare examples of someone moving from the clay room to leadership of a pottery (though he probably accomplished this feat outside the center of Ohio's pottery industry). Perhaps his achievement made him appreciative of other individuals whose talents suggested they might be management material.

Charles W. Foreman joined Owen China Company in 1905. About ten years younger than Owens, Foreman had already accumulated over two decades of work experience on railroads before he shifted his career. At the time of his marriage in 1900, he resided in Pittsburgh because of his position in the freight audit department of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The fact that Foreman's wife, Mary Carr, came from Minerva, Ohio, may have created or contributed to a desire to settle in that area if and when the possibility arose. The establishment of Owen China Company in 1902 in Minerva and its survival led to a need for a bookkeeper, and Foreman got the job. After four years, Owens promoted him to general manager of the pottery company in 1909, and the *1915-1920 Farm Journal Rural Directory of Stark County Ohio* listed the Foremans in Minerva. Owens departed Minerva in 1917 to move to Tennessee. Whether he left Foreman in charge of the Owen China Company or sold it to him remains unclear, but the Minerva plant facilities expanded in the early 1920s under Foreman's leadership.

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plant in East Liverpool in 1901 or from Southern Potteries in Erwin in 1951, the separation of duties and space by gender remains remarkably similar. See Raymond Boryczka, and Lorin Lee Cary, *No Strength Without Union: An Illustrated History of Ohio Workers 1803-1980* (n.p.: Ohio Historical Society, 1982), 88-93; William C. Gates Jr., *The City of Hills and Kilns: Life and Work in East Liverpool, Ohio* (East Liverpool, Ohio: East Liverpool Historical Society, 1984), 417-27; and "Southern China," *Esso Oilways* 17 (March 1951): 1-6.

In 1922 Charles Foreman purchased Southern Potteries. This action caused little immediate notice or change. Owens continued living in Erwin at least until after the Erwin city directory appeared in 1924.[53] The Foremans maintained residence in Minerva until sometime in 1923 or 1924 when they moved about sixteen miles west to the Stark County seat at Canton, Ohio. The place of production in Erwin churned out the same type of pottery it had manufactured from the beginning. The thirty-five rental houses designed by Grosvenor Atterbury that Owens bought from the railroad in 1920 still sheltered Southern Potteries employees, and the pottery's Local Union 103 fielded baseball teams and sent representatives to the annual NBOP meeting.[54]

Study of the 1920 census and the 1924 Erwin city directory reveals that, besides Owens, some key figures at Southern Potteries had connections with Owen China Company. Henry Kutsch of Ohio Avenue and foreman of the pottery had to be related to Joseph Kutsch who had been Owens's foreman of the decorating shop in Minerva. Likewise, Frederick Davison of 107 Horseshoe (or Holston Place) and employed by Southern Potteries had descended from Thomas Davison, Owens's friend from Staffordshire whom Owens had sent for--along with his glaze formula--when he opened Owen China Company. G. Fred Brandt rose from foreman of the clay shop in Minerva to general manager of Southern Potteries after Foreman bought it. Brandt became Erwin's

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[53]Eventually Owens, his son, and son's family moved to Sebring, Florida. That town's founder, George Sebring, had come to central Florida to open a winter resort in 1912 from Sebring, Ohio, which he and his five brothers had created in 1898 when they opened a pottery there after beginning their careers in East Liverpool. Karl E. Schwab, "Ohio, Florida Towns Bear Name of 'Sebring Boys,'" *Youngstown (Ohio) Vindicator*, 11 June 1972, sec. B, p. 1.

[54]"Pottery Ball Team to Play Illinois Team at National Convention," *Erwin Magnet-Times*, 25 May 1928.

first Chamber of Commerce president.[55] At the same time the pottery depended upon local workers, both men and women, to fill its unskilled positions, and by the end of 1926 all but 14 percent of the payroll comprised "native labor."[56] If viewed from within the pottery, connections to Ohio and the markets beyond it clearly survived and mattered to Southern Potteries. Viewed from Erwin's Main Street the pottery's involvement in and ties to the local community and population of Erwin grew in its first ten years of existence. These differing perspectives help to create the story delineated in the following chapters.

Erwin, Tennessee, might easily be labeled a New South town. To all intents and purposes the railroad created it and transported it into the twentieth century. George L. Carter's railway carrying Appalachian coal to markets and expanding industries outside the region sustained the town and county. But the relationship was reciprocal since the shops, yards, and offices located in Erwin made the railroad's runs possible and profitable. Carter's boosterism and that of the men who followed him encouraged the development locally of various industries, often funded by northern capital, and one of the early enterprises, Southern Potteries, created a niche for women workers. Even Erwin's civic capitalism marks the place as typical of its era and region.

Differences emerge, however, between Erwin and those other towns of its region.[57] Initially, the architectural element advanced by the railroad with its

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[55]"Owen China Company," *Living Out Our Heritage*, 142, Vertical Files, Local History Room, Minerva Public Library, Minerva, Ohio, and "G. F. Brandt Elected Chamber of Commerce President," *Erwin Magnet*, 18 December 1925.

[56]Walter Harper, "Southern Potteries Present Striking Example of Labor Loyalty and Craftsmanship," *Erwin Magnet*, 28 December 1926.

[57]Barry Thomas Whittemore, "The Rural to Urban Shift in the Appalachian South: Town Building and Town Persistence in Virginia's Blue Ridge, 1880-1920" (D.A.

development of Grosvenor Atterbury's plan for a model community distinguished it. Atterbury's Development for the Holston Corporation made Erwin a Progressive town, where the Progressive era ideas of social uplift and efficiency in combination with the architect's attractive design and use of space emphasized a more modern and conciliatory attitude on the part of management towards its labor. Such communities denoted industrial order in place of conflict. While they may actually have originated as visible expressions of paternalistic attitudes of company owners, they were undoubtedly meant to avert social problems.[58] But other model villages came into existence, too, including the one just up the tracks at Kingsport, designed by John Nolen's firm. Planned worker housing alone did not separate Erwin from other places of its time and region. The pottery factory, in combination with the railroad and the architecturally designed neighborhood, made Erwin distinctive, as examination of the subsequent history of Southern Potteries and its workers during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s clearly establishes.

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diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 1996), 221, examines Appalachian town development and presents his formula regarding Appalachian urbanization: "industrial era transportation technology must be available. . . . [T]hen towns will be built whose ability to persist will depend on the nature of their industrial/economic development and the proximity of the source of the capital to do it. The closer the capital and the more complex the economic activity the more likely a town will be to persist."

[58]As Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 184, wrote: "Desire for control over workers was a primary reason for sponsoring housing."

CHAPTER 5

SOUTHERN POTTERIES: TRANSFORMING THE CRAFTS REVIVAL INTO SOMETHING THOROUGHLY MODERN

In the latter half of the 1920s, the township of Erwin, Tennessee, entered its sixth decade, and Southern Potteries moved into its second. Though no one knew at the time, events in the years that followed stalled the momentum the community gained in the 1910s and 1920s. The nationwide depression of the 1930s affected Erwin's industries and population, just as it did the rest of upper East Tennessee, the South, and the country as a whole. Indeed, trends in the larger world altered movements and actions on the local level even if the workers and their families had no direct awareness of those trends and little or no control over them. While this situation held true throughout the Appalachian and Piedmont regions, simultaneously and paradoxically the experience of Erwin's workers both mirrored and differed distinctly from the laboring class experiences in those other communities. Unions played a role in these differences, as did the type of work undertaken. In the 1930s the employees of Southern Potteries faced labor issues while they also encountered from several directions a swelling interest in Appalachian crafts. By the end of the 1930s these various factors had changed both the focus of Southern Potteries and its future, though its owner and employees could not have foreseen this as the roaring twenties came to a close.

Even before the stock market crash of October 1929, certain groups of workers doubted President Herbert Hoover's claim that the nation stood on the verge of its "final triumph over poverty." At Elizabethton, Tennessee, the Carter County seat located within twenty miles of Erwin, labor unrest emerged at two rayon plants during the spring of 1929. Although the causes varied, the ensuing sequence of events and their

unfortunate outcome repeated themselves almost exactly at other sites in subsequent strikes over the next few years. At Elizabethton, the initial walkout in mid-March concerned issues of pay and policy for the female employees, who comprised more than one third of the labor force between the two plants.[1] Eighty-seven miles away in Marion, North Carolina, a strike commenced in the following July because the textile mill owner fired men who had complained of low wages and demanded as compensation a reduction in work hours.[2] In both situations the workers began to organize with union assistance after management denied their requests. The plant and mill management in both cases refused to acknowledge the fledgling local chapters of the United Textile Workers of America (UTW) as representatives of their laborers' wishes or as equals in negotiations. The same difficulties existed in mills and factories throughout the region, yet each site of labor unrest became an individual battleground with little or no bearing on the struggles in the next towns up or down the line. Ten years later, in Dalton, Georgia, Crown Mills employees chose in similar fashion to reject any further paternalism on the part of the owners and to turn instead to the union's protection. The decision ended the collective

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[1]The two rayon plants at Elizabethton had been built by a German parent company, Vereinigte Glanzstoff Fabriken, in the mid-1920s. American Bemberg opened in 1926 and American Glanzstoff in 1928; between the two plants almost 3,000 laborers found employment in fifty-six hour work weeks. For details concerning the strikes that erupted in the spring of 1929, see James A. Hodges, "Challenge to the New South: The Great Textile Strike in Elizabethton, Tennessee, 1929," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 23 (1964): 343-57.

[2]Sinclair Lewis reported in Scripps-Howard Newspapers on the events in the summer and fall of 1929 at the Marion Manufacturing Company and the Clinchfield Mills, both located on the Southern Railroad line just beyond its junction with the Clinchfield Railroad at Marion, North Carolina. The United Textile Workers of America and the Women's Trade Union League republished Lewis's six articles that appeared in newspapers during October and November 1929 under the title *Cheap and Contented Labor*.

mill family tranquillity that had marked the company's first three decades of this century.[3] Even the massive regional textile strike of 1934, in which the sheer numbers of workers refusing their employers' orders gave an appearance of unification, did not succeed against those owners, and unionization lost out in the region as a result.[4]

All of these examples shared certain characteristics and helped to create certain expectations among workers and management alike. The work place involved was a rayon or textile factory where the division of labor by gender and segregation by race went unquestioned. In fact, both unions and factory management viewed the roles and responsibilities of men and women as different. Though union leadership strongly disagreed with management's perspective that considered strikes anomalies and the workers who instigated them aberrant, in periods of labor unrest union leadership looked to men to speak on the picket line and in the meetings while women supported their efforts with food, supplies, and encouragement. Any break from the normal behavior stood out as if in high relief.

The strikes of the Piedmont and Appalachian regions in the late 1920s and 1930s appeared more radical than earlier such actions in part because of women's active

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[3]See Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands and Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), chapters 9, "The Great Depression and the Union," and 10, "Torn Asunder: The Strike of 1939."

[4]Commencing on Labor Day 1934, textile workers in the Piedmont began what developed into the largest single strike in the history of this nation's textile industry. Employees in twenty states struck during the three-week confrontation; officials called in the National Guard; and deaths occurred, including six strikers at Honea Path, South Carolina. In terms of results, the workers gained nothing from their employers. Some strikers lost their housing and were blackballed from future work in textile mills, and many lost confidence in and became suspicious of unions because of the failure of organized labor to help the workers in this strike.

participation in them. At Elizabethton women employees had been the first to act, and in later strikes critics applied some of the same negative classifications they used at Elizabethton to female strikers' behavior. As women's historians of recent decades have shown, the fear of "disorderly women," that is, of employees who moved outside their prescribed gender-defined roles during a strike, complicated the confrontational situation for all participants.[5] The well-established patterns for female labor had relegated them to an inferior status in terms of types of jobs available, wages, and possibilities for advancement. As William Chafe notes, "throughout industry, women earned at best only 50 to 65 percent of what men were paid, and the Social Security Administration disclosed in 1937 that women workers took home an average of $525 a year in contrast to an annual income of $1,027 for men." When he examines the wage levels for women on a regional level in place of the national one, Chafe finds that "women working in Southern mill towns in 1929 received $9.35 a week. . . ." In a fifty-two-week year, this wage would net $486.20. In his compilation of articles written after the strike in Marion, North Carolina, Sinclair Lewis repeatedly mentions that male employees earned $13 per week, not quite half again Chafe's figure for their female counterparts.[6] Both men and

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[5]Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *Journal of American History* 73 (1986): 354-82, and Mary E. Frederickson, "Heroines and Girl Strikers: Gender Issues and Organized Labor in the Twentieth-Century American South," in *Organized Labor in the Twentieth-Century South*, ed. Robert H. Zieger (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 84-112, look at women of different ages, how society viewed their actions during the strikes of this era, and the effects of their actions on later women workers.

[6]William Henry Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 61, and Sinclair Lewis, *Cheap and Contented Labor: The Picture of a Southern Mill Town in 1929* (New York: United Textile Workers of America and Women's Trade Union League, 1929), 7, 17, 18, 20, and 24.

women operatives in the South earned annual amounts dramatically below the average incomes figured by the Social Security Administration a few years later.

The figures found pertaining to southern women workers in the 1920s and 1930s usually come from textile mills. As Grace Hutchins observed in her 1934 book on female labor, "cotton mills employ more women than any other manufacturing group in the South. . . . In the four states, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama (in the order of their numerical importance) over 100,000 women are at work in the cotton textile mills." She mentions separately the rayon plants that employed another 10,000 women and the cigar and tobacco factories with 74,000 female employees.[7] From Hutchins's time forward, studies concerning southern states have concentrated, then, in these industries.[8] In terms of hours worked per week, writers point out the

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[7]Grace Hutchins, *Women Who Work* (New York: International Publishers, 1934), 28.

[8]Two such examples, the first on cotton mills, the second on tobacco factories, and both set in North Carolina, are: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), and Dolores E. Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender, and Class in a New South Community*, Class and Culture Series, ed. Bruce Laurie and Milton Cantor (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).

For more general information concerning women workers, their issues, wages, and shifting status over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Susan Estabrook Kennedy, *If All We Did Was to Weep at Home: A History of White Working-class Women in America*, Minorities in Modern America, ed. Warren Kimball and David Edwin Harrell, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Lynn V. Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds., *"To Toil the Livelong Day": America's Women at Work, 1780-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Ava Baron, *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

double burden of women workers who have household duties as well. Coupling the 1931 average of 58 1/2 hours per week spent at work in North Carolina with over sixty hours per week in housework left not quite fifty hours for sleep and other needs.[9] While labor legislation enacted in the depressed 1930s looked at first like improvements for working women, appearances could be deceiving. The end of night work in four-fifths of the cotton mills in 1931 received some notice in the press, but this third shift was quietly reinstituted in mill after mill in a year's time.[10] North Carolina limited the number of hours a woman could work per week to fifty-five, with eleven the permissible daily high, but that legislation did not keep management from demanding the same or even more end product than had been expected under the longer work week.[11]

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[9]Hutchins, *Women Who Work*, 107, and Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 5. See also Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), for her argument about the true implications of household appliances as labor-saving devices.

[10]Hutchins, *Women Who Work*, 114, found night work unhealthy for women with families because they spent their days in domestic duties instead of sleeping, and Hutchins claimed "married women who worked at night obtained only about four and one half hours of sleep in the daytime."

[11]Ibid., 109; Hutchins observed that "great numbers of women workers are in reality young girls . . . [because] only the younger workers can keep up the pace that is required in most plants" (120).

And while reformers wanted to protect the laborers by setting legislated limits to the number of hours women (and children) could work, the employee's ambition centered on making enough money to feed and care for her family. See Rita J. Simon and Gloria Danziger, *Women's Movements in America: Their Successes, Disappointments, and Aspirations* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 53, for more observations regarding the differing interpretations of the needs of working women held by them and by middle- and upper-class would-be reformers.

Hutchins compiled her facts, figures, and examples in the early 1930s to support her argument that women workers needed to help themselves; they must unionize. In many cases, however, "union-approved contracts allowed unequal pay scales and the maintenance of separate seniority lists for women workers."[12] While the union label might not ensure or even necessarily support equality for women members, unions did provide some weight to workers' arguments against management. In the case of Erwin's pottery factory, the employees of Southern Potteries benefited from union association throughout the Depression era, in spite of the fact that the pottery industry began to experience economic hard times earlier than most other industries.

The increase in ceramic imports following the conclusion of World War I escalated in the 1920s. By 1927 foreign ware captured 30 percent of the United States dinnerware market, doubling its share in that market since imported ware's all-time low of 14 percent in 1919. By the next year, potteries suffered their worst unemployment since 1914, and kilns stood idle. The United States Potters Association (USPA), made up of pottery executives, admitted in 1930 virtually no profit in the industry. Such bleakness on the part of the factory owners could have led to layoffs of more employees or plant closings, but the employees' union, the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters (NBOP), requested in 1931 that what work materialized be divided evenly among the workers, and in 1932 the USPA agreed to this request. The next year, 1933, by mandate of the National Industrial Recovery Act, the USPA produced pottery codes that called for a maximum work week of thirty-six hours with minimum wages of forty cents per hour for men and thirty-two cents per hour for women. Though the hours and wages were low, they enabled more people to work. By limiting the number of hours any employee

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[12]Ware, *Holding Their Own*, 48.

could work, more workers could share existing wages. In 1934, the same year as the regional textile strike, the NBOP negotiated an 8.5 percent increase in wages for its members in potteries across the country.[13]

Southern Potteries survived this industry downturn. The employee rolls did not increase during the lean years of the company's second decade, but because of the NBOP efforts and USPA agreement with the union in the 1930s, the pottery avoided major layoffs. A newspaper article in 1928 had referred to the three hundred employees of Southern Potteries. A clipping from 1936 said its 325 employees worked three shifts, seven days a week, and the factory management offered this information as still accurate three years later. If employee rosters at Southern Potteries fell much in the early 1930s, they went against the agreement between the NBOP and USPA and against memory. Raymond White's father was a kiln placer in those years and he recalls the elder White's pay stubs by saying "the pottery always was good pay." Difficult periods did occur, and in mid-April 1938 a management-imposed shutdown closed the pottery for more than a week, "due to general depression in national business life."[14] References to strikes at

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[13]Don A. Shotliff, "The History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry: The National Brotherhood of Operative Potters-International Brotherhood of Operative Potters, 1890-1970" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1977), 150, 195, 201, 219-20, 226, 235, and 230, and William C. Gates Jr., *The City of Hills and Kilns: Life and Work in East Liverpool, Ohio* (East Liverpool, Ohio: East Liverpool Historical Society, 1984), 328-29. In the one variance between these two sources, Gates claims the maximum number of work hours adopted was forty, not thirty-six.

[14]*Erwin Magnet-Times*, 25 May 1928; H. W. Kibler, Southern Potteries, Erwin, Tennessee, to R. R. Humphries, Federal Writer's Project, Knoxville, Tennessee, LS, 17 February 1939, Federal Writers' Project Records, 1941, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee; Raymond White, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 15 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author; and *Erwin Record*, 14 April 1938.

Southern Potteries during the 1930s, though, do not appear in the community's newspaper. Remembering that paper's conservative and booster-oriented nature during the 1920s, silence about industrial worker strife is not too surprising. In fact, the 15 March 1929 edition made no mention of the strike in progress at Elizabethton but carried an article on how textile factories in the South prospered. The following week's paper of 22 March 1929 had headlines of "Rayon Strike Ends; Peace Made at Last" and an article that talked of the wage agreement--which management chose a little later not to enact. Probably the Erwin newspaper's editorial policy concerning Southern Potteries and other local industries that experienced turbulence in the Depression downplayed difficulties encountered by one group or another, for the good of the general population--and the owners' images.[15]

Though the *Erwin Record* may have been prone to minimize labor dissatisfactions, the facts indicate that union backing at Southern Potteries was an asset. The history of the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters suggests as much. The pottery industry's development in the United States following the Civil War had coincided with the rise of labor unions. The first organization associated with pottery plants, however, formed among the owners of those enterprises. In 1875 the United States Potters Association began as a trade association, concerned more with tariffs and

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[15]David Montgomery, "Violence and the Struggle for Unions in the South, 1880-1930," in *Perspectives on the American South: An Annual Review of Society, Politics and Culture*, vol. I, ed. Merle Black and John Shelton Reed (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1981), 38, lists "the firm commitment of its local, and especially its state governments, to create an environment attractive to industrial involvement" as one obstacle for organized labor in the South. The "prominent, propertied, educated individuals" of the community, those civic capitalists who owned or served on the boards of the local banks, newspaper, utilities, and businesses, opposed strikes, strikers, and labor union activists, and, Montgomery claims, any violence their opposition created "was of the 'socially acceptable' variety" (45).

their effect on prices and consumer demand than with employee wages or industry-wide wage rates. The Knights of Labor emerged from its origins as a secret society in Philadelphia at about the same time, and by 1882 pottery workers in East Liverpool, Ohio, created a Local Assembly under the Knights' auspices to try to address their needs. This local assembly lasted less than a year when faced with opposition from the manufacturers, and the operatives, feeling betrayed by the failure of the Knights to defeat the owners' interests, did not pursue affiliation with the Knights.

A few years later, though, the Ohio pottery workers founded their own organization in 1890, the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters. Within four years the NBOP faced a crisis from which it had to triumph to survive. The reduction in 1894 of the McKinley Tariff rates on decorated and plain dinnerware precipitated the situation. In place of tariffs of 60 percent (decorated) and 55 percent (plain), the new rates fell to 35 and 30 percent respectively. In response, the USPA made its first effort at official wage control, proposing to reduce the pay of workers up to 50 percent to offset the loss expected in consumer sales. The NBOP called for and conducted a strike lasting six months. The lack of violence during this action resulted in part from the ongoing depression that began in 1893. Financial difficulties made merchants and townspeople sympathetic to the workers' plight, and they carried the strikers' accounts on credit. At the strike's end, a compromise between the owners and workers resulted in the smaller wage reduction of 12.5 percent and a sense of satisfactory conclusion for most parties involved. The NBOP encouraged its members to repay their creditors as quickly as possible, increasing the regard in which the young union's leadership was held. The outcome of the strike meant survival of the NBOP.[16]

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[16]Facts and dates in this paragraph of the text and the one that follows come from Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," chapters 2,

Having survived, in the next few years the NBOP gained recognition and acceptance both from the USPA and from pottery workers in regions beyond Ohio. When the USPA created a labor committee regarding wages in 1897, that committee chose to work with the NBOP to restore the higher 1893 wage levels, acknowledging the new leadership role of the NBOP. After more than ten years of pursuing regional independence first through the Knights of Labor and then in local unions, eastern operatives concentrated around Trenton, New Jersey, decided to join the NBOP in 1898. With this new sense of unity among the skilled pottery workers, the NBOP affiliated in 1899 with the American Federation of Labor.

The workers showed wisdom, organizing when they did, just as the pottery industry began to experience the effects of mechanization that had moved through other industries earlier. In the 1880s power-driven machinery entered the clay preparation portion of pottery factories, and in the 1890s the power source for jiggers (the equivalent of the potter's throwing wheel) became mechanized. As the makers of the pottery ware, jiggermen had always been considered skilled workers of the highest rank. With mechanization, though, fewer conditions in the ware-making process depended upon their knowledge and training. Jiggermen needed union support and protection to maintain their position as skilled labor in the eyes of management. Increasing mechanization threatened operatives in other parts of the pottery process in similar fashion.

"The Development of Organized Labor in the Pottery Industry to 1900," and 3, "The Growth of the NBOP during the Progressive Period," and from David A. McCabe, *National Collective Bargaining in the Pottery Industry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), chapters 1, "The United States Potters Association," and 2, "The Brotherhood--History."

As William Gates points out, "the very nature of the industry (working with clay) necessitated a number of hand processes and repeated careful handling as the product moved through the various stages of manufacture." Alongside this need for skilled labor, though, arose "the introduction of new machines, . . . and the necessity of repeated handling, allowing the use of semi-skilled and even unskilled workers."[17] The NBOP widened its base of support, first by including those semi-skilled and unskilled male operatives and then by including females, in 1901 and after. The union persuaded its membership and then management to accept in 1904 a national uniform wage scale in place of the older piece-rate method of payment. This development of a uniform wage helped end regional rivalry among pottery factories, which then meant that workers could stand united in common issues. From 1905 forward, the NBOP and the USPA established a biennial conference on wages via collective bargaining, resulting in two-year contracts and no cessation of work between 1905 and 1922 except for a ten-day strike in 1917.

Disagreements arose and negotiations might be both protracted and arduous between owners and their employees, but the union succeeded in keeping the factories operating and their membership in jobs. When in 1910 the NBOP built a new brick building (see Figure 44) in East Liverpool, Ohio, for its headquarters, a message of permanence and stability was sent with which the pottery industry agreed. Taking its cue from the industry leaders, the public likewise did not view the pottery industry as rancorous. Southern Potteries in Erwin had maintained a local chapter of the NBOP from 1917 with about half of its employees as members. After the mid-1930s that percentage increased (as did membership figures for the NBOP in general--see Table 1),

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[17]Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 92.

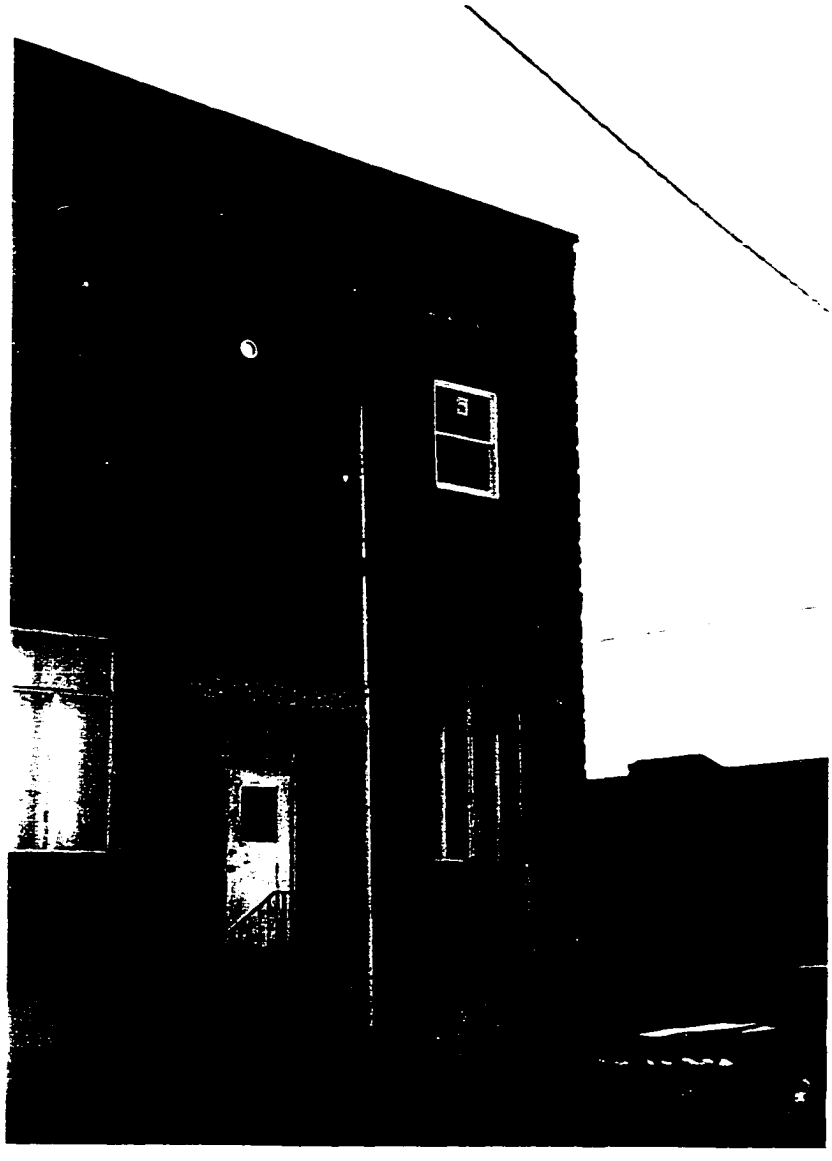

Figure 44. NBOP headquarters, East Liverpool, Ohio (1910)
Photograph by the author

MEMBERSHIP OF THE NBOP AS OF MARCH 31, OF EACH YEAR

1911	6,500 (approx.)	1933	---	1952	25,980
1914	7,950	1934	10,757	1953	24,648
1915	7,687	1935	11,270	1954	23,299
1917	7,814	1936	13,252	1955	24,070
1918	8,151	1937	13,633	1956	25,841
1919	7,877	1938	15,085	1957	24,700
1920	8,870	1939	14,909	1958	22,547
1921	9,360	1940	16,482	1959	21,329
1922	9,360	1941	19,475	1960	21,006
1923	9,130	1942	22,011	1961	16,362
1924	8,383	1943	21,825	1962	16,013
1925	8,391	1944	22,589	1963	---
1926	7,755	1945	22,099	1964	16,758
1927	7,277	1946	22,373	1965	16,232
1928	6,960	1947	26,750	1966	16,390
1929	6,553	1948	28,633	1967	13,909
1930	6,060	1949	29,145	1968	16,264
1931	---	1950	26,814	1969	17,103
1932	5,530	1951	27,713	1970	17,930

Source: NBOP, IBOP, and IBPAW, Executive Board Reports, 1911-1970.

Table 1. Membership of the NBOP as of March 31, of each year

(Reprinted by permission of Kent State University, from Don A. Shotliff, "The History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry: The National Brotherhood of Operative Potters-International Brotherhood of Operative Potters, 1890-1970" (Kent, 1977), 405.)

and at least one newspaper clipping claimed 100 percent of Southern Potteries employees held union membership. While workers and management sometimes found themselves at odds with each other, both parties recognized that consumer satisfaction with their products remained the single most important objective for them all. The items created at Southern Potteries and at factories in Ohio, New Jersey, and scattered elsewhere served the public. Competition for ever-larger shares of that market could pit pottery plants against each other. In common, though, they faced threats from two different but equally dangerous developments. The continued push for mechanization within American factories plagued potteries as much as did the availability of dinnerware imported from Europe and Asia.

The high tariffs of 1883 and 1890 had provided protection to the young domestic dinnerware producers, enabling them to gain dominance in the United States' market, as mentioned earlier. The lowered Wilson-Gorman Tariff of 1894 lasted only until 1897, when Congress reinstated the former duty rate of 1890. Though the tariff of 1913 once again lowered the duty percentage on pottery ware, the subsequent eruption of World War I effectively reduced imports from 1915 for five years. Commencing in 1920, however, imports in ceramics rose steadily (except in 1922) until by 1927 they composed 30 percent of the ware sold in the United States, a return to their pre-war share of the market (see Table 2). Imported ware functioned as the common enemy for the USPA and the NBOP.[18]

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[18]For details on Congressional tariff hearings involving the NBOP and the USPA, see Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," chapters 4, "Industrial Opposition, the Great Strikes and the NBOP during the 1920's," and 5, "The Great Depression and the New Deal." General histories of the tariffs of the first half of the twentieth century include: Percy W. Bidwell, *What the Tariff Means to American Industries* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956); E. E. Schattshneider, *Politics, Pressures, and the Tariff: A Study of Free Private Enterprise in Pressure Politics, as Shown in the 1929-1930 Revision of the Tariff* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1963);

TOTAL IMPORTS INTO THE UNITED STATES
OF EARTHENWARE AND CHINA

1900	$ 8,646,223	1914	$10,629,178
1901	9,350,920	1915	8,681,472
1902	9,680,156	1916	5,837,206
1903	10,512,052	1917	5,989,964
1904	12,005,008	1918	6,824,612
1905	11,659,723	1919	6,498,081
1906	12,877,528	1920	8,696,270
1907	13,492,731	1921	13,020,937
1908	13,427,969	1922	11,889,964
1909	9,648,759	1923	13,160,662
1910	10,796,234	1924	15,844,973
1911	11,411,665	1925	15,490,440
1912	9,997,698	1926	18,512,818
1913	10,172,763	1927	18,847,228

Source: USPA, Proceedings, 1905, p. 42; Ibid., 1907, p. 28; Ibid., 1928, p. 65.

Table 2. Total Imports into the United States of Earthenware and China

(Reprinted by permission of Kent State University, from Don A. Shotliff, "The History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry: The National Brotherhood of Operative Potters-International Brotherhood of Operative Potters, 1890-1970" (Kent, 1977), 404.)

Of the decorated ware in 1927 coming from overseas, 53 percent originated in Japan. The wages paid Japanese pottery workers fell far below those paid in Germany and England, which were themselves less than one-half those paid in the United States, so the price of the finished product for the consumer, if no import duty was applied, was lower as well.[19] The adverse effect on the domestic pottery industry, already mentioned, foreshadowed the depressed condition the rest of the American population soon felt. At the same time, the aggressive attitude of the Japanese expanded beyond these business dealings into military build-up and actions in China and other Pacific territories. By the middle of the 1930s, the Japanese presence seemed to be looming on several fronts. Perhaps because the pottery industry had been among the first to suffer negative results from this particular direction, it led in reaction. At the American Federation of Labor (AFL) annual convention in 1937, the NBOP delegation introduced a resolution to boycott Japanese goods. The unanimous acceptance of this proposal by the members of the convention provoked various actions, including the eventual formation of the "Buy American Club." The support displayed by the AFL leadership for one of the smaller unions in its constituency surely gave the NBOP officers and members a psychological lift after experiencing ten years of hard times.[20]

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and Frank W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the U. S.* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914).

[19]Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," 150, writes in response to "the Ways and Means Committee, the NBOP officials stated that English pottery wages averaged 34 cents an hour, German wages 28 cents, and Japanese only .08 cents hourly, while American potters earned 86 cents per hour."

[20]It is worth noting, though, that the AFL was in the midst of its struggle with John L. Lewis and his Committee of Industrial Organization when the resolution vote occurred. Keeping its member unions happy might help the AFL in the ongoing struggle for loyalty it faced when it decided to expel the CIO in 1938.

See Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 320-23, for a fuller description of the initial

Attracting consumers could ease hard times too, though the individual pottery companies faced challenges there. Besides the competition pressing from abroad in the 1920s and 1930s, the pottery industry had to confront issues raised by continued mechanization and, following Henry Ford's lead, the shift to mass production. Since wages accounted for 50 to 60 percent of the pottery factory costs,[21] realizing profits came through a large sales volume on items with only small mark-ups. Management, therefore, favored increased production of dinnerware, but making assembly-line modifications alone did not insure quicker or larger output. Once a jiggerman created plates, they had to be fired. The bottle kilns of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took time to operate and held fairly small quantities during each firing.[22]

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phases of the NBOP "Buy America" campaign as begun in East Liverpool, Ohio.

[21]Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," 194, reports wages equaled 50 percent of total production costs in 1925, and Regina Lee Blaszczyk, "Imagining Consumers: Manufacturers and Markets in Ceramics and Glass, 1865-1965" (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1995), 311, writes that in the early 1930s wages comprised about 60 percent.

[22]Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 123 and 264, describes bottle kilns and reports that the various stages included in one firing cycle of a bottle, or periodic, kiln "required anywhere from eighty-six to 114 hours."

Blaszczyk, "Imagining Consumers," 293 and 334, and McCabe, *National Collective Bargaining in the Pottery Industry*, 8, point out the different classifications of laborers involved: placers and firemen, who were considered skilled workers, and drawers, who removed the ware and were categorized as unskilled. Placers put the ware in saggers (containers) and then placed the saggers in the bottle kiln in tiers to heights of twenty feet in the bisque stage. These towers could fall over with much loss of ware. Firemen controlled the initial, or bisque, firings of 2,200-3,000 degrees Fahrenheit for two days and glost firings (after applying glaze to the ware) of slightly lower temperature and shorter duration.

In Figure 45 the chimneys of the three bottle kilns used in the bisque stage at Southern Potteries are in the foreground with four glost chimneys and three smaller decorating kiln chimneys behind them. This image, taken from a post card postmarked February 25, 1924, must have been made prior to 1923, because in that year Charles

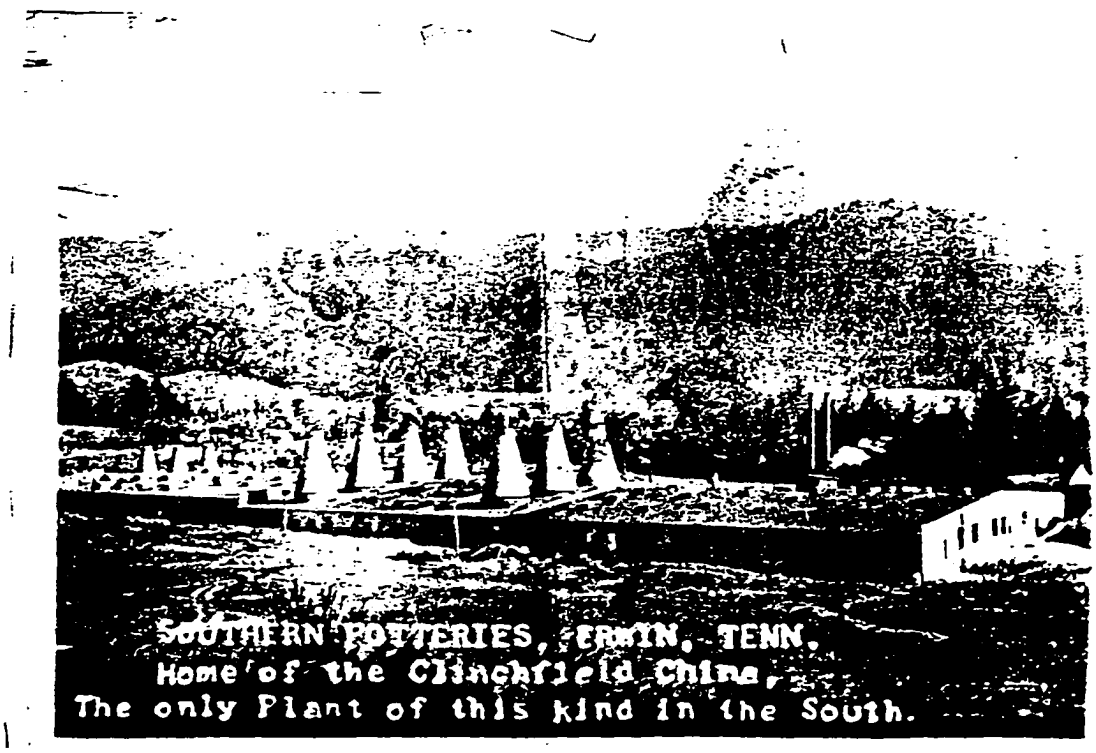

Figure 45. Southern Potteries in the 1920s

(Reprinted courtesy of Rene Hashe Keplinger of Erwin, Tennessee.)

Addressing these negative features, the Germans developed a differently shaped tunnel kiln in the nineteenth century. While capable of holding larger loads and firing more consistently and efficiently, the expense involved in replacing bottle kilns with this innovation kept tunnel kilns from emerging as an advantageous improvement to United States pottery factory owners until the 1920s. In the first half of that decade, however, the world's largest pottery company, Homer Laughlin China Company of Newell, West Virginia, commenced the shift to tunnel kilns, a move that forced its competitors to follow suit in order to survive. Once a pottery plant had the increased capacity of the tunnel kiln, the management could call for an increase in items to fill it and to do so more frequently.[23]

Foreman expanded the seven bisque and glost kilns by one of each type to a total of nine; see Albert L. Price, "Southern Potteries, Incorporated," in *Around Home in Unicoi County*, ed. William W. Helton (Johnson City, Tenn.: Overmountain Press, 1986), 69.

[23]Tunnel, or continuous, kilns got that name in part because of their length which in the straight model could extend over three hundred feet, though circular tunnel kilns like those added at Southern Potteries in the 1930s had a diameter of forty-eight feet.

The initial change introduced by tunnel kilns was the placement of the saggers holding ware to be fired on "cars" that traveled through the tunnel, allowing a continuous firing while the pottery moving through the kiln experienced the stages of warming temperatures, high heat firing, and cool-down. The advantages of this method included a much reduced firing time (under one hour for the glost stage); a savings in fuel; fewer breakages since the stacks of saggers on the cars reached only nine-foot heights; and a steady stream of pottery moving from jiggermen to decorators.

At the Homer Laughlin plant three tunnel kilns produced an estimated equivalent of twenty bottle kilns. At Southern Potteries two continuous kilns did the work of the nine old periodic ones. See Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 264; Blaszczyk, "Imagining Consumers," 301-02; McCabe, *National Collective Bargaining in the Pottery Industry*, 263; and undated newspaper clipping attached to H. W. Kibler, Southern Potteries, Erwin, Tennessee, to R. R. Humphries, Federal Writers' Project, Knoxville, Tennessee, LS, 17 February 1939, Federal Writers' Project Records, 1941, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Mechanization of the steps leading up to the firing procedure increased in the 1930s. Such investments in technology during the Depression suggest an optimistic and far-sighted outlook on the part of management. The impact of industrialization, however, upon what began as a craft included a "de-skilling" of particular operations and fear of an accompanying loss of status for the people performing them. While machinery produced a more uniform item, mechanization might also eliminate jobs and weaken the skill-oriented union, both desirable objectives to the USPA as it was feeling less successful in its negotiations with the NBOP. The NBOP fought to save its power by urging management to allow only skilled workers, replaced by machines, to operate those machines. First with the cast sagger introduced in 1933, and then with dipping machines and decorating appliances, management made concessions to the NBOP requests. Far more ominous for the future of the workers were the introduction of the kiln conveyor, or "iron horse," and then in 1938 the adoption of a spreader and in 1940 the development of a new jiggering machine. The kiln conveyor carried both newly turned dinnerware pieces and men toward the kiln. As all were moved along, the workers had to swiftly--and carefully--place the ware in saggers (containers) to be fired in the kiln they approached. Workers complained that this invention produced constant tension for them as well as physical discomfort. The spreader and new jiggering machine proved worse, though, since they replaced employees. The first pressed out the clay (a job formerly done by batters out), and then a conveyor fed the clay to the jiggering machine that could automatically turn out twenty-two pieces per minute (or 100-125 dozen plates per hour) and pass them along to a finisher and then to the tunnel kiln. The machinery needed a small number of operatives to see that it ran smoothly, but the potter at his wheel had no place in the modern dinnerware pottery factory.[24]

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[24]For more information concerning improvements in the mechanized aspects of

The 1930s were difficult years for pottery labor, then, because of international and domestic competition, mechanization of pottery factories, and the national depression, but the stance of the leadership in union-related areas changed to meet these challenges. Another ever-present factor of equal significance, the public's taste, stood beyond the union's control. And in the 1920s and 1930s, consumer interests altered as well. The destructiveness of World War I caused several different reactions. The war's horrors made allusions to an Arts and Crafts world that much more ephemeral, and the Arts and Crafts movement did not survive. Elements of it, though, influenced the colonial and crafts revivals that developed, looking back to an age perhaps simpler and more stable. While the war effectively put an end to the momentum of the Progressive era with its stress on improvements, for some people it influenced them "to look to the future and a new world order based on rationality and science."[25] Modernism in art reflected and glorified the triumphs of the machine age and the mass-production era. Meeting the divergent desires of the thoroughly modern buyers as expressed in these two major, and antipodal, trends in design sent potteries back to the drawing boards. The most successful companies concentrated their efforts, settling on one trend or the other in terms of developing patterns and their new, resultant images.

These adjustments represented just the latest developments in a long line of aesthetic decisions regarding consumers and consumption since the mid-nineteenth century. Jean Gordon and Jan McArthur in their article, "American Women and

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pottery factories, see Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," 233-35 and 269; Blaszczyk, "Imagining Consumers," chapter 4, "Reign of the Robots: The Homer Laughlin China Company and Flexible Mass Production"; and Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 319.

[25]Barbara Haskell, *The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 145.

Domestic Consumption, 1800-1920," define four stages through which consumption habits evolved. From traditional consumption through status seeking and rationalized to personally gratifying consumption, these stages were based on increasing availability of a variety of products.[26] And the decision to buy products had a cyclical effect that proved indispensable to the growth of industry. The purchases made by consumers put cash into circulation. These purchases allowed businesses to place fresh orders and pay for them. The merchants' dollars went to factories in need of capital to pay for machinery and expansion in order to produce more goods to attract consumers. At the same time, the decision to buy certain products or particular brands might also be seen as a maneuver for social acceptance, enabling upward mobility.[27] In other words, consumer decisions

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[26]Jean Gordon and Jan McArthur, "American Women and Domestic Consumption, 1800-1920: Four Interpretive Themes," *Journal of American Culture* 8 (Fall 1985): 36. For a discussion of women's roles and consumerism, see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1977).

The industrialization process that introduced those manufactured goods also caused realignment of the nineteenth-century populace beneath the existing upper class. Out of the lower class a second distinctive group, the burgeoning middle class, arose. Made up in part of merchants, mill owners, bankers, and other increasingly important commercial figures, this middle class aspired to be more like the upper rank it could never become. In like fashion, the masses still in the lower class might hope someday to emulate the new middle class. This further separating of society into three classes instead of two produced several changes. The power of the old lower class weakened as the middle class usurped what power it had, although the superiority and mastery of the upper class did not diminish. The development of a middle class allowed a new level of produced goods to be introduced as well. Now two classes below the upper echelon might attempt imitation of the class above them by purchase of goods that seemed to them fitting for a higher social standing. See Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery, 1850-1930* (Rochester, N.Y.: The Strong Museum, distributed by University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 13, who talks about this pattern of imitation and suggests the purpose behind acquisition to be less a matter of competing with other people than demonstrating a family's good taste.

[27]Mary Praetzellis, Adrian Praetzellis, and Marley R. Brown III, "What Happened to the Silent Majority? Research Strategies for Studying Dominant Group Material

made by women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries held significance on more than one level. Besides their economic impact, these decisions could be seen as defining good taste and social class.[28] And as new consumers sought acceptance into American society, the effect produced changing fashions. Such decisions clearly represented, in Karal Ann Marling's phrase, "the expressive act of choice."[29]

Beginning in the 1920s, then, some savvy consumers sought after objects that evoked the modernist trends displayed with much fanfare in postwar Paris and in Germany at the Bauhaus. Though the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et

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Culture in late Nineteenth-Century California," in *Documentary Archaeology in the New World*, ed. Mary C. Beaudry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 194, find "the emulative process whereby members of one class imitate those of another . . . is possible only in a society in which more than one class can afford the luxury of 'sumptuous dress' and where the relationship between these classes is not static." Even while trying to distance itself from the lower order, the middle class functioned as a "translator of these values to the working classes."

Gordon and McArthur, "American Women and Domestic Consumption," 42, suggest that imitation from below drove middle and upper class women away from the Victorian styles they had earlier cherished as their own.

[28]Women in the lower class had a role in this changing economy, too. They might be smaller-dollar consumers, but they entered the work force as well, filling the needs for unskilled labor in an expanding industrial environment.

[29]Praetzellis, Praetzellis, and Brown, "What Happened to the Silent Majority?" 194, and Karal Ann Marling, "From the Quilt to the Neoclassical Photograph: The Arts of the Home in an Age of Transition," in *The Arts and the American Home, 1890-1930*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Karal Ann Marling (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 6.

For other sources that examine consumers and their choices, see the other essays in *The Arts and the American Home, 1890-1930*; Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, eds., *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); and Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Industriels Modernes that opened in Paris in 1925 included no American design entries, by 1927 the presentation of an Art Deco exposition in New York indicates the style had engaged an American audience. This development resulted from enthusiasm for modern design expressed on several fronts. Objects from the Paris exhibit traveled to museums in United States cities for viewing in 1926. Reaching a far larger public, though, were the subsequent department store displays, and as Janet Kardon observed, "French modernism was disseminated in this country through the dual efforts of museums and retailers, as stores competed with museums to define good taste."[30]

Descended respectively from Cubist and Art Nouveau influences, the angular and curvilinear ornamentation of the Art Deco period evolved in the 1930s in the United States. Machine imagery "celebrating the materials and inventions of the modern world" resulted in a streamlined approach to be used in the total design of an object, not just its flourishes.[31] Separately, a group led by Walter Gropius established the Bauhaus in 1919. This German center of the arts urged both that form follow function and that "the design process must be predicated on mass production."[32] Both the Bauhaus influence on the growing field of industrial design and the evolving Art Deco coincided with the Depression which, as William Gates observes, "helped to stimulate a design revolution." He quotes from Jeffrey Meikle that during this decade "American design experienced a

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[30]Janet Kardon, "Craft in the Machine Age," in *Craft in the Machine Age, 1920-1945* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, in association with the American Craft Museum, 1995), 25. A literary magazine, *The Little Review*, sponsored the "Machine Age Exposition" held in 1927 in New York's Steinway Hall.

[31]Haskell, *American Century*, 156.

[32]Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 702.

quantum leap from the Victorian era to the twentieth century."[33] Wendy Kaplan evaluates that period as one that "intensified people's need to feel mastery over the new forces unleashed by technology, and streamlining satisfied that need by providing a comforting metaphor for speed, control, and progress."[34] Potteries, while in some respects suffering from mechanization, nevertheless felt compelled to create designs that celebrated modernism. By Gates's analysis, "bright colors and streamlined shapes . . . stimulated a public faith in the future, looking beyond the depressed conditions in which many people found themselves."[35] The most successful example in terms of mass produced domestic dinnerware came from the Homer Laughlin China Company and its art director Frederick Rhead in 1936.

The Homer Laughlin China Company (HLC) had from its beginning provided leadership to the industry. Founded as a yellow ware pottery by two brothers in East Liverpool, Ohio, in 1871, the small plant became the region's first to shift to the production of whiteware. In 1876 the HLC entry at the Philadelphia Exposition received that fair's highest award, suggesting to the public that this domestic ware compared favorably with imported ones. Over the next twenty years the company expanded its facilities while focusing on the middle and lower end of the dinnerware market. By 1897, Homer Laughlin decided to move into Los Angeles real estate and sell his pottery company. The families of the new owner, Louis Aaron of Pittsburgh, and the new

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[33]Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 318, and Jeffrey Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), quoted in Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 318, n. 10.

[34]Wendy Kaplan, "Industrial Design: Streamlined Moderne," in Haskell, ed., *The American Century*, 301.

[35]Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 318.

manager, W. Edwin Wells, have maintained the company ever since. A decision in 1902 to build a company town in Newell, West Virginia, shifted company headquarters from Ohio, but the new location remained connected to its old base by streetcar lines and a suspension bridge across the Ohio River. HLC's continually increasing association with the F. W. Woolworth variety chain stores provided the pottery with a nationwide venue. As mentioned earlier, shifting to tunnel kilns helped the company keep up with demand. Developing its own design and decorating department freed HLC from dependence on decal suppliers and allowed for long-range planning of new product lines. The best example of the success of this move is the company's Fiesta Ware.[36]

Pottery factories had long histories of borrowing ideas from their competitors that seemed popular with the public. HLC was no exception to this habit, and the idea of Fiesta Ware began in just that way. General manager Joseph M. Wells recognized a trend among some small California potteries in the late 1920s worthy of study. The brightly colored California dinnerware contrasted sharply with the white- or ivory-based backgrounds usually seen among mass produced ware. Developing a similar product for that larger market could garner more consumer attention, and as the world's largest pottery HLC had the money and staff to design such a totally different product line for mass production. Regina Blaszczyk's description of the stages involved to bring the concept to tangible fruition makes clear what a vast undertaking it was. While she credits the colors and the shapes that "hinted at art moderne" for the new line's success, Blaszczyk also adds her opinion that the concentric circles Frederick Rhead had

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[36]For more details on the Homer Laughlin China Company, see Blaszczyk, "Imagining Consumers," chapter 3, "Beauty for a Dime: The Homer Laughlin China Company and the Retailing Revolution," and Joanne Jasper, *Turn of the Century American Dinnerware, 1880s to 1920s* (Paducah, Ky.: Collector Books, 1996), 59.

developed for the ware "harked back to the early twentieth-century arts and crafts movement and its veneration of handmade objects." In contrast, Barbara Perry writes that since "the emphasis is placed on form and the avoidance of surface decoration . . . the design decisions were in keeping with the tenets of the Bauhaus and other modernist schools." For whatever reasons, the appeal to consumers was such that William Gates claims Fiesta Ware "became the most successful line of dinnerware ever made in the United States." And while humans designed it, Fiesta Ware was produced and decorated by machines, in that way epitomizing its era both then and today to consumers who purchase new Fiesta Ware even now.[37]

As appealing as it proved to be, not every consumer turned enthusiastically to Fiesta Ware or to the modern designs developed by other dinnerware companies. Concurrent with their streamlined forms, a resurgence in handicrafts drew a large following. The popularity of Tudor and Colonial Revival styles of architecture in the 1920s and 1930s suggests that some savvy consumers sought after imagery of a less complicated, slower past or of a uniquely American one. The urge to pursue the Colonial Revival style received impetus from three significant developments begun in the 1920s. As Wendy Kaplan points out, Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, John D. Rockefeller's Colonial Williamsburg, and Henry Francis du Pont's decorative arts collection (now open

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[37]For details of the people and stages involved in the year-long development of Fiesta Ware, see Blaszczyk, "Imagining Consumers," chapter 5 "Art Engineering: Frederick Herten Rhead, the Homer Laughlin China Company, and American Consumers"; the quotation comes from page 376; Barbara Perry, "Modernism and American Ceramics," in Kardon, ed., *Craft and the Machine Age 1920-1945*, 108; and Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 319.

The original Fiesta Ware colors of orange red, deep blue, cucumber green, egg yellow, and ivory have been supplemented to appeal to contemporary consumers, but the shapes with their concentric-circle texture in those solid colors remain the same.

to the public as the Winterthur Museum collection) attempted, in different ways, to preserve that American past. And some people even argued that the past survived, at least in part, in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. A groundswell of interest in craft tradition led, on the one hand, to companies reproducing furniture and needlework kits for the home and, on the other, to the marketing of items handmade by rural craftsmen. Appropriate dinnerware to accompany Colonial Revival interiors and consumer tastes also seemed in order.[38]

Southern Potteries, located squarely in the Southern Appalachian region, responded to these various forms of national competition through identifying with the region. Where the Homer Laughlin Company of the Ohio River region of West Virginia pursued a streamlined modern design in its new product, management in the dinnerware factory in Erwin, Tennessee, attempted to capture the market for the handicraft look. As already noted, Southern Potteries committed its resources in the depressed 1930s to improved equipment in order to increase production and keep up with competition. In that same decade, the pottery plant also experimented with hand-decorated patterns. The then-current method of decoration involved lining and decal application following the glost firing after the ware had been glazed. Called overglaze decoration, the colors and patterns could fade and lose their crisp edges with repeated usage and washings.[39] Hand-painted patterns fared no better than the bands of lining or the decals did. And, except in

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[38]Wendy Kaplan, "Colonial Revival: Idealizing the Past," in Haskell, ed., *The American Century*, 240 and 241. See also Beverly Gordon, "Cozy, Charming, and Artistic: Stitching Together the American Home," in *The Arts and the American Home, 1890-1930*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Karal Ann Marling (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 124–48.

[39]Employees ran the ware, once decorated, through a decorating kiln to "set" the design, but this step did not put a protective layer (like glaze) over the decorations.

small art potteries catering to more expensive tastes, hand-painted patterns had been eliminated decades earlier by decalcomania because of the time, skill, and accompanying expense involved in such work. Still, consumer decisions in the 1930s indicated a large market existed for hand-decorated items. In its desire for a distinct look that would lead to sizeable profits, management at Southern Potteries tackled both obstacles to mass producing a hand-painted line.

The solution to the problem of fading decoration involved rearranging the steps of the process. In the past, the ware moved through the factory from the clay room through the bisque firing to the glazing department and its subsequent glost firing before going to the decorating room and eventually to the packing department. The change introduced at Southern Potteries in the 1930s placed the decorating stage after the bisque firing and before the glaze dipping and glost firing. With this new order in place, application of the glaze followed the hand painting, allowing that glaze when fired to act like a seal over the painted pattern and the ware it decorated. The success of this modification led to rearrangement of space when Southern Potteries expanded its physical plant in the 1940s (see Figure 46).

The second difficulty to surmount involved more than the order of equipment and space. Who was to hand decorate the pieces and how? Given the pottery's increasingly mechanized earlier stages and the presence of tunnel kilns that needed to be continually fed ware for firing, the skilled male decorators of the nineteenth century, even if they could be resurrected, could not meet the pace required. Southern Potteries, like other twentieth-century pottery factories, had women decorators whose classification as unskilled workers made them less expensive to management than the skilled jiggermen and mouldmakers. Instead of simply lining or placing decals, perhaps these women could be trained to paint patterns. Crucial, though, to any shift to hand decorating was

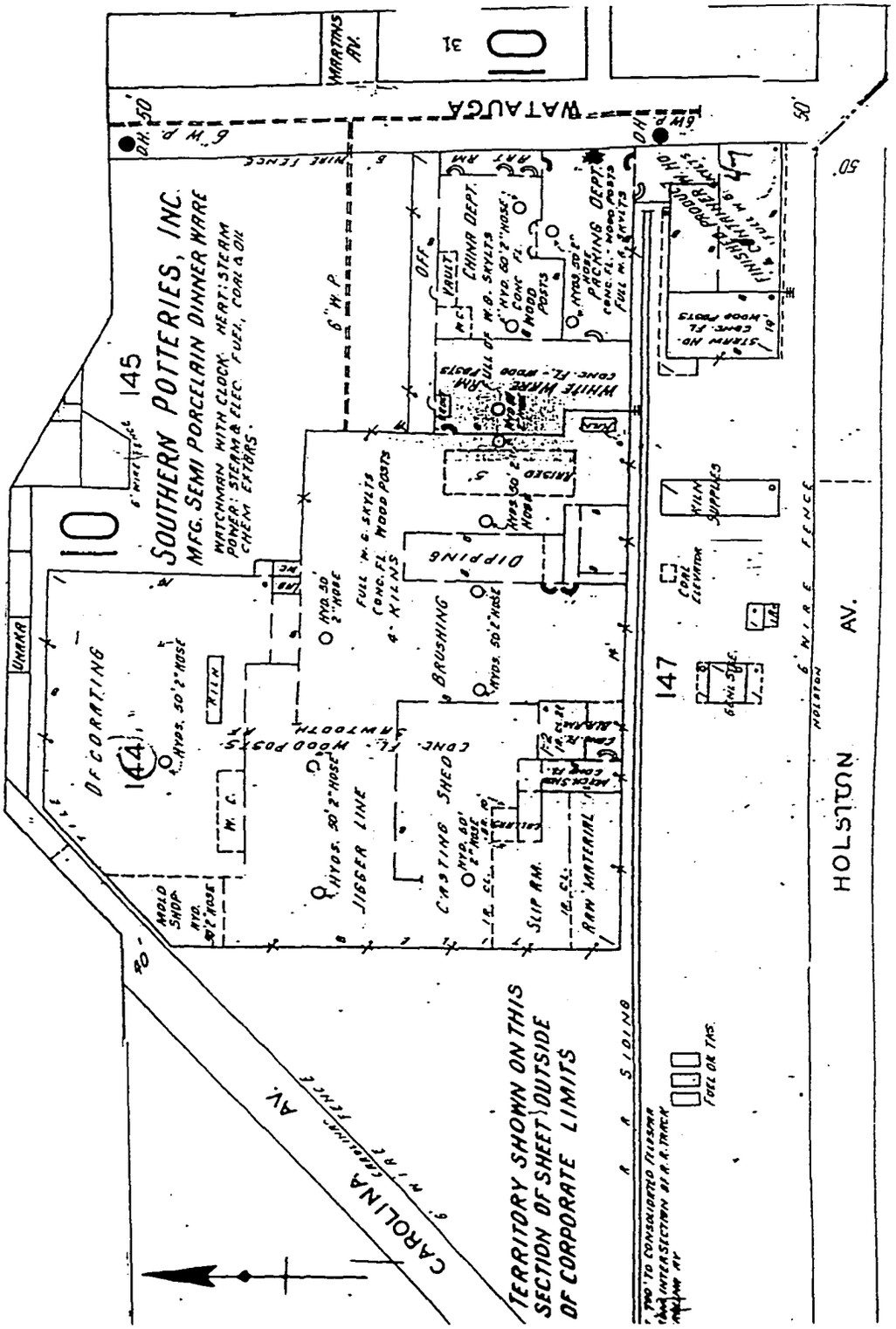

Figure 46. Southern Potteries
(Source: 1948 Sanborn Fire Insurance map)

the establishment of an efficient routine. To keep up the needed production pace, the decorators must function in a manner similar to workers assembling cars, over and over again carrying out one distinct step in a larger procedure. The key, then, was to break down those handicraft patterns into their parts and make each person responsible for one part. Completion of a decorated plate would involve several "artists" instead of one. As Negatha Peterson, a decorator who began work at Southern Potteries in 1941, recalls: "We had four-girl crews, and I worked second on crew. I helped the first girl if she needed help on flowers and such, and then I did stemming and outlining flowers, and then the next one did borders." The last girl washed off any smudges, and Peterson claims a four-girl crew could do 100 dozen plates a day.[40] Management had worked around its second obstacle.

Hand-painted under-the-glaze dinnerware became Southern Potteries' main focus from 1938. To signal the shift in appearance from their earlier Clinchfield lines, management named the new product "Blue Ridge Dinnerware." This particular label evoked the mountains and region from which handcrafted items came, and Southern Potteries hoped for any subtle association shoppers might make between the idea of handcrafted items and their mass produced dinnerware. Consumers reacted very favorably. The essential element in the success of Blue Ridge Dinnerware was not its name, however, but its women decorators. Blue Ridge depended as heavily upon human involvement for its success as Homer Laughlin's Fiesta Ware depended upon machines for its look.

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[40]Negatha Peterson, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 16 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author.

Such dependence on human labor befits a product from the Southern Appalachians when one thinks of the craft movement in the 1920s and 1930s that highlighted the region. In fact, Southern Potteries expertly played along with this movement involving the region and the interest it stimulated. Bringing the native population and their goods to the attention of the rest of the nation had been an ongoing process, however, from late in the nineteenth century. The "Industrial Survey of The City of Erwin" newspaper article of 30 May 1927 that described Erwin's potential labor pool as pure Anglo-Saxon stock just reiterated misinformation from missionaries and teachers who first entered some parts of the Appalachian region at about the same time as the mineral and timber speculators. Well-meaning outsiders saw the region's inhabitants as secluded. Samuel T. Wilson, who came to Tennessee to be president of Maryville College, described the people of the region in 1914 as "marooned in the mountains" and "the latest Robinson Crusoes." From descriptions such as Wilson's arose what scholars today call the "myth of Appalachia."[41]

Whether working for a church-related mission school or a settlement school based on Progressive ideas, teachers often displayed a paternalistic attitude, even when creating programs that involved older as well as younger generations. While meant to help the local population raise money and save craft traditions, this attitude also introduced problems in terms of manipulating the craftsmen and the public. The fireside industries program that emerged first at Berea College in Kentucky serves as a good example.[42] In

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[41]Samuel Tyndale Wilson, *The Southern Mountaineers* (New York: Presbyterian Home Missions, 1914), 9; see also *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, s.v. "Anglo-Saxon South," by David Chalmers, 1128; "Appalachian Myth," by Henry D. Shapiro, 1128-29; and Shapiro's *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

[42]Fireside industries were, at least initially, those crafts done in the home to be

1896, Berea's president, William G. Frost, encouraged the selling of handicrafts by mountain women at the college's commencement weekend fair. The success of this venture led to annual fairs and to imitation by other schools. This venue permitted mountaineers to receive both some money for their products and attention for their craft traditions. Soon, selected craftsmen began teaching the students at these Appalachian schools their skills, and certain of these schools developed a full-fledged program named fireside industries to make money.[43] Schools with this new focus began to hire crafts teachers from outside Appalachia to replace the local craftsmen. School administrators chose the craft items to be produced under the outsiders' instructions. Their choices did not necessarily represent goods these mountain people would have made for themselves but instead the goods the buying public desired. The teachers hired from outside the region helped weavers recreate Scandinavian patterns or woodworkers make furniture from the designs of Englishman William Morris. With little recognition or understanding of what they caused to transpire, these decision-makers replaced the authentic with an

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used in the home. In the modern, more mechanized age, handmade products took on a special appeal to consumers who could not themselves make such items, and some Appalachian settlement and mission schools and colleges began to sell baskets, coverlets, and brooms, among other items, to the outside market.

[43]A sampling of schools and colleges with fireside industries programs that have been studied by scholars includes: in Kentucky, Berea College and the Hindman and Pine Mountain Settlement Schools; in North Carolina, the John C. Campbell Folk School; and in Tennessee, the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School. For further information on these and other such schools, see John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921); Richard B. Drake, "The Mission School Era in Southern Appalachia," *Appalachian Notes* 6 (1978): 1-8; Elizabeth R. Hooker, *Religion in the Highlands: Native Churches and Missionary Enterprises in the Southern Appalachian Area* (New York: Home Missions Council, 1933); and David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native & Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*, Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

outsider's interpretation of what authentic should be. Even if appealing to the consumers had not been a factor, as David Whisnant has observed, "the 'culture' that is perceived by the intervenor (even before the act of intervention) is rarely congruent with the culture that is actually there. It is a *selection*, an *arrangement*, an *accommodation* to preconceptions. . . . Thus the culture that is 'preserved' or 'revived' is a hybrid at best."[44]

Is such a compromise as Whisnant describes better than the demise altogether of that indigenous culture? And what role did members of that culture play in its evolution? One of his fellow Appalachian natives, Garry Barker, writes that Whisnant "does not deeply explore whether or not the native mountaineers were *willing* cohorts in the 'cultural intervention' of the early twentieth century." Perhaps because Barker believes they were, he evaluates the process that was at work, its cause and result, with a more positive outcome. He has written that "when change did come--roadways, manufacturing, mail order--and began to eliminate the need for the hand skills involved in quilting, basketry, woodworking, and pottery, a missionary effort directly tied to the marketplace took over and preserved a vanishing culture."[45] Both Barker and Whisnant see change as inevitable with the "opening" of Appalachia, but it seems important to inject here that the exchange of ideas and subsequent modifications in craft traditions had always been present in this region. The region's isolation was never so complete as the

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[44]Whisnant, *All That Is Native & Fine*, 260.

[45]Garry Barker, *Notes from a Native Son: Essays on the Appalachian Experience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 118 and 110. Jane Kessler, "From Mission to Market: Craft in the Southern Appalachians," in *Revivals! Diverse Traditions 1920-1945: The History of Twentieth-Century American Craft*, ed. Janet Kardon (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, in association with the American Craft Museum, 1994), 126, calls this process one of "forming a new tradition--one shaped by the external influences of the marketplace rather than the internal influences of a closed community."

myth of Appalachia declared.[46] What marked the differences now were the speed with which new ideas entered the region, the increased number of factors to consider in altering former patterns, and the loss on the part of the native population to control those decisions.[47]

The Progressive impetus for reform that manifested itself in the establishment of fireside industries and craft centers in Appalachia continued into the 1920s, even as consumer demand for craft items continued to increase. Administrators in charge of the craftsmen showed mounting concerns for maintenance of that consumer demand. By late in the decade, fears of the twin threats caused by the marketplace, exploitation of craftsmen and reduction of craft standards, led these administrators to act. Several meetings of craft center representatives convened in North Carolina and Tennessee, and in late December 1929 what is today known as the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild formed. As a cooperative organization of more than twenty craft groups located in nine states, the Guild in 1931 established a Guild Shop in what had been the Allanstand

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[46]Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 88, refers to that community as "a small cog within the larger region's intricate pattern of trade," a description that might fit any number of rural communities across the country in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In contrast to Garry Barker's interpretation of the impact of outsiders, though, the culture of the residents of Cades Cove came to a definite end.

[47]These concerns were not limited to Appalachia alone, and a new movement labeled Regionalism emerged in society. While the Regionalists appeared across the nation in the years between the first and second world wars, their efforts were not centrally organized or uniform. As the term implies, Regionalists attempted to preserve the cultural, political, and social elements they associated with a particular section, hoping that pluralism might stave off the threat of a society made homogenized through mass production. See Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt in the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

Cottage Industries Shop for hand weaving at Asheville.[48] Though a small number of influential outsiders, like Allen Eaton of the Russell Sage Foundation, took active parts in the Guild's formation and early years, the administrators of the craft centers made up the bulk of the membership. By policing themselves through setting product standards and price controls, the Guild leadership maintained a level of quality goods that well-heeled consumers appreciated.[49]

Like the women teachers and reformers who came before him and were still forceful presences, Eaton believed the revival in the 1920s and 1930s of handicrafts in Appalachia served several useful functions. Eaton wrote that the money generated from the sale of craft items helped enable mountain families to stay in their region instead of moving to more urban areas in search of jobs. While survival of those craft traditions made up part of the rural heritage of the United States, something Eaton believed worth

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[48]Along with Allanstand, begun by Frances Goodrich, North Carolina supported, among other craft centers, Penland with its Weavers Cabin begun by Lucy Morgan and the Spinning Wheel at Beaver Lake, begun by Clementine Douglas. Among settlement schools, the one run by Pi Beta Phi Sorority in Tennessee, which eventually became the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, proved instrumental in establishing the Guild and later (1948) in creating the Guild's Craftsman's Fair.

[49]For more details on the Guild's early years, see Allen H. Eaton, *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1937); Helen Bullard, *Crafts and Craftsmen of the Tennessee Mountains* (Falls Church, Va.: Summit Press Ltd., 1976), 3-5; Allen Eaton, "The Mountain Handicrafts: Their Importance to the Country and to the People in the Mountain Homes," in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, ed. W. K. McNeil (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 227-41; Garry Barker, *The Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia, 1930-1990* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), chapter 2, "The 1930s: The Handicraft Guild, Southern Highlanders, and Eaton's Survey"; Barker, *Notes from a Native Son*, 112-15; and Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), chapter 3, "The Southern Highland Handicraft Guild: Organizing a 'Handicraft Culture.'"

preserving, it also provided "objects of use and beauty for the homes of countless people who may never get within this mountain region at all." Eaton also saw as significant the value of handicraft production among the native population. As his friend Frances Goodrich suggested, women benefited not only economically but also psychologically from having this outlet, itself a cultural contribution, as a connection to the outside world. In similar fashion, as Jane Becker points out, Olive Dame Campbell deemed most craft producers to be women. Campbell restricted her definition of true craft to work done in leisure time or for a second income for a family--in other words, to women's work. Guild protection would help raise its value and the esteem in which the women who did it were held.[50]

As noble as their words and endeavors sound, these various and diverse functions accorded by reformers to craft revival can be equally applied to the work done in the factory by women decorators at Southern Potteries. Their jobs provided them economic stability so that they might stay in their Appalachian environment. Their products brightened the homes of purchasers across the country. These decorators felt connection with the workers of the world through their labor (and union affiliation), while their contribution of decorating pottery by hand continued the long-established female tradition of china painting and home beautification. The influences, then, of the market on the women in craft production were not unlike the effect on Erwin's pottery industry workers. Garry Barker has observed, "the marketplace is an obvious force that can effectively either preserve or homogenize a local culture."[51] In the situation at Southern Potteries, it was perhaps, in effect, doing both.

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[50]Eaton, "The Mountain Handicrafts," 230-34; the quotation appears on 232; and Becker, *Selling Tradition*, 84.

[51]Barker, *Notes from a Native Son*, 115.

As the twentieth century progressed through its third and fourth decades, another type of outsider also took a role in supporting and encouraging the Appalachian craft traditions. Jane Becker sees those traditions shaped not only by the marketplace and consumers, or by the reformers that Whisnant criticized, but also by the government. The work of agencies, both state and federal, created in the 1910s and 1920s continued in the 1930s while new programs to counter the Depression appeared to supplement the earlier efforts. As Judith Anne Sealander has noted, a direct outgrowth of the Progressive era emerged on the national level when the Department of Labor established the Women's Bureau in 1920. "Emboldened by the suffrage victory and the significant wartime contributions women had made, Progressives, especially women Progressives, led the campaign to retain the World War I Woman-in-Industry Service as a permanent Women's Bureau within the Department of Labor." The United States Department of Agriculture had earlier organized its Cooperative Extension Service for rural families as a result of the 1914 Smith-Lever Act. Individual state legislatures might support its efforts, and Tennessee, which had been doing so since that time, later passed an additional Agriculture and Home Economics Cooperative Extension Act of 1929. Experts from the Women's Bureau concentrated on women who worked outside the home; those from the Extension Service offered advice to women whose work was focused on the home property. Though their main functions varied, both groups reported on the efforts of rural women to improve their families' situations. Regarding the crafts revival of the period, they offered conflicting opinions and suggestions.[52]

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[52]Becker, *Selling Tradition*, 6; Judith Anne Sealander, "The Women's Bureau, 1920-1950: Federal Reaction to Female Wage Earning" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1977), 4; and Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 106 and 117.

Typical of the Progressive era in which they operated, the early work of extension agents emphasized projects leading to improvements in the rural household environment. Teaching the women and girls of the family more efficient or safer ways to put up food or produce foodstuffs that could be sold for cash helped convince them of the value of a modern kitchen. And as the availability of electricity became more widespread, the attention shifted even more toward interior design and decoration. Better surroundings encouraged social uplift, a goal middle-class reformers knew their rural subjects would appreciate. Regularly, Colonial Revival was the preferred style underlying the suggested projects that would change the look within the home. Rural women in farm settings, then, received praise for copying or incorporating craft items that conjured up ideas of an earlier time. And the women who had generated those craft items they copied had lived in an even more rural situation than these farm wives experienced. The irony created by this development apparently escaped the extension agents, but their interest lay less with true Appalachian crafts and more with the Colonial Revival standardization of patterns, looks, and pieces that the agents espoused through their projects. In this way, extension agents and the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild leadership shared a common characteristic. Reformers in general desired standardization of design. Jane Becker uses the reaction of a representative of the Women's Bureau to mountain pottery to make that point. Having not been regulated by inclusion in the Guild, an independent potter's work was found lacking, due to "its uniqueness and authenticity." Still, USDA extension approval of the crafts revival added yet another segment of the population to the consumer pool requesting items, patterns, or kits to enhance the crafts effect in the home.[53]

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[53]Becker, *Selling Tradition*, 134. For more details on the Agricultural Extension

Where the Extension Services existed to discern the needs of the homemakers and to educate them, the Women's Bureau existed to discern the needs of women workers and to persuade companies and agencies to address those needs. Through field work and surveys, diligent staff members garnered information and issued reports. At least in terms of their investigation of Appalachian craft workers, though, as Jane Becker warns, "we must regard the surviving evidence of these encounters as a negotiation between at least two parties: representatives of the federal government who asked the questions and chose the data they needed to demonstrate their own theories and support their arguments, and the mountaineers who nonetheless generated their own responses." As a result of field work in 1933 and 1934, the Women's Bureau took a negative stance toward craft production among Appalachian women. In a speech delivered on 15 January 1936 to the Board of Directors of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Bertha Nienburg, assistant director of the Bureau, criticized the home production of craft items. Comparing the conditions to European sweatshops, Nienburg claimed "the contractor pays skilled women rates far below that offered the least skilled factory laborer" and these women "must get their contracts filled in time, regardless of home duties."[54] Nienburg knew her audience; these women leaders would be sympathetic to their disadvantaged "sisters" and might feel they could be of help. Nienburg had stated earlier

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activities in Tennessee, see Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community*, chapter 5, "Better Homes on Better Farms: Home Demonstration and Domestic Reform," and Becker, *Selling Tradition*, 101-03.

[54]Becker, *Selling Tradition*, 129, and Bertha M. Nienburg, "The Role of Women in the Nation's Wealth Production" (speech presented to the Board of Directors of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, n.p., 15 January 1936), Records of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, 1918-1965, University Publications of America, Inc., reel 16, Speeches: 147, p. 7.

in her speech that "men will not reshape the world for women. Women, themselves, must bring into play the humanizing factors that will affect economic forces; they must determine the part women are to play in the country's economic life of tomorrow." She must have meant this rallying cry to appeal to her listeners.[55]

The position taken by the Women's Bureau did not, however, adversely affect the public's interest in handicraft items. The Bureau's surveys, reports, and speeches had little impact, and other government departments took opposing views to this one supported by Nienburg and her colleagues.[56] In the rush of new agencies spawned during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first term as President, several undertook craft programs of varying duration and direction. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was the federal funder most often associated with art or crafts projects, but in Tennessee the Tennessee Emergency Relief Administration had functioned much like the WPA

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[55]Nienburg, "The Role of Women in the Nation's Wealth Production," 2. It is interesting to note that in the same month "Miss Nienburg attended a conference of project directors, Rural Resettlement Administration, in which they were urged not to stimulate craft development among low income groups unless they had previously ascertained there was a market for specific handicraft." Records of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, 1918-1965, University Publications of America, Inc., reel 2, Report No. 7: January 1-31, 1936, p. 3.

Who urged whom? If it was Nienburg who spoke, her argument here was based solely on economics and did not include social elements mentioned in her speech before directors of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. If the speaker was from the RRA instead, his argument varied from that put forth earlier by the Women's Bureau's Nienburg.

[56]Sealander's more general evaluation of the Bureau's difficulties certainly has bearing on their lack of success with their crafts recommendation. "Bureau agents had to be invited into factories employing women; they could not compel industries to obey their recommendations. Nor could they force male-led unions to treat women workers fairly. As bureaucrats who had only influence, not power, Women's Bureau members needed to be subtle politicians. Unfortunately they, by and large, failed the test." Sealander, "The Women's Bureau," 4.

prior to that federal agency's creation. The Civilian Conservation Corps, National Youth Administration, and Rural Resettlement Administration also had craft components. The National Park Service, National Forest Service, and Department of Indian Affairs supported similar endeavors as well, and the results provided diverse ethnic groups and minorities aid in maintaining parts of their traditions.[57]

The Southern Appalachian crafts received special attention from a New Deal creation unique in its purpose and longevity. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), authorized during Roosevelt's One Hundred Days in 1933, had been an idea nurtured by Senator George Norris of Nebraska for over a decade. Supporting the crafts tradition may not have been one of Norris's primary aims, but developing handicrafts as a source of income formed one early part of TVA's scheme for economic improvement to the region. The original impetus in this regard came from Arthur Morgan, who with Harcourt Morgan and David Lilienthal served as TVA's initial triumvirate of directors. Though Arthur Morgan left the agency in 1938, by then his interests had instigated several outlets for handicraft production.[58]

As the first step, Arthur Morgan organized in 1935 the Southern Highlanders, Inc., whose membership heavily overlapped with the Southern Highland Handicraft

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[57]Eaton, *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, 274; for more details, see Becker, *Selling Tradition*, chapter 4, "Order Out of Chaos: The Federal Government and the Industrialization of Handicrafts"; and Hildreth J. York, "New Deal Craft Programs and Their Social Implications," in *Revivals! Diverse Traditions 1920-1945: The History of Twentieth-Century American Craft*, ed. Janet Kardon (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, in association with the American Craft Museum, 1994), 55-61.

[58]Becker, *Selling Tradition*, 103-11, pinpoints Arthur Morgan as the primary force behind this movement; Barker, *Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia*, 22, suggests the TVA sponsorship "could have been a subtle effort to help offset and defuse the bitter resentment of the families and communities displaced by the TVA lakes."

Guild, with which it eventually merged in 1951. For this new association, TVA opened a shop on the Plaza at Rockefeller Center in New York to market its craft items. A second shop operated at the Southern Highlanders, Inc. headquarters in Norris, Tennessee, the model community TVA constructed not far from Knoxville, and at least two more shops in Tennessee opened later. Besides organizing the craftsmen and selling their products, TVA also began an educational component for the artisans and others who would like to learn the craft tradition. Woodworking, weaving, and potting shops constructed at Norris provided training in 1935 for 1,624 people in seventy-four classes. Arthur Morgan's desire that handicraft tradition might be aided by industrial advancements led also to the establishment of a ceramics laboratory where trained ceramic experts experimented with local clays.[59] In the decade of the Depression, the federally funded TVA helped the crafts revival to survive and prosper. Mirroring the efforts of the other reformers that it followed, the TVA encouraged standardization of goods and marketing of products desired by consumers when both thrusts went against the actual craft tradition. In "Writing about the Crafts," Garry Barker acknowledges that the old goods made by mountaineers before the crafts revival era are seldom if ever produced now. Instead, what does come down to the present of those craft traditions is "the mountain tradition of working with the hands, of using quality materials and ageless skills to create works of function and quality."[60]

Well-meaning reformers, consumers, and government agencies each in their own ways and all with best intentions adversely affected the crafts tradition they sought to

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[59]Bullard, *Crafts and Craftsmen of the Tennessee Mountains*, 5 and Appendix B, 196-98, and Eaton, *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, 295 and 216.

[60]Barker, *Notes from a Native Son*, 114.

elevate through the crafts revival movement. Such attention, though, to the products from the Southern Appalachians must have been a factor that Charles W. Foreman and his management at Southern Potteries considered in the 1930s. If the dinnerware factory in Erwin could produce its own version of hand-decorated dishes, the company could capitalize upon this national crafts mood. By 1938 Southern Potteries committed its resources and its future to the hand-painted underglaze line it marketed as Blue Ridge.

The end of the 1930s witnessed other significant changes at Southern Potteries as well. First among them was Hugh W. Kibler's arrival in Erwin from Minerva, Ohio, to assume a leading position in the plant's management. This event in 1937 may have precipitated modifications in several matters, and the long-term impact of Kibler's appearance proved favorable. He had previous business experience as the office manager of the Alliance Vitreous China Company of Alliance, Ohio, in the mid-1920s. He also had association with Owen China Company, probably after his time in Alliance and during the time Charles Foreman owned the company. The 1936 Canton, Ohio, city directory listed Kibler as Vice President of United Potteries, an umbrella organization connected to Foreman that included, along with its twelve Ohio-based firms, Southern Potteries of Tennessee. Following Kibler's move to Erwin, he became general manager of Southern Potteries by 1939, replacing G. F. Brandt whom Foreman had brought from Minerva in the 1920s.

Which of these three men proved most instrumental in the change to the hand-painted underglaze Blue Ridge line remains unknown. Brandt left Erwin, though, and organized a family-run pottery in Jonesborough, Tennessee, in 1940. Brandt's Cherokee China Company operated for only a decade or so, but it produced hand-painted underglaze whiteware.[61] He knew the procedure before he left Southern Potteries, and

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[61]Tennessee Department of Conservation, Division of Archaeology, *A Survey of*

one would assume Brandt had been a supporter of it since he set up his own company to make similar items in the same manner. If Foreman sent Kibler to Erwin to replace Brandt, this took two to three years to happen. If he sent Kibler to engineer the change to hand-painted underglaze pottery, that occurred almost upon his arrival. The timing involved suggests neither shift hinged exclusively on Kibler's presence.

Another important decision acted on over these same years involved the Atterbury-designed company housing along Ohio Avenue and Unaka Way. Southern Potteries had purchased from the Clinchfield Railroad a number of residences in 1920, and they had rented these houses to employees over the ensuing two decades. The deed records of Unicoi County show that the pottery sold ten of the houses in 1937, three in 1939, twenty-one in 1940, and the last one in 1941. Kibler bought his in 1940. Did the hard times of the Depression cause Foreman to decide to sell some of his company's housing in 1937? Since other twentieth-century mill villages and company communities continued as such in Tennessee until the 1950s, Southern Potteries' decision to sell earlier stands outside any trend.[62] Without survival of company records, an answer is merely speculative. The freedom from responsibilities for rental property, however, could allow energy to be concentrated solely on the pottery factory's physical plant and activities going on there. Did Kibler's presence signal a new mood, a new direction, a new era at Southern Potteries? In the 1940s the Erwin pottery factory reached its greatest size and

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Historic Pottery Making in Tennessee, by Samuel D. Smith and Stephen T. Rogers, Research series, no. 3 (Nashville: TDC, 1979), 62.

[62]Among five other company communities built in Tennessee from 1900 to the 1920s, DuPont sold its housing in the post-World War II boom, Bemis maintained its rental housing until the 1960s, and Luptonville, Alcoa, and Kingsport housing went on sale to employees in the 1950s.

achieved national recognition through its Blue Ridge Dinnerware, and Hugh Kibler held the title of general manager throughout those good years.

The fact of Kibler's presence should not diminish the role played by the women decorators at Southern Potteries. The success of the drastic move to a hand-painted underglaze line depended upon the women workers who painted the colorful patterns. Like the women mountaineers turning out crafts for the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild or Southern Highlanders, Inc., these women at Southern Potteries completed the assignments dictated to them. There is no doubt that in each scenario the women were used to management's benefit, but some observers would say they were helped as much as they were used. As the United States and its citizens prepared for war and a new decade opened, the intense interest in Appalachian crafts receded. Impending warfare brought new jobs and sources of income to people who served in the military or worked in defense industries, some even without leaving the mountains. The pottery business in Erwin boomed. An evaluation of the situations that the women decorators at Southern Potteries faced must take into consideration the developments there in the 1940s.

CHAPTER 6

BLUE RIDGE HAND-PAINTED DINNERWARE: FROM MERCHANDISE MARTS TO FLEA MARKETS

By choosing to transform its product into a distinctive looking dinnerware with a name that conjured up mountain crafts tradition, Southern Potteries intentionally sought the attention of the national marketplace. In so doing, the management in Erwin, Tennessee, bound the factory's future to national and international movements and to consumer whims, all of which operated beyond the pottery company's control. This gamble led initially to commercial success, and sales climbed throughout World War II. Only subsequently did the market change, leading to the company's failure and closure in 1957. Southern Potteries experienced a down curve as dramatic as had been its earlier economic upswing. Because the company ceased to operate, the end result in business terms was negative. Evaluation of Southern Potteries' relative success or failure, however, should also take into account the company's employees and the impact of their work situation on them. The decision made in 1938 to launch the hand-painted Blue Ridge dinnerware could not have been reached without the cooperation of the women decorators who made the hand-painted patterns possible. Because they recognized their distinct contribution, these women's self-esteem increased from the first hand-painted patterns they produced within the pottery factory. At the same time, every department, not just decorating, had an important role in that production, and employees realized that the parts played by each of them mattered. The experience of pottery employees through the 1940s and until the plant's demise presents a picture as significant as the company's profit and loss figures. To be fair and complete, an examination of Southern Potteries' last two decades requires, then, a search on two levels. Class differences as perceived

within the Southern Potteries community interplayed with business decisions. The results created a more complex mix of factors than some accountant's balance sheet of assets and liabilities can document.

In order to determine whether to concentrate on hand-painted underglaze Blue Ridge dinnerware, Southern Potteries management in the late 1930s evaluated their competition within the domestic pottery industry and took into account international events. Open aggression on the part of both Japan and Germany made wars in Asia and Europe appear almost certain and inevitable. The ongoing American Federation of Labor campaign to "Buy American" led to a decline in imported Japanese ceramics and helped American potteries. Once World War II commenced in Europe in late 1939, further declines in imports from English and German potteries meant the domestic market virtually belonged to U. S. firms. Moreover, the company already had borne the expense of increased mechanization and automation. If war came and affected manpower, company managers could recruit less skilled operatives with fewer fears of compromising the quality of dinnerware being produced. The pottery's decorators required only brief training. A ready supply of applicants from the Appalachian region desiring decorator jobs meant management could count on a steady production of the hand-painted dinnerware sets. All these factors made the decision to move to hand-decorated dinnerware appealing.

Southern Potteries stood to gain as well from an innovation relatively new to the pottery industry. Pottery companies had advertised in national trade journals for some time, but in the late 1930s the Homer Laughlin and Edwin M. Knowles China Companies led the way in placing ads in magazines that consumers read.[1] The owners of these

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[1]William C. Gates Jr., *The City of Hills and Kilns: Life and Work in East Liverpool, Ohio* (East Liverpool, Ohio: East Liverpool Historical Society, 1984), 319-20.

factories shifted tactics in order to make the potteries less dependent upon buyers working for china sections of department stores. Instead of pursuing these middle men and women, hoping for good in-store displays and coverage in hometown newspaper department store ads to attract customers, the dinnerware producers chose now to put their advertising funds into appeals made directly to the public. This strategy met with success, and other pottery companies followed the new trend, but few gained so quickly an advantage as Southern Potteries. The distinctive patterns promoted on its Blue Ridge line clearly stood out in comparison with the overglaze decal decorations of many of its rivals.

Southern Potteries managed to survive the Depression and in the late 1930s began to prosper. The work week, lowered in the days of the National Recovery Act to thirty-six hours, now expanded permanently to forty hours. The forced time-off of April 1938 "due to general depression in national business life" was the last one that Southern Potteries employees experienced for more than a decade.[2] Not only could the factory claim to work three shifts a day, seven days a week, but now it had to hire more workers. By August 1941 the decorating department employed three hundred women in hand painting and lining. The size of this department equaled what had been Southern Potteries' entire labor force through the 1930s, before the move to hand-painted pottery.[3]

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[2]*Erwin Record*, 14 April 1938.

[3]Wm. J. Campbell and Juanita White to James M. Duffy, LS, 25 August 1941, International Brotherhood of Pottery and Allied Workers Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Library, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio (hereafter cited as IBPAW Collection). In another letter to Duffy, president of the NBOP, in mid-November 1941, Campbell, as the Local 103 president, informed him that in Local 103 at Southern Potteries "we have close to 600 members and about 650 employees."

By tradition in the domestic pottery industry, female decorators were called by others and referred to themselves as "girls," whether they were young, middle-aged,

By the middle of the decade, the number of women decorators had doubled again. Former worker Sarah Lorene Adkins recalls that in 1945 "they hired every day; it'd be five or six every day they hired."[4] At its zenith, Southern Potteries had somewhere between one thousand and twelve hundred employees on its payroll. The pottery had over 3,500 different decorations available by 1942, and its regular open stock of dinnerware held four hundred patterns, all completed by women briefly trained on the job.[5]

Blue Ridge dinnerware could be recognized, not only because the decoration did not fade over time but also because the designs and their colors had a more spontaneous and individualized appearance. The china hinted at folk art in its decoration. From its introduction at the end of the 1930s, it proved to be very popular. Part of what may have created the individualized appearance of the china's decoration was the truncated training the women employees received. In earlier days, before going to work on actual merchandise, they had learned lining techniques in a room set aside for such instruction in the center of Erwin, roughly a mile from the pottery plant. Once the hand-painting

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single, or married. Though the term was not specifically derogatory, it did indicate an inferior and less valued position in terms of skill in comparison with the skilled jiggermen. In a similar fashion, ware boys were considered unskilled but warehousemen were skilled.

[4]Ruby Hart, "Meet Ruby Hart, Blue Ridge Hand Painter," interview by Kim Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (July/August 1996): 3; Alvin Whitt, "Meet Alvin 'Bud' Whitt, Ware Boy/Kiln Placer," interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (November/December 1996): 13; and Sarah L.[orene] Adkins, interview by author, tape recording, Jonesborough, Tenn., 31 August 1999.

[5]Betty Newbound and Bill Newbound, *Southern Potteries Inc. Blue Ridge Dinnerware*, rev. 3d ed. (Paducah, Ky.: Collector Books, 1996), 9 and 16, and A. R. Mosser to James M. Duffy, TDS, 20 August 1942, IBPAW Collection.

procedure was in place, new girls were "trained" at the pottery site for a mere few hours before being put with a crew. Mayfra Bennett reported being taught for only two hours by Alvin Miller, the man who would then be her boss for the next seven years; he put her to work the same day.[6]

As a result of continuing and increasing demand for its product, management expanded the physical plant to accommodate the needs of the growing decorating department. Construction in 1945 led to a new and larger decorating department (alternately called the underglaze department) at the northwest end of the Southern Potteries facility. In the expanded space many more decorators could work at one time on Blue Ridge dinnerware. The new room contained long rows of tables that ran the length of the room. In front of the tables, three crews of women sat on each bench. The four women in each crew worked in turn on a piece of pottery. These crews followed the procedure for hand-painting the dinnerware just as it had been worked out in the late 1930s, and decorators' descriptions of the method invariably sound precise. In Ruby Hart's words: "We worked four in a crew . . . at these long tables. The first girl did the flower. She what we call spaced it. She spaced the flowers, maybe the buds or whatever. Then I put the stems and the leaves. I worked second, and the third girl traced around and put the veins in the leaves and whatever else the pattern [required]. The fourth girl only did the edge--the line or sponging or whatever it had around the edge." As Frankie Lewis recalls the daily routine: "We had ware boys that brought the plain ware to us and set it up and we were told what pattern to paint and the number and how many dozen. When we were finished with that then they'd start us on something else. . . . We had our

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[6]Mayfra Bennett, interview by author, Erwin, Tenn., 26 April 1996. Bennett had such talent she became the painter of the company's samples used by pottery salesmen in their visits with department store buyers. See also "Meet Ruby Hart," 3.

paint brushes which we'd wash off and they'd set a pattern up in front of us and we'd do it."[7] Chemist Wayne Sparks mixed the paint colors in big jugs in the color room.[8] Once the decorators received their day's orders and knew on which patterns they would be working, they got small amounts of the appropriate colors from the large jugs and returned to their work stations. As Elizabeth Johnson explained her routine as a hand painter, each decorator had an eighteen-inch square glass plate, called a "tile," where she mixed her paint. Though the decorators did not have to buy their brushes or other supplies, they were responsible for keeping their work area clean. The women took pride in their appearance as well as in the work they produced. According to Lois Johnson, decorators spent money on their clothes, wearing dresses, hose, and high heels to work.[9]

The management at Southern Potteries displayed awareness of at least some of the needs of its decorators. Where no toilet facilities had been noted in earlier floor plans

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[7]Negatha Peterson, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 16 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author; "Meet Ruby Hart," 3; and Frankie Lewis, "Meet Frankie Lewis, Blue Ridge Hand Painter," interview by Kim Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (November/December 1996): 3.

[8]Oscar Riddle, who worked in several departments at the pottery but not in the decorating department, remembered instead that Alvin Miller, supervisor of the decorating department, was responsible for the color formulas. Riddle married Miller's sister, and as Riddle recalled, "one time my brother-in-law was sick, and they were running out of paint and Sparks sent a boy out there to Alvin to send him his formula so he could mix up some more paint. And my brother-in-law said 'No, buddy . . . I'm not sending him that. I'll mix you up enough to do till I get back.' He wouldn't let them have the formula." Oscar Riddle, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 12 June 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author.

Whether it was the duty of Miller or Wayne Sparks, these stories clearly make the point that the formulas for Blue Ridge colors created at Southern Potteries remained trade secrets, not even shared with the decorators who applied the paints to the ware.

[9]Elizabeth Johnson and Lois Johnson, interview by author, tape recording, Jonesborough, Tenn., 31 August 1999.

prepared for Sanborn fire insurance maps, after the plant's enlargement a large water closet stood adjacent to the decorating room on Sanborn's 1948 depiction of the plant.[10] Management proved sensitive to the women in other ways as well. Whether thought of as artists or not, these employees needed a comfortable environment in which to work. The office area of the plant had air conditioning for management. The production area around the jiggering machines and especially around the kilns seemed always hot.[11] As someone who worked for fifteen years in the decorating department, Lois Johnson observed, though, "I never remember it being too hot or too cold . . . it had to be comfortable, 'cause you can't paint with your hands cold."[12] And throughout the 1940s Southern Potteries operated twenty-four hours a day with three shifts, seven days a week. The underglaze department differed from most other parts of the plant, though, because its decorators worked Monday through Friday and a half day on Saturday. All the decorators worked at the same time, reporting for only the first shift each day. This schedule helped mothers with children in school, since the shift ran from 8:00 in the

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[10]Outside privies had been available earlier. While showing awareness of women's needs in that matter, the management did not have any sort of maternity leave in place. Such a benefit would have been fairly revolutionary for the times, and Southern Potteries' women employees did not, apparently, ask for or expect such consideration. Instead, if a woman decorator could not bear the paint and turpentine (used with the oil-based paints required for decorating chinaware) during a pregnancy, as Negatha Peterson put it, "you quit your job and you got rehired." She went on to explain that if you were experienced, you would be rehired. Peterson interview, 16 May 1996.

[11]Raymond White, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 15 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author, refers to the availability of salt tablets by the water fountain because of the heat; in his capacity as a ware boy and his father's as a kiln placer the two Whites were almost always in the hottest area of the factory where the pottery was fired.

[12]Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999.

morning until late afternoon. The schedule also allowed an hour at midday for lunch, running errands, or socializing.[13]

Socializing mattered to all the pottery employees, who saw themselves as a community within the larger setting of the town of Erwin. Local 103 of the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters organized a picnic each year around Labor Day for its members and their families. Sometimes held at the Fish Hatchery outside town or some years in Asheville, North Carolina, the day-long event included prize drawings and other activities. At various times the pottery sponsored baseball teams for men, separate softball teams for women and for men, and bowling teams that pitted Southern Potteries against teams from other companies located in Erwin's vicinity. Workers recall that their line and floor bosses participated with them in these sports. Pitching horseshoes at impromptu cookouts and swimming parties on the river also come up in the reminiscences of these people.[14]

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[13]Along with the decorators, mould makers worked one shift per day, while jiggermen and their crews worked two, and men in the clay shop and kiln placers worked all three. The beginning of these shifts varied from that of the decorators as well, with jiggermen reporting at 7:00 and the clay shop at 6:00 each morning. The nature of the jobs involved dictated which departments had to be up and running before other areas could carry out their duties. Ibid.; Charles Duncan, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 14 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author; and Hachita Mashburn, "Meet Hachita Mashburn, Finisher," interview by Kim Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (January/February 1997): 3.

[14]W. C. Callahan, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 15 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author, refers to the members of the bowling team being from Ohio, claiming people from Erwin were country people and farmers instead. For native-born employees who did participate on the company teams, see "Meet Ruby Hart," 9, and E. C. Sellars, "Meet E. C. Sellars, Assistant Sales Manager," interview by Kim Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (September/October 1996): 11.

Despite the fast pace of production demanded of these decorators, supervisors allowed them to experiment with new design ideas, adopting some as patterns for national distribution. If a decorator desired to create a special piece--for a husband's birthday, for example, or to commemorate some event--she could paint the piece at home and include it in the pottery's next-day firings. Those decorators with real talent left the work of the four-women crews and devoted their time either to decorating chinaware pieces or to painting samples. Since Southern Potteries did not publish a catalog of patterns, salesmen needed good examples of the company's products for department store buyers to examine. Samples served that purpose as well as being used in the factory by the women decorators who copied from the sample dishes placed in front of them. Only a handful of decorators painted samples or worked regularly as designers, and all the employees viewed this tiny cadre of women as the department's elite class of workers.[15] They might be commissioned to make special platters, and they could sign their pieces--something today's collectors seek.

Not every piece of pottery turned out flawlessly. Warehousemen separated out the pottery into one of four categories, where grade one represented undamaged pieces of first quality. Pieces that had imperfections might be sold as seconds or thirds. Lester Bailey, a former employee and ninety-three at the time he was interviewed in 1996, succinctly captured his routine. "You take out the crooked. You take out the one that had a chip in it. You take out something else. You'd have one, two, three and four grades. . . . You sit down over here and you do that eight hours a day."[16] The pieces with

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[15]Lois Johnson claims no more than twenty decorators worked in chinaware, and the names of the women who designed patterns or made samples that Johnson mentioned (Lena Watts, Rosa Mae Rollins, Frances Kyker) have been listed by other interviewed pottery employees as well; Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999.

[16]Lester Bailey, "Meet Lester Bailey, Warehouseman," interview by Kim and

worst damage ended up on a discard heap behind the pottery. As one decorator, Geneva Campbell, recalled, even some of those items made their way to someone's home. "On the day they dumped the dishes over there, that was the day we had a ball. We'd go through that trash and find real valuable pieces. But, we gave them all away, 'cause we didn't think they were worth anything. People liked them and we'd just give it to them."[17] A hauler like Chuck McKnight, for whom Lester Bailey eventually worked, bought the seconds and thirds in big batches to sell at discounted prices outside Southern Potteries' regular market areas. In E. C. Sellars's description of a typical deal, no packing of this grade of merchandise was provided by Southern Potteries. "All we'd do is set it out there in stacks. . . . He had to take what we had. He couldn't just pick out what he wanted." To the management, such an arrangement helped clear needed space within the plant and also helped offset expenses. "If you're in the manufacturing business and you have some seconds and thirds and fourths, there's a lot of money tied up in those, same amount of money as is tied up in first quality."[18] Selling those lower grades to haulers also cleared space at the plant that could be filled quickly by the next pieces coming off the line.

By the 1950s, displays of Blue Ridge dinnerware could be found in eleven showrooms across the country, including New York, Toronto, Chicago, Dallas, Kansas City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Canton (Ohio), New Orleans, and Winston-Salem. Department stores, including Gimbel's in New York City, carried it. Blue Ridge sets of dinnerware could be ordered through the mail catalogs of Sears, Roebuck and

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Bryan Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (January/February 1997): 6.

[17]Geneva Campbell, "Meet Geneva Campbell, Handpainter," interview by Kim Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (March/April 1997): 8.

[18]"Meet E. C. Sellars," 11, and E. C. Sellars, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 10 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author.

Montgomery Ward. Though Southern Potteries chose not to publish its own catalog, management ran advertisements in various women's magazines, including *House and Garden*, *House Beautiful*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*. Companies could request exclusive designs to sell to customers, as did Stanley Homes with the Stanhome Ivy pattern (see Figure 47). Companies might also order special sets for employee presents. Competition for consumers was intense among dinnerware companies, but the South's premier pottery held its own in the 1940s. Indeed, businesses marketing other products complimented Southern Potteries when, for example, a Sanka ad campaign selected a Blue Ridge cup to hold its coffee in 1949 (see Figure 48).

Southern Potteries' ascendance, however, would not continue indefinitely. The end of World War II caused great jubilation and allowed families to reunite with their loved ones who had served in the armed forces or in war-related labor situations away from home. The cessation of hostilities also signaled a return of imported goods to the market. Occupied Japan and Germany increased their ceramic production as quickly as possible, and by 1948 the domestic pottery industry began to experience some slack time and rising unemployment. In 1948, for example, Japanese imports were four times what they had been in 1947; German imports were five times higher.[19] Furthermore, consumers who had loyally supported their American brands for a decade desired a change.

Some buyers were ready for a whole new look and feel, and they discovered both in Melmac, a product newly available to the public. As one of the first commercially produced plastic wares, Melmac owed its existence to the development of ersatz

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[19]Don A. Shotliff, "The History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry: The National Brotherhood of Operative Potters-International Brotherhood of Operative Potters, 1890-1970" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1977), 305 and 307.

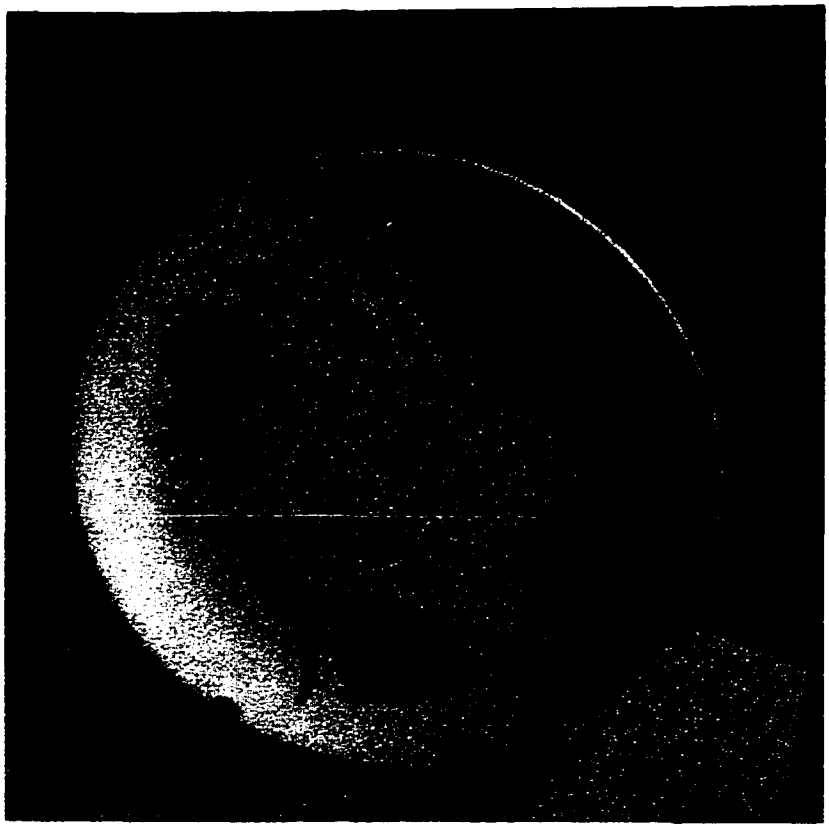

Figure 47. Blue Ridge Stanhome Ivy pattern

Photograph by the author

Do you think you're drinking too much coffee?

It seems that no matter how much people love coffee, they usually worry about drinking too much of it.

You probably do yourself.

And it's only natural—when you realize how the caffein in coffee can upset people.

So whenever you find yourself feeling nervous and jittery or sleepless at night you probably check up on how much coffee you've had.

Maybe *you* are being affected by the caffein in it. Maybe you ought to stop drinking it altogether . . . or at least cut down on it.

Luckily, there's an easier, pleasanter solution.

DRINK SANKA COFFEE

Sanka is a real coffee . . . a delicious-tasting coffee—that you can drink and enjoy without worrying.

Sanka is rich and full-bodied, with all the satisfying flavor, with all *the bracing cheer*, that only real coffee . . . and only fine coffee . . . can give.

REAL COFFEE-97% CAFFEIN-FREE

You can drink as much Sanka as you want—any time you want. For Sanka Coffee is 97% caffein-free. There's no need to limit yourself . . . no need ever to go without the pleasure of a good cup of coffee.

Start drinking Sanka and see for yourself. You have nothing to lose, and possibly a great deal to gain.

Sanka Coffee

Real coffee with the worry taken out
Drink it and sleep!

Products of General Foods

Life Magazine November 7th, 1949 57

Figure 48. Sanka ad, *Life Magazine*, 7 November 1949

(Reprinted courtesy of Kim and Bryan Snyder of Mountain City, Georgia.)

materials during the just-ended world war. By 1952 various lines of plastic ware began to take sizeable numbers of buyers away from the ceramic dinnerwares. At Southern Potteries the rising popularity of plastic dinner sets created one funny, if sadly inappropriate, gesture. Each year's company picnic featured drawings for prizes donated by local businesses. The minutes of Southern Potteries' Local 103 meeting held just prior to the festive event in August 1952, captured an ironic situation. "A motion was made that the plastic dinner set donated by Silers be removed from the list of prizes to be given away at the picnic." The motion carried.[20]

Along with the other companies in the United States Potters Association, Southern Potteries suffered from drops in demand, and in 1951 the Erwin facility chose to cut many employees' weekly hours from forty to twenty-four.[21] Though talked of as a temporary measure, this action indicated a serious slowing in sales momentum. The company also attempted various strategies to engage consumers, just as it had done in the past. From about 1950-1952, the Chicago-based United Wallpaper Company agreed to produce wallpaper matching five popular dinnerware patterns. That initial endeavor proved to be unpopular, and expansion to other patterns failed to materialize. Another venture in the late 1940s and 1950s turned out better because of the support of Montgomery Ward and Sears. Earl Newton and Associates, as Southern Potteries' agent in Chicago, negotiated arrangements with a glass factory in Ohio, also represented by Newton, to copy eight Blue Ridge designs on tumblers, juice glasses, and dessert cups.

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[20]Minutes, National Brotherhood of Operative Potters Local 103 meeting, 22 July 1952, TD, IBPAW Collection.

[21]"Meet Alvin Whitt," 13, includes mention that this reduction in the hours Whitt could work led him to leave Southern Potteries for a job in South Carolina.

Montgomery Ward and Sears carried those items in glassware to accompany some of the Blue Ridge dinner patterns they sold.[22]

A third strategy involved production of a new line in the Erwin plant. By the mid-1940s a separate chinaware division had developed around decorators who worked on individual vitreous chinaware pieces that might--but did not have to--coordinate with the semi-vitreous dinnerware sets. These specialty items had to be cast in moulds rather than shaped by jiggermen. They included candy boxes, leaf-shaped plates, lamps, boot-shaped vases, Betsy jugs, and a little later four character jugs representing Paul Revere, Daniel Boone, an Indian, and a Pioneer Woman.[23] Each piece received its bright colors from a single decorator instead of being passed down a crew of three or four, as happened to the dinnerware pieces. The finer quality of clay mixture that this china required also demanded oil-based paints instead of the water-based colors used on the dinnerware pieces. This attempt at diversification proved successful, but the output of finished items in the china division fell far below what the crew system produced in the dinnerware

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[22]Newbound and Newbound, *Southern Potteries Inc.*, 149 and 150. The five Blue Ridge patterns from which United made wallpaper included Blossom Time, Cherry Time, Wild Strawberry, Woodbine, and Yorktown. The glassware patterns coordinated with Blue Ridge patterns were Crab Apple, Cumberland, Green Briar, Mountain Ivy, Petal Point, Ridge Daisy, Ridge Harvest, and Sun Bouquet.

[23]Lola Johnson painted the Pioneer Woman and Indian jugs, while her twin sister Lois painted ones depicting Daniel Boone and Paul Revere. In order to clean their brushes these chinaware decorators had to use turpentine, and Lois recounted how her mother objected to the smell of it on their clothes when they returned home from work. "That turpentine was very strong. When we'd come home, Momma would say, 'Oh, get those clothes off. You smell just like turpentine.' And it would settle, you know, it would settle in our clothes. We didn't know it, we'd be with it so long a time, we didn't even notice it." Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999.

division. Their prices were also comparatively higher both then and now among collectors.[24]

Though Southern Potteries tried mightily to entice the public back to its distinctive hand-painted underglaze, consumers had wearied of this look. Perhaps its very success helped to bring about its downfall. Even in its newest patterns, shapes, and edgings, Blue Ridge did not look different enough from what a young woman remembered being in her mother's kitchen. Though the colors remained bright through their years of use, the dinnerware may have reminded some people of those war years and the restrictions that went along with them. In the early 1950s there were many more products from which to choose. Why select something that seemed old-fashioned in comparison with the newer offerings available from other sources?

As department store demand continued to decline, the pottery sought to reach broader, more mass markets. Southern Potteries undertook an agreement with Quaker Oats that looked beneficial to both companies. The oatmeal packages advertised the discounted purchase of a starter set of dishes for one dollar plus a blue star from off the Quaker Oats box. Economical shoppers might be more likely to choose Quaker Oats over its competition when they could also acquire hand-painted pottery in the bargain. The initial set included a cup and saucer, a bread and butter plate, and an oatmeal bowl, all decorated with a simple apple pattern (see Figure 49). Additional pieces, also discounted, could be ordered from a sheet enclosed with the first set. The venture proved

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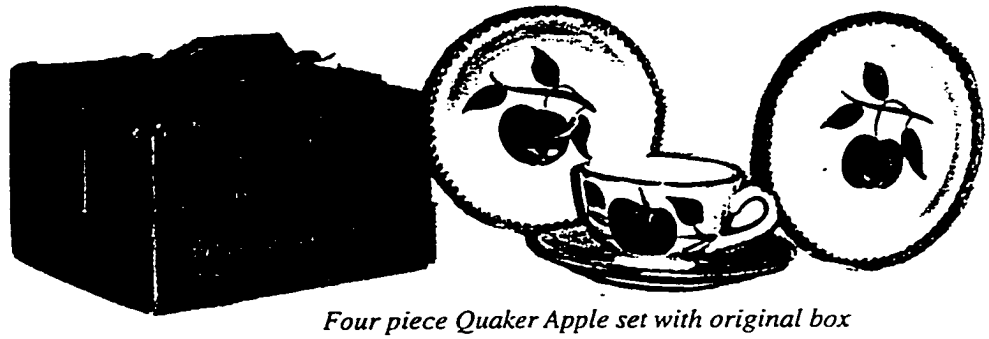
[24]Newbound and Newbound, *Southern Potteries Inc.*, 118-44 passim, and "Meet Geneva Campbell," 3.

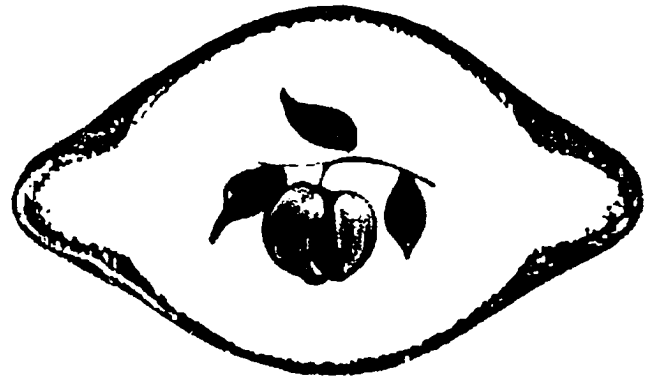
The Betsy jug is actually a pitcher styled to look like a Dutch girl, and it came in two sizes. Southern Potteries produced a number of different shapes in pitchers, the most distinctive of which was the jug design based on the heads of four characters mentioned above.



Four piece Quaker Apple set with original box

Inside of the order form. Check out those prices!

Photos of the Quaker Apple Sales Brochure were furnished by Winnie Keller Author of Dishes What Else ! Blue Ridge of Course!



Spoon Rest offered as a Premium by Quaker Oats.

Figure 49. Blue Ridge - Quaker Oats apple set

(Reprinted courtesy of Kim and Bryan Snyder of Mountain City, Ga.)

to be quite successful, and the constant number of orders that came into Southern Potteries from Quaker Oats in the 1950s required the building of a shed just for the processing and shipping of those boxed sets.[25]

Such popularity, while welcomed, may have been less a boon than originally thought, and it may have inadvertently hurt the Blue Ridge image with the public as well. Attracting shoppers with lower incomes did not help sell more expensive Blue Ridge patterns and may have driven away middle-class consumers who purchased brands that those beneath them economically could not afford. Making a Blue Ridge pattern available to all made it less desired by some.

Yet the quality of Southern Potteries products remained unchanged. The classification system of ceramic pieces into four grades continued in place, and the management and employees alike prided themselves on their shipments of first quality dinnerware sets throughout the country. The ingredients that together made up the clay that jiggermen and machines shaped into plates and bowls were consistently good. In fact, the first source of kaolin clay used by Southern Potteries had come from nearby Spruce Pine, North Carolina, but in later years even better kaolin, shipped by railroad from West Tennessee, replaced it.[26] In the second half of the 1940s, when Charles

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[25]For details regarding the processing of orders and shipment of the boxed sets, see "Meet Howard Bogart, Postman," *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (March/April 1997): 6.

After the stockholders voted in February 1957 to close the pottery, orders already placed, including some for the Quaker apple, were honored and completed by a reduced crew. As Lola Johnson recalled, "The only time I ever made apples was when--how many of us was it that went back to work that last month or so? Ten or twelve? But anyway, I had to do three or four plates and apples and I'd never done apples before. Reckon I done alright, but whenever you started to make an apple it was altogether different than the flowers." Lola Johnson, interview by author, tape recording, Jonesborough, Tenn., 31 August 1999.

[26]"Meet Lester Bailey," 13.

Duncan worked in the clay shop, his crew mixed five types of clay in various proportions to the correct consistency.[27] Two of these clays came from North Carolina, two from Georgia, and one from out west, "Colorado or somewhere." This last clay was between beige and brown in color, and one of the Georgia clays was cream colored. Another of the five was dark brown, and one was almost powder. As Duncan remarked, "I knew it was good dinnerware because of the things they'd done and the emphasis they put on making sure that clay was exactly right and everything was right up to par, even to the heat in the kiln."[28]

Still, some changes did occur that consumers may have noticed. While the hand-painted decorations continued in the same manner, the patterns became less elaborate, as E. C. Sellars explained. "When they first started hand painting anything, you know, there was quite a bit of painting on some of those patterns. . . . the more paint, the more design, the more money it cost. Not only going through the plant but in retail, also."[29] In an attempt to keep profit margins up as much as possible while sales declined, management called for simpler designs, allowing a cutback in the number of hours that decorators worked and the pay they received. Besides the expense, another reason not mentioned by Sellars for the simplification of patterns involved the decorators' relationship with their

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[27]The formulas for the clay mixtures were held in the front office and not left up to the clay maker and his crew in the clay shop, a situation similar to that of the decorators mentioned in footnote 8. This limitation of knowledge is typical of crafts that underwent industrialization, where a worker's job became quite specific and his or her need for knowledge of the whole process narrowed. At the same time, the secrecy maintained at Southern Potteries indicates a fear of the competition acquiring information that the company had no desire to share.

[28]Duncan interview, 14 May 1996.

[29]"Meet E. C. Sellars," 9.

union. The union had never fully appreciated the hand-painted work the decorators undertook after 1938, and that lack of understanding seemed to grow rather than diminish as the 1940s drew to a close. Looking back from the distance of several decades, it is difficult to determine, in fact, whether management's position or that of the union in the 1940s and 1950s proved more detrimental to the decorators and other employees of Southern Potteries.

When the management at Southern Potteries determined to devote the plant exclusively to hand-painted dinnerware in the late 1930s, the status of its women decorators shifted from merely unskilled labor to a better standing in comparison with the skilled male labor. The jiggermen, or potters, ranked in the top tier of pottery occupations, but the future success of Southern Potteries would have just as much to do with the designs on the plates as with the plates themselves. Still, the rate of compensation did not reflect this new situation, nor could it immediately. The great majority of Southern Potteries employees belonged to the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters (NBOP), and that organization negotiated with the United States Potters Association (USPA) that represented the owners and management of potteries regarding wages and other worker issues. As had been the pattern for more than three decades, the NBOP and USPA adjusted wage scales every two years, often with the union asking for sizeable increases, the owners asking for reductions, and the compromise reached between these extremes keeping pottery wages higher than those of many other industrial workers. Decorators across the country in pottery factories applied decals to the ware and earned an unskilled hourly wage for their efforts. A different category of worker, known as a liner, then placed each dish on a wheel and as it revolved added the band of color at the ware's outside edge, a task requiring some skill and earning better wages than the decal girls received. The change in method of decoration at Southern

Potteries meant that its decorators' situation now differed from the norm. Bound by the union scale of wages, the management at Erwin paid its hand painters the unskilled wage that decorators everywhere received.

Wage negotiations in 1938 between the NBOP and USPA had resulted in no change from the 1936 contract, in part because of the recession in effect at the time. By 1940, though, the union's insistence that workers' pay increase led to improvements in wages across the industry in the spring of 1941. Liners, for example, now earned seventy-six cents an hour, and hourly wage earners saw a 10 percent increase in their rates. As Elizabeth Johnson recalls, she went to work as a hand painter at Southern Potteries in October 1940 making thirty-five cents an hour. By the time her cousins Lois and Lola Johnson commenced work in the decorating department in March 1942, the wage had risen to 51.5 cents per hour. Local Union 103 members thought these women deserved more and had already demonstrated support for them by writing twice in 1941 to James Duffy, president of the NBOP, to that effect. The first letter, in late August 1941, asked "if there is any way that we could get some consideration for this line of work." The response from Duffy came almost by return mail and concluded with his pledge that the union "will do every thing in our power to have more equitable rates established for this work." The second request from Erwin, in November, suggests some concern that Duffy act on his words, but, as his reply makes clear, any actions taken would be through the established structure used by the NBOP and USPA, and that process could prove to be slow.[30]

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[30]Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," 268 and 271; Elizabeth Johnson and Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999; and Campbell and White to Duffy, LS, 25 August 1941, and James M. Duffy to William J. Campbell, TL, 29 August 1941 and 26 November 1941, IBPAW Collection.

In Duffy's November letter he states, "I agree with you that some effort should be made to settle the hand painting question. We have made requests of the manufacturers

In the meantime, the United States went to war. This country's first peace-time draft had begun calling up men in September 1940. Unfavorable comparisons with decal girls at other potteries did not stop women from applying for decorating jobs in Erwin, and within a year the pottery factory had 300 decorators. Some were young and single, but more and more married women joined the pottery's labor force or remained there after their nuptials, and a few worked though they had small children at home.[31] Consumers' positive reaction to Blue Ridge dinnerware patterns led to further expansion of the work force and the designs they painted. The issue of appropriate wages for hand-painting decoration did not disappear during the interval, but the formal hearing of Southern Potteries' situation before the USPA Decorators' Standing Committee did not occur until late October 1942. The NBOP proposed an increase in the minimum wage for decorators to eighty-five cents an hour, which still fell below the warehousemen's rate of eighty-eight cents. A chart provided by the Local Union 103 showed the number of plates per hour a crew could decorate in eleven different patterns (see Figure 50). To the decorators, the combination of speed and careful painting added up to a skill worthy of compensation beyond what decal girls received. The USPA committee's negative response to any change from the 51.5 cents rate and the union's acceptance of that committee's decision must have been doubly disheartening.[32]

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for a conference for a wage increase. I shall also include hand painting."

[31]Out of a population of just over 14,400, Unicoi County would eventually send 2,400 men and women into active duty in the armed forces during World War II. Hilda Britt Padgett, *The Erwin Nine* (Johnson City, Tenn.: Overmountain Press, 1993), xi.

[32]John McGillivray to Wilbert Betz, TL, 21 September 1942; A. R. Mosser to James M. Duffy, TLS, 20 August 1942; and James M. Duffy to C. A. Lozier, TL, 1 October 1942 and 30 October 1942, IBPAW Collection.

Charles W. Foreman as president of Southern Potteries effectively played into the delay between the workers' request for a hearing and the committee's meeting on their

Pattern Number	Number Girls in Crew	Number - Dozen - Per - Hour. Small-Ware	Large-Ware
3083	3-Painters. 1-Liner.	12	10.
3093	4-Liner Helps Paint.	8	6
3092	3-Liner Helps Paint	15	12
3031	3-Liner Helps Paint	15	12
3091	4- " " "	15	12
075	4- " " "	7	5
2777	4-Liner-Outlines.	12	10
3090	3	5	4
3062	3-Stamped-Filled-In.	5	3
2549	4- " " " "	4" Plates - 8 - only.	
3041	3- " " " "	" - 11 - " Stippled-Edge.	
	We have over 3000 patterns.	Some as low as 12 doz. per day.	

Figure 50. Chart depicting quantities of dishes decorated per hour in particular patterns

(Reprinted by permission of the Special Collections and Archives, from the International Brotherhood of Pottery and Allied Workers Collection, Library, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio)

Was there jealousy at work here, since Erwin's pottery produced a dinnerware distinctive from all other pottery factories? There is nothing to prove such a notion, nor is there anything to disprove it. The Decorators' Standing Committee might argue, instead, that wages had to be correlated to prices. In a separate action, the federal government had established a wartime Office of Price Administration. In 1942, this office turned to the manufacturing sector and asked for its cooperation in holding prices, wherever possible, where they had been in October 1941. The sacrifice by pottery owners of potentially larger profits probably had an adverse effect on the wage proposal put forth for these decorators. An appeal made to the War Labor Board by the NBOP languished for a year and a half before coming up for consideration, and in late April 1944, the War Labor Board refused to grant a hearing on the case.[33] The women decorators in Erwin were not to receive their glory through monetary rewards.

Among the various characteristics the women decorators displayed, the ability to cope proved to be an asset. The job of hand painting was not suitable for any and every

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wage proposal. Foreman managed to put off a visit to his plant first scheduled by Duffy of the NBOP for mid-April until mid-September by absenting himself from Erwin. The NBOP made its request to the USPA Decorators' Standing Committee one week after Duffy finally met with Foreman. See letters from Foreman to Duffy dated 4 April 1942, 13 April 1942, 18 May 1942, and 3 September 1942, and letters from Duffy to C. A. Lozier dated 10 June 1942, 13 August 1942, and 9 September 1942, IBPAW Collection.

[33]Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," 291, and James M. Duffy to Henry Bruce, TL, 29 April 1944, IBPAW Collection. As Duffy, president of the NBOP, explains the War Labor Board's action, "They give as their reason for rejecting our request the fact that our Decorators' Standing Committee, as provided in our collective bargaining agreement, made a decision as to the basis of payment for this work." His letter continues, "This action of the War Labor Board is not at all to my liking. I was depending upon the hearing as the one means of bringing this case to a fair conclusion. Our only chance now is to continue the effort in future wage conferences."

female applicant to Southern Potteries. To be successful, a decorator had to be, first of all, a fast learner and also a good observer and copier. She had to be able to work quickly but carefully and with efficiency. Surrounded by hundreds of women doing similar work on pottery dishes, she had to be comfortable with a fair amount of talking, clatter, and a number of people in close proximity. Those employees who did settle into the decorating department also enjoyed common benefits. Their contributions helped to create a distinctive product, one that stood out from dinnerware produced by other potteries. Working as they did in an assigned position on a four-woman crew also meant responsibility for particular elements of the pattern at hand. A decorator could look at a stack of dishes and recognize the strokes she had made as part of a team painting them. Good work could lead to advancement. From fourth position on her crew, a painter might move up to second or first, for example. Or, like Lois and Lola Johnson, some decorators had the opportunity to leave the dinnerware crews and paint samples and individual china pieces instead. For many women their accomplishments were a source of pride. As Geneva Campbell admitted, "Everything I did I was proud of, 'cause I didn't think I could do it, but every piece I painted I was proud of. Whether it was good or bad, I was proud of it. . . . I'm proud that it is going to be around for a while." Southern Potteries turned out an identifiable product to consumers which the pottery's employees could associate with particular people.[34]

At the same time, however, these workers did not allow their jobs alone to define them. Successful as she was as a decorator, Geneva Campbell left Southern Potteries to care for a daughter with disabilities. Lorene Adkins worked on a dinnerware crew from 1945 to 1955, and she gave as her reason for leaving "[to] start a family." Hachita

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[34]Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999, and "Meet Geneva Campbell," 8-9.

Mashburn explained, "I didn't work until my children were a good size that I could leave."[35] These women workers, recently interviewed because of their positions at the pottery, found their personal identification in those same years through the roles they assumed in their families. When possible, they participated in both the work place and the home, but their position as wives and mothers took preference when their arrangements did not go as planned.[36] Lester and Lola Bailey both worked at Southern Potteries and hired someone else to watch the children, but when that situation turned sour, Lola Bailey gave up her decorator role to concentrate on one as a homemaker:

> Lester and Lola had three sons together. "She was a good wife. She was a good mother. She was an excellent cook." It was to take care of these boys that Lola quit working for Southern Potteries. "We had a girl staying with us. That's when you had one of these crank washing machines that you put your clothes through the roll, and so forth. Lester, Jr. was just big enough to get up in a chair. My wife was working. She came home one day and this girl was gone. To this day we don't know where she went. But, Lester, Jr. was up in a chair. She left the washing and he was up in a chair trying to run those things through that roller washing machine trying to finish that washing. And right there we decided that my wife was worth more at home than she was working."[37]

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[35]Ibid., 8; Adkins interview, 31 August 1999; and "Meet Hachita Mashburn," 3.

[36]For comparison with early but important scholarship regarding women and their movements between the worlds of work and home, see Tamara K. Hareven, "Family Time and Industrial Time: Family and Work in a Planned Corporation Town, 1900-1924," *Journal of Urban History* 1 (May 1975): 365-89; Elizabeth H. Pleck, "Two Worlds in One: Work and Family," *Journal of Social History* 10 (Winter 1976): 178-95; Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, *Women, Work, and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978); and Tamara Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[37]"Meet Lester Bailey," 6.

Apparently, the women did not disagree with such expectations, nor did they question the gendered division of jobs within the pottery plant. The pottery industry had always been segregated along gender lines, both in England and in the United States. When women first entered the field, it was as unskilled workers whose supervisors were male. Even after gaining semi-skilled and, later, skilled status, the pay for women remained lower than what their male counterparts received.[38] Though at Southern Potteries an occasional female gained a role of responsibility on the production floor on a particular shift, men almost exclusively filled the office positions at the plant. The president, general manager, assistant general manager, ceramics engineer, general sales manager, and assistant sales manager were all men. The people in these positions comprised what Charles Foreman called "the executive family" (with the addition of the head of bookkeeping and two secretaries who were women).[39] The plant manager and department supervisors, one rung down in terms of administrative power and with offices a bit removed from the others, provided the necessary link between the front offices and the workers. They too were men. This situation did not seem odd in its industry, in its time period, or to its employees. The idea that women composed the largest department within the pottery plant because they, in their feminine capacity, could paint flowers and tidy the ware seemed no more odd than the idea that men, being more muscular, managed the machinery.[40] Workers at Southern Potteries did not express concerns about

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[38]Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 92 and 94, and Richard Whipp, *Patterns of Labour: Work and Social Change in the Pottery Industry* (London: Routledge, 1990), 60 and 61.

[39]Edythe Manfull, interview by author, tape recording, Erwin, Tenn., 31 August 1999.

[40]For an example of a situation with certain similarities to that in Southern Potteries, see Patricia Cooper, "The Faces of Gender: Sex Segregation and Work

the gendered division of responsibilities, perhaps because they felt united instead as workers against the obviously separate executive family located in the front offices.

A point of contention was class, not gender. The actions and attitude of Charles Foreman as president of Southern Potteries made his workers wary of him and his managers. While the NBOP did not call Southern Potteries a closed shop, almost all the workers there held union membership, a fact Foreman had to accept even if he did not like it. Though in fact the charter for Local Union 103 predated Foreman's involvement with the pottery in Erwin, the Local had never been particularly difficult and had not called for strikes. In terms of providing for the workers, the NBOP's effectiveness against the USPA on a national level had in general protected them in their local situation. Still, Foreman attempted to circumvent the union when he could, as a situation reported in a letter in the fall of 1943 from Local Union 103 to James Duffy at the NBOP indicates. The wage increase to 76 cents an hour that liners should have received beginning in 1941 had not occurred at Southern Potteries. Management set up the liners in an area to themselves but paid them 51.5 cents per hour, the wage they had received when still working with hand painters. Foreman claimed that nothing should change until the War Labor Board ruled on the hand-painting wage question that had been sent on appeal to it.[41] In another incident two years later in 1945, Foreman again used the War Labor Board as an excuse. Now the union was studying a new wage scale for the hand-painting department that would be based on the number of pieces painted. As Henry Bruce recounted Foreman's position, "He told us then that he was hopeful of

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Relations at Philco, 1928-1938," in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*, ed. Ava Baron (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 320-50.

[41]Tom Holland to James M. Duffy, TLS, 14 October 1943, IBPAW Collection.

setting up a piece work plan or a [*sic*] incentive plan. But do [*sic*] to the Unions [*sic*] representing our case to the War Labor Board He would not do anything. I told him that we were not aware of anything pertaining to our Underglaze being before the War Labor Board."[42]

In whatever situation he found his pottery, Charles Foreman tried to turn it to the management's advantage to increase profits. He did so, though, at his workers' expense, and they knew it. They saw through his schemes and recognized his true feelings. Foreman expressed those feelings often enough that the president of the Local 103 could write "we are used to hearing him rave quite often when he is here."[43] Since union leadership had been unable to procure wage increases for the decorators at Southern Potteries prior to 1945, the NBOP did not look like invincible heroes to factory workers. The union had, however, made some efforts, no matter how feeble, on the workers' behalf. Therefore a woman decorator, weighing her choices of allegiance as World War II closed, might well turn to her union. The NBOP had to seem more supportive and certainly less paternalistic than Charles Foreman, the man who claimed "he put the first shoes on those girls."[44]

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[42]Henry L. Bruce to James M. Duffy, LS, 5 April 1945, IBPAW Collection. The appeal sent by the NBOP to the War Labor Board regarding Southern Potteries' hand painters had been refused a hearing one year earlier, in April 1944. Later in the fall of 1944 when NBOP and USPA talks broke down, the War Labor Board agreed to try and settle their differences, finally issuing decisions on twenty separate points in December 1945. See Gates, *City of Hills and Kilns*, 329. In fairness to Foreman, his remark to his Local 103 delegation in mid-April 1945 may have concerned this later War Labor Board arbitration. The employees, though, and the NBOP leadership they turned to reacted to Foreman based on his previous record with them.

[43]Wm. J. Campbell to James M. Duffy, TL, 31 January 1942, IBPAW Collection.

[44]Manfull interview, 31 August 1999.

In the spring of 1945, Local Union 103 eventually gained approval from Foreman "and his official family" to initiate on a trial basis a piece work plan for the hand decorators.[45] Where the women had been paid a set hourly wage before, the new plan permitted a chance for more pay. As the union envisioned the arrangements, the Southern Potteries management would maintain its current expectations in output from its employees, and meeting that level earned them a particular salary. As NBOP president James Duffy wrote to the Local 103 in the following October, "It has always been my idea that the basis for piece work for these girls should be the cost per dozen under the day wage plan so long in effect at your plant." Work done above and beyond that point would mean extra pay. Such incentives could bring industrious workers more money, and, Duffy reasoned, "the company will benefit through the increased volume that will result because of the piece work arrangements."[46]

Decorators at Southern Potteries, who had received no raise in several years, embraced this plan with enthusiasm. They also benefited from the December 1945 War Labor Board decision that the minimum hourly rate for all female employees in NBOP- and USPA-represented potteries be 55 cents (and further industry-wide wage advances followed in the postwar economy). By October 1946, Local 103 could report to Duffy that "the underglaze girls are going wild on this new set up. Some have increased there [*sic*] wages 90% or about 1.40 per hour instead of .73 1/2 cts."[47] The more lasting effect, however, turned out to be less joyful. In order to make more money, some crews worked

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[45]Henry L. Bruce to James M. Duffy, LS, 23 April 1945, IBPAW Collection.

[46]James M. Duffy to Henry Bruce, TL, 4 October 1945, IBPAW Collection.

[47]Bill [Wm. Campbell] to James M. Duffy, LS, 22 October 1946, IBPAW Collection.

too quickly. The speed-up led to more mistakes or sloppy work, breakage, and less time for creativity. The decorating department that began the piece work plan with a sense of exhilaration shifted moods to a grimmer note.

Several factors of the late 1940s fed into the somber tone that emerged in the 1950s. These postwar years witnessed the rising number of imported ceramic goods that cut into Southern Potteries' markets. While the eruption of the Korean conflict reversed that trend, it did so only briefly, and employee hours had to be reduced.[48] Less obvious but perhaps more significant in effect at the pottery plant in Erwin was Foreman's poor health. Already in his seventies at the time the piece work plan began, Foreman's visits to Erwin decreased and his winter stays in Florida lengthened as the 1940s wound down. Letters from Duffy of the NBOP to the management at Southern Potteries received answers from Foreman's general manager, Hugh Kibler. Though Kibler had run the plant on a daily basis for a decade, he now occasionally had to act for the company's president. With Foreman's death in October 1951, one month short of his seventy-seventh birthday, the pottery's future became cloudy.

After Foreman's death, Hugh Kibler was elevated to president of Southern Potteries, and he continued the piece work plan. In fact the management hired a California firm to conduct a time and motion study to see how long it should take, for example, to paint a leaf on a stem. As Eugene Price remembered its effect, he admitted the study may have caused some sloppiness to develop with the decorated dinnerware. Hand painters felt increased pressure from this new study and its resulting standards, in part because a daily production ticket for each of them had to be filed (see Figure 51).

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[48]Wm. J. Campbell to James M. Duffy, TLS, 25 July 1952, IBPAW Collection, admits "Our liners are getting very little work. Our underglaze hand painters are averaging about thirty hours per week."

NAME & NUMBER

SOUTHERN POTTERIES, INC. DAILY PRODUCTION TICKET

DECORATING DEPT.

DATE _____

POSITION NO. _____ TICKET NO. _____ OF _____ TICKETS TODAY

START	STOP	ELAPSED HRS.	PATTERN	ITEM	DOZENS				TOTAL	STD.	STD. MIN.
									TOTAL STD MIN.		
									PER OPERATOR		
									CONSTANTS PER OP.		

TOTAL HRS.	
SUP'N. HOURS	
INDIRECT HOURS	
DAY WORK HOURS	
TRAINING HOURS	
REWORK HOURS	
WAITING HOURS	
HRS. ON STD.	
STD. MINUTES PRODUCED PER OP.	
ALLOWED PROD. INDEX	
NET. PROD. INDEX	
MIN. BELOW STD.	
BONUS HRS.	

Figure 51. Daily Production Ticket at Southern Potteries

(Reprinted courtesy of Rene Hashe Keplinger of Erwin, Tenn.)

The incentive plan explanation (see Appendix 4) includes in the final paragraph a description of the purpose of this daily production ticket. "Counters on the floor keep a written record on a special form in front of the operator all day long with a carbon copy for the operator. Dozens in each item of each pattern are counted. The following day these work sheets are translated into standard hours produced and posted on shop bulletin boards."[49]

The effect was demoralizing. Some decorators who had worked at Southern Potteries for years blamed some of their co-workers for the pottery's problems. By Lois Johnson's reckoning, "some of the girls on dinnerware they just absolutely slapped it [the paint] on and they ruined it--they ruined it because the dollar meant more." Other decorators disliked what the time study meant for their own work. As Madge Phillips recalls, "you had to do it real quick and lots of times [the plate] would fall off and break." As someone who took pride in her work, she did not like painting so quickly that she could not work to the best of her ability.[50]

At the same time the NBOP was experiencing change and uncertainty. The pottery industry had lost skilled workers to other fields, steel in particular. After the membership rolls had peaked at 29,000 in 1949, the NBOP entered an era of internal struggle between its sanitary ware and generalware divisions. James M. Duffy had guided the union as president since 1927, and different factions desired a fresh face, a

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[49]Eugene Price, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 11 June 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author, and "The Southern Potteries' decorating shop incentive plan," TMs, January 1955, in Box 76, folder 49, IBPAW Collection.

[50]Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999, and Madge Phillips, "Meet Madge Phillips, Blue Ridge Hand Painter," interview by Kim Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (September/October 1996): 3.

new perspective. Duffy left the union in 1952, replaced by Frank Hull, a former NBOP vice president. Hull saw his role as that of a bridge, allowing a transition from dinnerware dominance of the union (through the generalware division) to leadership from within the sanitary ware division. Hull retired after two years as president so Ed Wheatley might assume the leadership in 1955. Forces within Wheatley's sanitary ware division had become the vanguard of the union in terms of its direction for the workers' futures. With the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations reuniting as well in 1955 under George Meany, the tenor of the times for the potteries may have needed such an adjustment to survive.[51]

The mid-1950s thus proved to be difficult years for Southern Potteries. Consumer demand for Blue Ridge dinnerware shrank despite expanded marketing efforts. Cutbacks in work hours of those kept on the rolls could not counter the effects of a public whose taste had changed. The union lost its credibility; in fact those who worked in the office area blamed the union for part of the company's problems. As Edythe Manfull remembers the situation, management asked for lay-offs of more recently-employed workers so those employees of longer standing could work full time. The union refused to agree to that idea, and the company went to half days of work.[52]

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[51]Shotliff, "History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," 319, 330, and 340. During this period of transition in leadership the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters also changed the first part of its name from National to International.

[52]Manfull interview, 31 August 1999. Raymond White mentions that attitude concerning all workers being kept on to the detriment of the older ones as a problem as well, but he did not say it was the union's fault that no employees were laid off. White interview, 15 May 1996.

From 1955 to 1957, each year's results turned out bleaker than those of the year before. On the national level the NBOP continued to negotiate with the USPA for better wages and benefits, and the wage rate for women decorators reached $1.25 an hour. On the local level, though, the raise came with a reduction in hours worked. As Negatha Peterson explained it, "two or three years before the pottery closed, I can't remember how long, we got a raise to $1.25, but then when we got the raise we went on half time. One week we'd work two days and the next week we'd work three until the pottery closed."[53]

Some of the workers blamed management for causing the problems the company could not surmount. The piece work plan imposed on the decorators created difficulties, Raymond White believes, but even more serious to him was management's failure to reinvest in the plant's equipment.[54] In the study Don Shotliff conducted of the pottery industry, he found that many potteries had failed to retool their equipment along more modern lines. Imports of cheaper goods hurt the industry, and thirteen potteries closed saying they could no longer compete. Shotliff's evaluation agreed to some extent with the perspective of those failed companies and concluded, "American potteries simply could not compete with the cheap labor nations equally. Consequently, only the firms that utilized modern, labor eliminating appliances, with management capable of prognoticating [*sic*] the trends in designs, survived the depressed economic conditions created by the imports and substitute products industries."[55]

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[53]Peterson interview, 16 May 1996.

[54]White interview, 15 May 1996.

[55]Shotliff, "The History of the Labor Movement in the American Pottery Industry," 349. In the 1950s, Shotliff reported on pages 346-47, twenty-two potteries failed or liquidated, and of those the following thirteen claimed the failure was due to the pressure of foreign imports: In West Virginia, Paden City Pottery Co. and Edwin S. Knowles; in Ohio, American Limoges China Co., Crooksville China Co., Pope-Gosser

Certainly company management tried different solutions. Hugh Kibler, president of Southern Potteries, accepted the presidency of the United States Potters Association in 1955. Did this added responsibility divide his attentions and divert them from his plant in Erwin? Or did this honor suggest to him that as a leader of the pottery manufacturers the ideas he had for salvaging his factory deserved a trial? During that same year, Southern Potteries initiated a pilot program in the manufacture of tiles for facing buildings.[56] Referred to as MagnaTile in an article appearing 14 June 1956 in the *Erwin Record*, the rectangles measured 12 by 16 inches and were about one-quarter inch thick. Throughout 1956 work continued at the pottery on developing this new item for production, and MagnaTile was applied to at least one building (see Figure 52) in the immediate region.[57] Though innovative, Kibler's attempt at making this type of tile undercut his pottery plant in at least two ways. Instead of fixing or updating equipment for the plant's already established products, he devoted space and funds to something experimental. And the new product had no need for decorators, a group that made up

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China Co., Steubenville Pottery Co., Universal Potteries, Inc., W. S. George Pottery Co., Standard Art Pottery Co.; in Tennessee, Southern Potteries Co.; and in California, Santa Anita Potteries Co., Hollydale Pottery Co., and Vernon Kilns.

[56]H. W. Kibler to Frank Hull, TLS, 24 August 1955, IBPAW Collection. As Kibler explains the plan "to turn a part of our factory into the production of tile," he admits that "still in the experimental stage . . . until these final tests have been completed we will not know whether or not it is possible to make a tile of this type," but "we are hoping that . . . it will mean more work for our employees." The following February Kibler was still negotiating an agreement with the union for the tile work; see Agreement on Marbleizing Operation, DS, 16 February 1956, IBPAW Collection.

[57]An extant example of this building tile remains on part of the front elevation of a building in Johnson City, Tennessee, located at 209 East Main, opposite the intersection with Spring Street. E. C. Sellars, interview by author, tape recording, Erwin, Tenn., 31 August 1999.

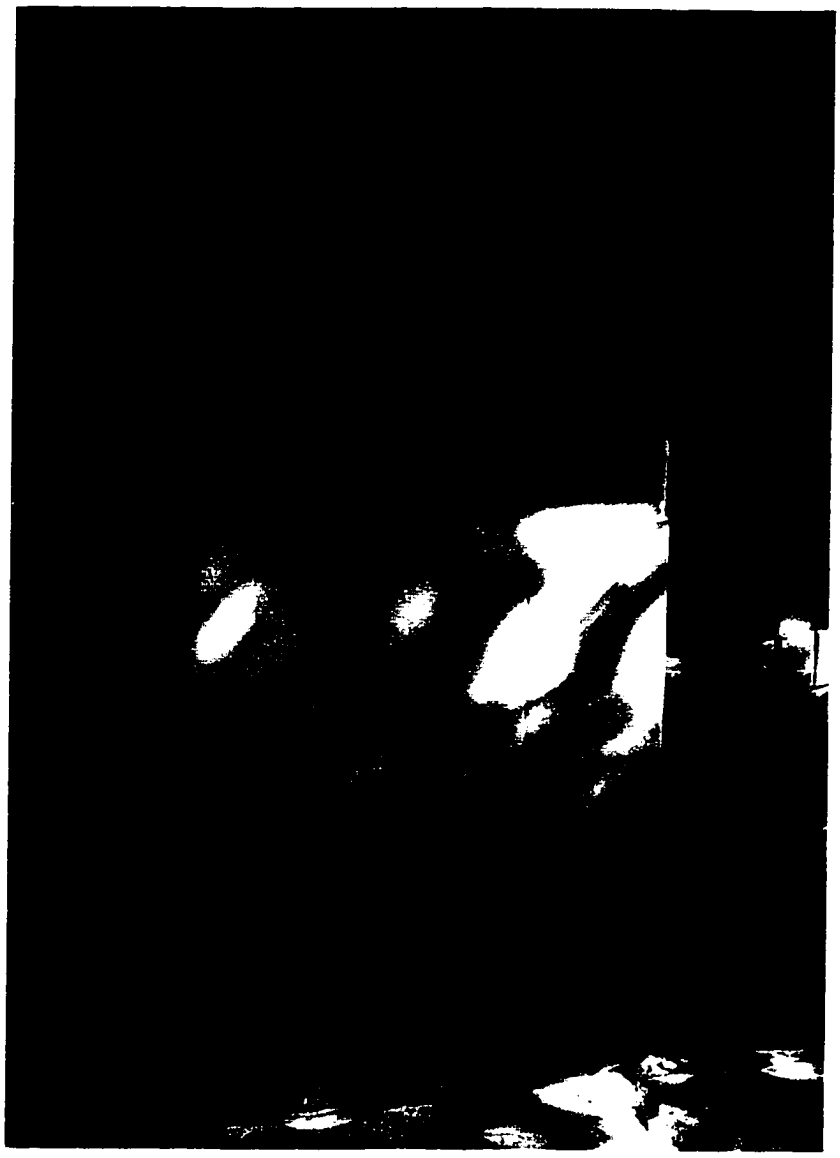

Figure 52. MagnaTile on building in Johnson City, Tennessee
Photograph by the author

close to half of his pottery's labor force. The experimental work helped create activity around the plant; in September 1956 a newspaper article claimed the company's prospects looked better than they had in the last two years.[58] Still, had Kibler's new idea achieved enough success for it to be continued, Southern Potteries would have become a very different place. The business could even have been relocated elsewhere. By his action, Kibler made clear that he chose to strive for profits at the expense of his established personnel in place of trying to fight for a solution that took care of both.

In early 1957, the Board of Directors and stockholders of Southern Potteries Inc. met and voted to liquidate the company while money still remained to divide among themselves. Although Edythe Manfull remembers the decision as a complete and unexpected surprise when the Board of Directors met on 7 February, the meeting had been publicized in an extra edition of the *Erwin Record* the week before with the announcement of the plan to close the pottery.[59] William Campbell clipped the story and immediately sent it to Ed Wheatley at the union's headquarters.[60] On the *Erwin Record* front page on 7 February 1957, beneath the heading "Pottery Directors Meeting Today,"

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[58]*Erwin Record*, 20 September 1956. The article mentions that over half of the pottery's departments were now working a full forty-hour week, and the payroll listed six hundred employees [half the number Southern Potteries employed at its peak]. The piece also mentioned an increase in production of dinnerware, perhaps attributable to the Quaker Oats campaign.

[59]Manfull interview, 31 August 1999. Manfull's desk in the office area of the pottery plant placed her in close proximity to the room where the meeting was held. The more usual pattern for this group was to convene instead at the John Sevier Hotel in Johnson City, but then this particular meeting was different from those earlier regularly scheduled ones.

[60]E. L. Wheatley to William J. Campbell, TL, 5 February 1957, IBPAW Collection, conveyed "deep concern and sincere feelings of regret" but no mention of any plan of action to attempt to offset the intended closing of the pottery.

an article informed the readers that the directors were "to decide upon the liquidation of company assets." On the same page under her regular column titled "Just Rambling," Mrs. E. H. Griffith commented on the pride people felt for Blue Ridge pottery. She continued, "This seeming disaster was brought about by changing world conditions and not by failure of the fine management and personnel of the plant who saw the handwriting on the wall and heeded before it was too late." Indeed, as Eugene Price recalls, he received a "liquidating dividend" on his stock, and though he did not make a great deal, he did not lose money.[61] The *Erwin Record* article reporting on the stockholders' meeting of 22 February quoted from Southern Potteries' official statement: "of the stock represented in person and by proxy, the vote was approximately 99 percent for continued liquidation and approximately one percent against. Ninety-six and two-tenths percent of the total outstanding stock of this corporation was represented in person and by proxy."[62] The groups comprising the Board of Directors and the stockholders overlapped to a large extent and together included fewer than twenty people.

Hundreds of employees were out of work, and the pottery plant ceased to function after forty years of operation.[63] Various causes for Southern Potteries' demise can be

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[61]Price interview, 11 June 1996. Newbound and Newbound, *Southern Potteries Inc.*, 7, reports "remaining stockholders were paid approximately $7.50 per share upon closing."

[62]Mrs. E. H. Griffith, "Liquidation of Sou. Potteries Underway," *Erwin Record*, 28 February 1957, 1.

[63]Over a period of eight months a skeleton crew completed the orders already placed in operation at the time of the vote to liquidate. Mary Lott, the bookkeeper, wrote almost twenty years later, "after the business . . . had been terminated, the charter was canceled [and] . . . all records destroyed." Mary Lott to Jenny B. Derwich, TL, 28 January 1975, Edythe Manfull collection, Erwin, Tennessee, copy in possession of author, courtesy of Ms. Lott's niece, Edythe Manfull. Lott had tried to buy a block of Southern Potteries stock and paid a high price for it earlier. By Manfull's estimation, her

listed: adversarial relations between management and labor; import competition; too little money being called upon to fill needs from too many directions. Had the union been wrong ten years before in pushing the piece work plan and too militant in insisting union members not be laid off in economic hard times? Had management (so stringent in the time study and incentive plan) done all it could to weather an economic downturn and to find new ways of marketing the Blue Ridge products? Had the pottery failed in the face of some combination of these diverse parts or because of something else altogether?

Had the public's fickleness, in fact, been just as much a culprit in the case of Southern Potteries? So long as the public supported their product, the employees at Erwin's pottery plant understood that their jobs were safe. Once consumers turned away, though, workers became expendable and/or the jobs they performed might be redefined. Former hand painters who have been interviewed understood that they were replaceable: they decorated dinnerware because it was a job. When asked, the response invariably is that they did not see themselves as artists. But in the very same moment that former decorators, haulers, ware boys, jiggermen, and clay shop workers say that much, these people admit that they know they created something distinctive. The management at Southern Potteries depended upon them to make the products upon which it capitalized, and in that sense these employees were irreplaceable, until consumers deserted them.

The atmosphere at Southern Potteries in its best years may have been like that of a family, as former employees now recall. For Lois Johnson, Southern Potteries was a good place to work and "kindly family," because "when one family member got a job there the next thing you knew then the whole family was there." Oscar Riddle thought

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aunt lost considerable money. Manfull interview, 31 August 1999.

that a job at the pottery was about the best a person could get around Erwin, and he confides that people could tell a difference in the town when Southern Potteries was operating. In fact, as Viola Foster Garland remembers, the mood when the pottery closed was like a funeral.[64] The loss to workers, to their households, and to Erwin was great indeed. Just as impressive, though, is the legacy those pottery workers left. The material culture survives; the Blue Ridge pottery that was distinctive then, and that has become popular among collectors today, has confirmed for the decorators and their fellow employees the value of their work.[65] The workers at Southern Potteries involved with

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[64]Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999; Riddle interview, 12 June 1996; and Viola Foster Garland, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 8 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author.

Virtually each of the twenty-three people interviewed by the Snyders and by the author recalled the relations within the pottery as being "like a family." There were, however, clearly two different "families" being inferred, the one in the office area and the other on the production floor, that did not necessarily intermingle with quite the same ease or warmth.

[65]Books devoted to Southern Potteries and its Blue Ridge line that have appeared in recent years include: Winnie Keillor, *Dishes What Else? Blue Ridge of Course!* (Frankfort, Mich.: published by author, 1983); five different editions of Betty Newbound and Bill Newbound, *Southern Potteries Incorporated: Blue Ridge Dinnerware* (Paducah, Ky.: Collector Books, 1980, 1984, 1989, 1993, and 1996); two volumes by Newbound and Newbound from 1994 and 1998 titled *Encyclopedia of Blue Ridge Dinnerware* and *Collectors' Encyclopedia of Blue Ridge Dinnerware* (Paducah, Ky.: Collectors Books); and Frances and John Ruffin, *Blue Ridge China Today: A Comprehensive Identification and Price Guide for Today's Collector* (Atglen, Pa.: Schiffer Publishing Co., 1997). Norma Lilly of Blountville, Tennessee, publishes the *National Blue Ridge Newsletter* six times a year. Kim and Bryan Snyder produced the shortlived *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* through five issues in 1996 and 1997. During the first weekend in October each year, Erwin's Apple Fest has in recent years drawn crowds of Blue Ridge dealers and collectors. An estimated 60,000 visitors descend upon the town for the event and the display of pottery in the town's armory.

Blue Ridge dinnerware and chinaware created a lasting source of pride for those who worked on it and a delight for those who own it. Without a doubt, there is skill in that.

CHAPTER 7

BUILDING UPON ITS PAST: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND HERITAGE EDUCATION EFFORTS IN ERWIN

More than forty years have passed since the decision to close Southern Potteries in February 1957. Once kilns and conveyor belts ceased operating, the work routines of pottery employees lived on only in memories. With the end of Erwin's distinctive industry, its former significance dimmed quickly. As events and people associated with Southern Potteries lost meaning, the town's interest in them and in the Blue Ridge dinnerware they formerly produced declined as well.[1] In later decades newcomers to Erwin did not know to be impressed by what had taken place in the pottery factory south of the town center. Subsequent owners of the Southern Potteries site modified and used the plant first to make caskets and later to customize vans.[2] At present the facility stands empty (see Figure 53). Recently, though, consumer interest in collecting Blue Ridge pottery has helped revive some curiosity about the plant and people who produced it. The achievements of the past are gaining some recognition with a younger generation of buyers, at least. At the same time, the development of regional and women's history since the 1960s and 1970s allows a scholarly evaluation of the Southern Potteries

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[1]After all, the pottery had been started and operated by "outsiders." All three of Southern Potteries' presidents and a fair portion of the management's "executive family" had come from Ohio. The Board of Directors included almost no one of upper East Tennessee origins, and the workers' ranks depended upon people from surrounding states as well as from the vicinity of Erwin. Many of these employees moved away once their jobs at the pottery disappeared.

[2]Betty Newbound and Bill Newbound, *Southern Potteries Inc. Blue Ridge Dinnerware*, rev. 3d ed. (Paducah, Ky.: Collector Books, 1996), 7.

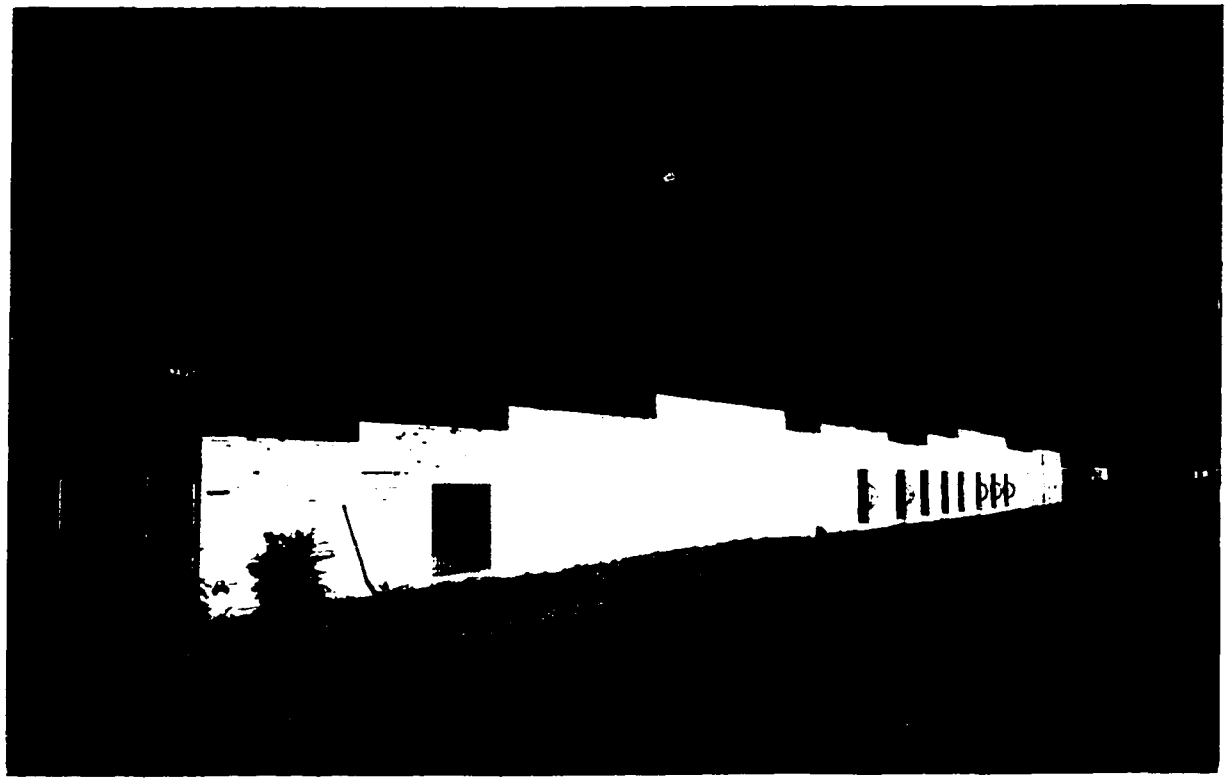

Figure 53. Southern Potteries plant, side elevation facing Watauga Avenue

Photograph by the author

experience for women workers who decorated those dishes. From this last perspective, their difficulties and their accomplishments bear witness to issues that have faced women workers in other industries, too. Preservation efforts to ensure that aspects of the community's past, including Southern Potteries' history, survive can be undertaken. Erwin contains a variety of resources that testify to earlier periods. Extant buildings, surviving landscapes, examples of materials produced, and the presence of people involved can each contribute to an understanding of Erwin during the first half of the twentieth century, its past citizens, and its legacy.[3] That period's prosperity proved fleeting, but the anticipation of its return that has influenced most subsequent developments in the community can also fuel prosperity's reestablishment through preservation.

The town of Erwin did not collapse upon the pottery's demise, and before the end of the month following the close of the plant the *Erwin Record* front-page headlines announced the arrival of a company representing a modern industry. Davison Chemical Company would build units for nuclear reactor materials at a plant to be located west of the pottery site and south of the railroad yards.[4] Beginning with fifteen employees in July 1957, the company survived, grew, and changed its name to Nuclear Fuel Services. From the mid-1970s through the mid-1990s, the firm has employed three hundred or

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[3]For discussions concerning landscapes and features in them, see John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Ary J. Lamme, *America's Historic Landscapes: Community Power and the Preservation of Four National Historic Sites* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); and Rebecca Yamin and Karen Bescherer Methany, eds., *Landscape Archaeology: Reading and Interpreting the American Historical Landscape* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996).

[4]*Erwin Record*, 21 March 1957.

more workers, though only about 20 percent of them are women. Southern Potteries' long-time neighbor plant, the A. P. Villa and Brothers Silk Mill, has also undergone change of management, name, and product, but operations at its facilities continue today as RedKap Industries Work Wear with three hundred employees, almost all of whom are women (as was true in its past).[5] A few of the women decorators from Southern Potteries found employment at other potteries. Some women moved to Stetson China Company in Lincoln, Illinois, where hand-painted dinnerware production survived against import competition until 1966. Negatha Peterson began her own business in Erwin using moulds she purchased from Southern Potteries when it closed. The majority of the women decorators, though, sought work in other fields and, with few employment opportunities in Erwin, in other locales.[6]

The neighborhood nearby that the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway (CC&O) and Grosvenor Atterbury envisioned as a model garden community still stands. All of the Atterbury-designed residences that Southern Potteries sold in the late 1930s and early 1940s remain. Additions have been made: carports in some cases, in others

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[5]*Erwin Record*, 30 June 1976, and loose papers from Erwin/Unicoi County Chamber of Commerce, Erwin, Tenn., dated 1993 and 1995. Some hand painters got work at Industrial Garment (now RedKap), but the garment factory paid lower wages than the pottery had. Elizabeth Johnson, interview by author, tape recording, Jonesborough, Tenn., 31 August 1999.

[6]Susan Bagdade and Al Bagdade, *Warman's American Pottery and Porcelain* (Radnor, Pa.: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1994), 147. The Johnson sisters went to work at May Brothers, a plant that opened in Johnson City to make building levels tools. May Brothers specifically sought former hand painters and paid them a rate of $1.00 per hour. The company originally intended for these women to paint the stripes for the levels bubble, but they were assigned to other jobs instead once it became clear that a machine could make accurate stripe marks quickly. Lois Johnson, interview by author, tape recording, Jonesborough, Tenn., 31 August 1999.

siding and metal railings replace original materials. None of the original shutters has survived, but the tone Atterbury was trying to develop has.[7] Later housing built near these residences reflects similar characteristics in materials and style, so that the entire residential area has a distinctive appearance, noticeable to people driving down its roads. Atterbury's road system from 1917 continues to shape the landscape. The high school built in 1929 on land given to the town by the Clinchfield Railroad just up Unaka Way from the Atterbury houses closed at the end of the 1998-1999 school year. The new high school opened with the next school year at its location directly south of the old school and on the opposite side of Mohawk (see Figures 54 and 55). The new school faces the Unicoi County Memorial Hospital, also built on land once owned by the railroad and dedicated in January 1953. Two institutions of great importance to Erwin as a community have been placed, decades apart and years after Atterbury drew up his plan, along the central roadway and the grand circle from his original design (see Figures 25 and 56). Atterbury's vision from eighty years ago continues to shape at least a portion of the town and its image.

Neither Atterbury nor Charles Foreman would have imagined a four-lane highway linking Erwin to Interstate 81, but such a road now runs parallel to the railroad tracks on Erwin's western edge. Only time will tell if its presence will transform Erwin as Atterbury's and Foreman's contributions did. Efforts at modernization in the commercial center of Erwin along Main Street, though, seem capable of transforming the older town fabric, and, in some cases, of eliminating it. The original county courthouse was replaced in the 1970s by a building that almost overwhelms its corner at Gay and Main

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[7]Sarah Eubanks, Patricia Milan, and Carla Stewart, "Community Development by Grosvenor Atterbury: Erwin, Tennessee" (class project, University of Tennessee, 1992), 2, copy in the possession of the author.

Figure 54. Unicoi County High School (constructed 1929)

Figure 55. Unicoi County High School (constructed 1999)

Photographs by the author

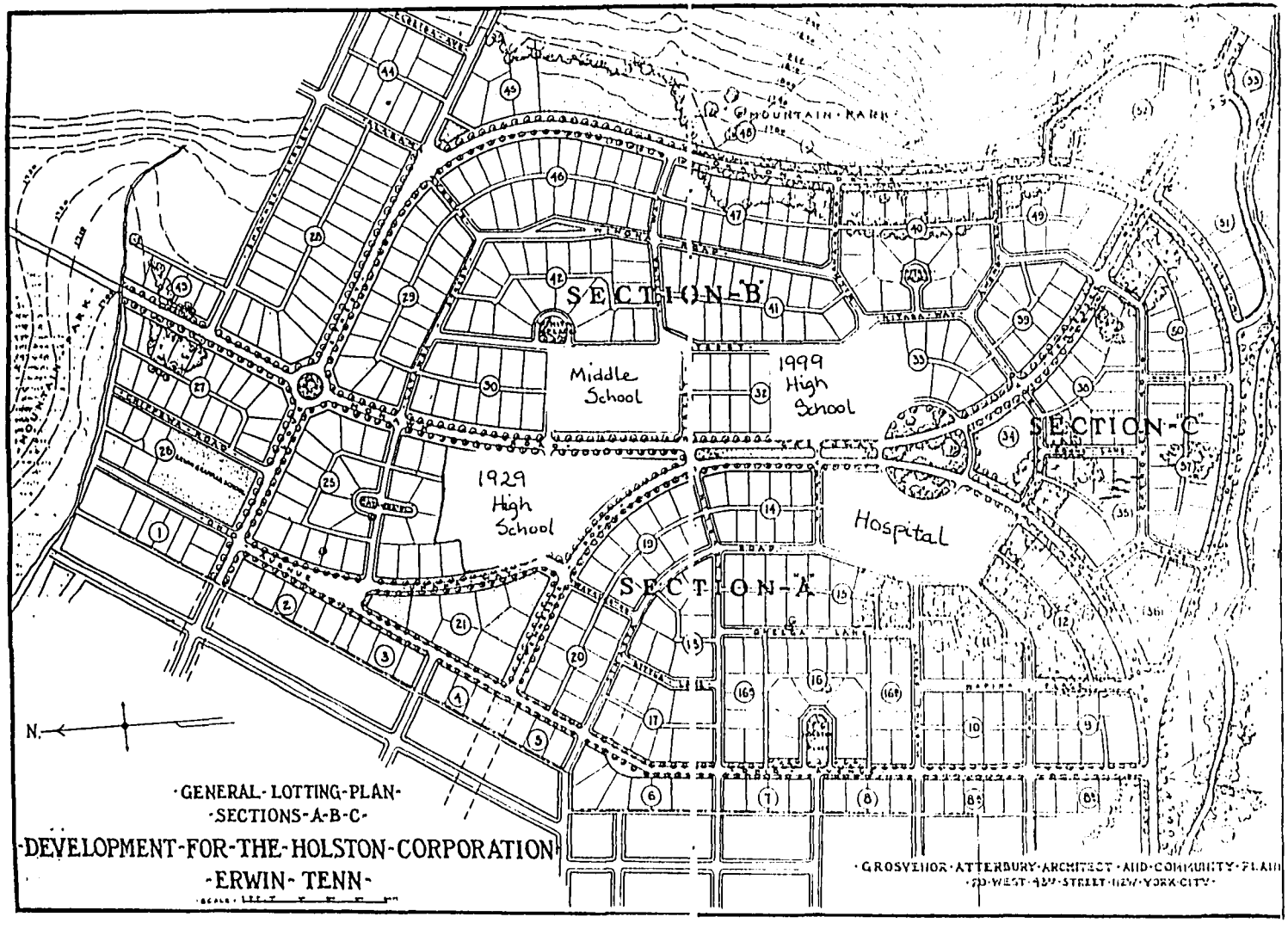

Figure 56. Erwin, Tennessee: General Lotting Plan, amended by the author

Streets. The new town hall stands on Main Street north of the town center. Completed in 1996, the building looks like a postmodern version of a train depot (see Figure 57) and replaces the three-story city hall building immediately behind the courthouse. That 1923 city hall building, now considered a fire trap by Erwin citizens, still houses on its third floor the local chapter of the Masons (which has met on this same piece of land since its founding in 1876). The first floor serves temporarily as the Clinchfield Senior Adult Center. Erwin's senior citizens met previously at the YMCA building, built in the mid-1920s at the corner of Main and Tucker Streets, until its demolition in 1997. The present YMCA facilities are located several blocks out Love Street, on the site of the old elementary school built when the Atterbury houses first went up. A new post office stands now on the former YMCA corner of Main and Tucker, and across Main a Sonic Drive-In faces it. The old post office building from 1935, situated on the southwest corner of Main and Tucker, is the new home of Plant Palace Flowers & Services (see Figure 58). Across Gay Street from the 1923 city hall is the sometimes vacant A. R. Brown & Company building (constructed by 1910) where in the earliest days of Southern Potteries, Inc., girls and women learned lining techniques to go with the decal trimming on the pottery of that time.[8]

The stylish train depot of 1925 went into decline once passenger service ceased on the Clinchfield line in 1955, but it provided useful storage for components of the signals system. The building's neglect after the CSX absorbed the railroad and terminated the Clinchfield's name mirrored the conglomerate's attitude toward the old line's history. After recent rehabilitation the depot has opened its doors to the public

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[8]*Erwin Record*, 7 April 1999; *Erwin Record*, 30 June 1976; and Newbound and Newbound, *Southern Potteries Inc.*, 9.

Figure 57. Erwin Town Hall

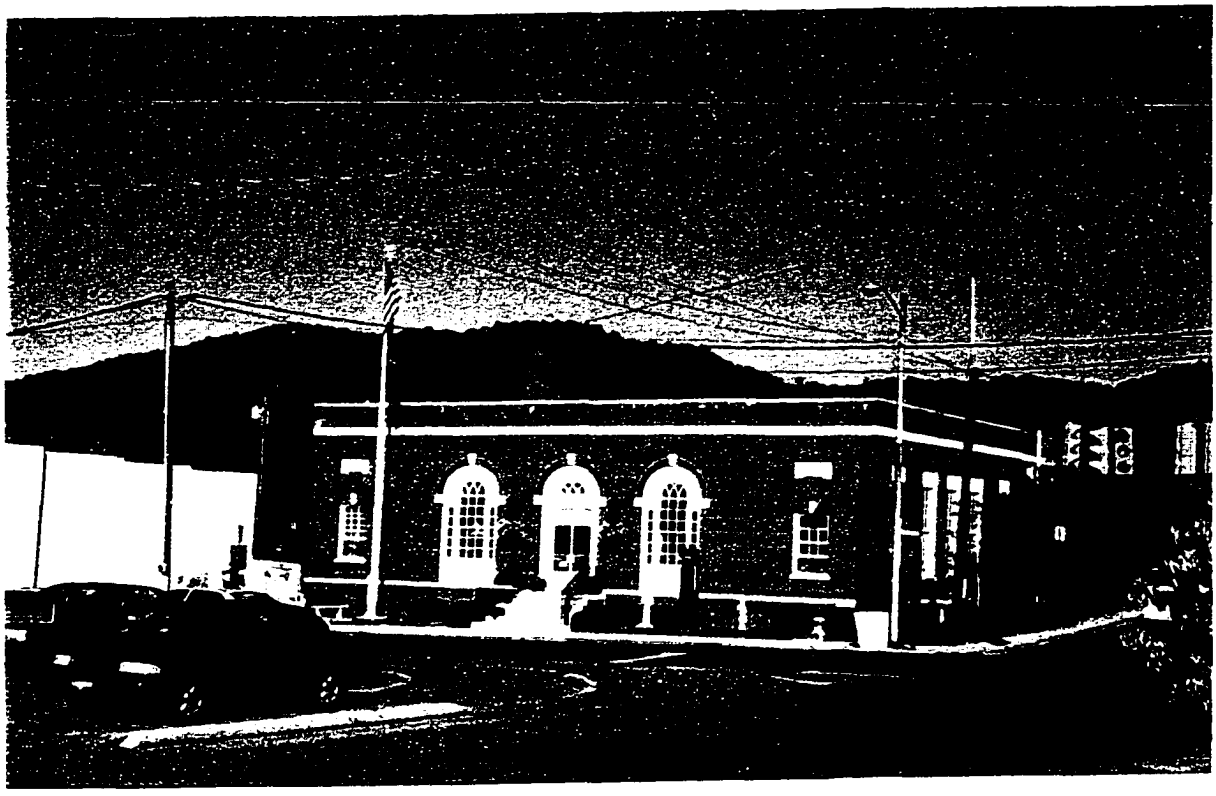

Figure 58. former Erwin Post Office (constructed 1935)

Photographs by the author

again, this time as the county library (see Figures 59 and 60). The library's former home, the 1928 Erwin National Bank building on the corner of Main Street and Union, stands empty but still sports an elegant granite facade reminiscent of the boom period resulting from the civic capitalism experienced in Erwin in the 1910s and 1920s. South of the railroad depot the CSX regional offices occupy the General Offices Building that CC&O management had built in 1915 and later expanded. The Hotel Erwin, facing Main Street a block east of the General Offices and depot buildings and forming a triangle with them, now houses a bank instead of businessmen and train passengers. The extensive railroad yards beyond and north of the depot continue to function as they have for almost ninety years.[9]

Such a cursory survey suggests that Erwin has a history worth remembering and one that can be tangibly identified through buildings and structures which individually or in districts deserve attention and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.[10] The same might well be true for Unicoi County sites in locations outside of Erwin. At this time, however, the 1925 Clinchfield Depot, the Tilson farm at Flag Pond, and the Clarksville Iron Furnace comprise the only places in Unicoi County represented on the National Register. This situation indicates the need for two different actions. A

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[9]Steve King, *Clinchfield Country* (Silver Springs, Md.: Old Line Graphics, 1988), 105, and *Erwin Record*, 30 June 1976.

[10]The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created the National Register of Historic Places, which the National Park Service maintains for the Secretary of the Interior. The National Register is the official list of "districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture." The level of determined significance may be local, state, or national, and the listing should be "worthy of preservation." *Title I, Section 101, The National Historic Preservation Act, 1966* [S.3035; Public No. 89-665], and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: USDI, 1991), i.

Figure 59. Clinchfield Depot, during renovation

Figure 60. Col. J. F. Toney Memorial Library (former Clinchfield Depot, 1925) with CSX General Office Building (former Clinchfield G. O. B., 1915, 1926)
Photographs by the author

comprehensive survey of historic resources in Unicoi County is both necessary as a preliminary procedure and essential to any future preservation efforts. Completion of the survey will provide a basic inventory of resources from which a prioritized list of desired actions can be created. Just as necessary as such a survey is the organization of interested individuals into a formal group committed to acknowledging and preserving such resources where possible. This group would serve the community by keeping the list and calling for action. Neither step, survey nor identification of activists, taken in isolation will prove nearly so effective as the two operating in tandem.

Unicoi County already has an active historical society with a collection of holdings in the Col. J. F. Toney Memorial Library in Erwin. In place also is a Chamber of Commerce office with at least one staff member available during regular business hours each week. The successful acquisition of funds to rehabilitate the train depot suggests a presence of some interest and energy for preservation. From these diverse organizations with overlapping interests a core group of activists might well be drawn. Such a designated group could then seek funds for conducting the survey of historic resources and receive that survey's results.

The National Park Service of the Department of the Interior publishes a manual of guidelines and methods for conducting surveys entitled *National Register Bulletin 24, Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning.* The subtitle emphasizes how fundamental this step is in any and all types of local efforts. Tennessee also publishes forms through its Tennessee Historical Commission and the State Historic Preservation Officer that may be used for preliminary fieldwork and submitted to the office in Nashville for advice on possible further action.

Unicoi County may seem a bit remote in its location in upper East Tennessee, but within its boundaries the United States Fish and Wildlife Service operates the Erwin

National Fish Hatchery and the United States Forest Service maintains the Cherokee National Forest. Any action taken by these federal bodies requires Section 106 review as written in the National Historic Preservation Act. This section of the act applies to properties either already listed on the National Register of Historic Places or deemed eligible to be placed there. Section 106 "requires that Federal agencies consider what effects their actions, and actions they may assist, permit, or license, may have on historic properties, and that they give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a 'reasonable opportunity to comment' on such actions."[11] Though the Advisory Council can not prevent a federal agency from pursuing a plan that may destroy a historic property, the point behind this required review is to attempt to preserve historic properties by urging federal agencies to find alternate solutions. With so much of Unicoi County already under this type of watchdog situation, completion of the county's historic resources survey would bring to public attention all areas within its boundaries deserving of preservation attention.[12]

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[11]"What Is 'Section 106 Review?'" Local Preservation pamphlet (Washington, D.C.: USDI, n.d.).

[12]Other types of legislation can also have a bearing on Erwin's situation. As an example, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), could have been used to Erwin's advantage. As a part of this act, funds for preservation efforts in the fifty states existed for six years. Tennessee had available over sixty-six million dollars for projects within its borders through 1997. Because there was federal highway construction between Interstate 81 and Asheville, North Carolina, passing beside Erwin, Unicoi County might have been eligible for funding of some preservation-related work. In its Surface Transportation Program, ISTEA listed under Transportation Enhancement Activities the following improvements that were eligible to receive funding: "provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites, scenic or historic highway programs, landscaping and other scenic beautification, historic preservation, rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities (including historic railroad facilities, and canals), preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian and bicycle trails), control and removal of outdoor advertising,

The possibility of designating rural historic landscapes within Unicoi County, while quite obvious, has not yet been fully gauged. The U. S. Forest Service did arrange for a feasibility study early in the 1990s at Jackson Farm on the Nolichucky River at Jackson Mountain, within the Cherokee National Forest. Occupation of this property dates from the late eighteenth century, but the study's recommendation to create a Southern Appalachian Heritage Center there has not been pursued.[13] Though farming no longer provides the primary occupation in Unicoi County, it remains a link to some of the earliest settlers in this part of Tennessee.

After completion of the initial county-wide survey of historic resources, using *National Register Bulletin 30, Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* could help to determine appropriate sites for nomination to the National Register. Besides the Clarksville Iron Furnace already on the National Register, there might be mining sites that would also qualify for inclusion. Zinc mining formed the primary source of employment, based on the 1920 census, in the county's sixth civil district, for example. *National Register Bulletin 42, Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Registering Historic Mining Properties* would provide handy reference in this area. The range of categories with preservation possibilities that might be found in Unicoi County would probably surprise its residents.[14]

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archaeological planning and research, and mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff." *Surface Transportation Policy Project Resource Guide* (Washington, D.C.: 1992 Surface Transportation Policy Project, 1992), 11-12.

[13]School of Environmental Design, *Southern Appalachian Heritage Center: A Feasibility Study* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1993) can be viewed in the Unicoi County Historical Society holdings in the Col. J. F. Toney Memorial Library in Erwin.

[14]Samuel N. Stokes and A. Elizabeth Watson, *Saving America's Countryside: A Guide to Rural Conservation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) might be a useful reference book when examining and evaluating Erwin and Unicoi County's

By the time a county survey is underway, the group of activists would be well advised to collect together and become familiar with the materials that have been published over the last three decades with reference to historic preservation efforts. Most works addressing the subject urge creation of a Certified Local Government (CLG), an idea for the Unicoi County activists to consider. The Tennessee Historical Commission (THC) publishes a sheet containing three very basic questions and their answers to help define and clarify for the public the purpose of a CLG. The National Park Service publication *National Register Bulletin 26, Certified Local Governments in the National Historic Preservation Program* provides more detailed information with the same objective. A major consideration here is the establishment of a local qualified historic preservation review commission. This commission "should be composed as much as possible of professionals in preservation fields such as history, architectural history, and archeology; in reality, commissions are usually made up of a combination of professionals and nonprofessionals, but all must have demonstrated an interest in historic preservation."[15] The location in nearby communities of several colleges and East Tennessee State University in Johnson City might provide supplementary support for this commission through both knowledge and numbers, if either seems locally insufficient.

Several advantages emerge for a community when it makes the effort to acquire CLG status. A community with such designation becomes eligible to receive funds from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). CLG status also provides a closer connection to the SHPO when a community is in need of technical services and

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rural environment.

[15]William E. Parrish, "Management of Cultural Resources at the Local Level," in *Cultural Resources Management*, ed. Ronald W. Johnson and Michael G. Schene (Malabar, Fla.: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1987), 128.

assistance. Because of Erwin's distance from the THC and its SHPO headquarters in Nashville, that becomes an advantage of some importance in Erwin's case. Control of the process, though, remains at the local level. Nominations for the National Register would be reviewed first within the county before going to the state review board, and the CLG would be able to create criteria and procedures for designating local historic and cultural landmarks. A Certified Local Government by its nature is proactive, and for the sake of preservation efforts it seems always safer to be advancing a cause rather than reacting to an erupting crisis.

A CLG is not mandatory to take advantage of various federal and state programs, but having an activist group that is knowledgeable can accomplish many things. Investigating the Main Street Program, now in existence for more than two decades, might help the businesses in downtown Erwin as they revitalize the appearance of their area. Locating an attorney or law firm interested in writing easement documents could prove helpful in both commercial and residential areas.[16] The town of Erwin might well produce two or three historic districts from its residential, business, and industrial sectors, and these would be eligible for tax incentive programs authorized by Congress. A combination of any or all of these possible actions has the potential of informing and engaging a good percentage of the town's citizens.

Designating an area of a community as a historic district requires survey work and research. The fundamental nature of the work involved in shaping up and documenting that historic district can act also as a springboard from which to attempt a Main Street program or easement work. Listing what exists comes first. Erwin includes three

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[16]Pamela Dwight, ed., *The Landmark Yellow Pages: Where to Find All the Names, Addresses, Facts, and Figures You Need* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1993) presents brief overviews of a number and wide range of preservation possibilities.

different areas with potential to be designated as historic districts. The railroad yards and buildings comprise a transportation and industrial site of significance commencing shortly after the turn of the century. The architecturally designed residential area and road system laid out by Grosvenor Atterbury in the late 1910s makes a second district. The downtown section of Erwin, including the commercial and civic centers along Main Street and radiating out from it, would be a third district (see Figure 61). Each of these areas has significance in terms of its evidence of broad patterns in history and in terms of its architecture and construction. Requesting inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places would be justified, and properly completed nominations for such districts should receive positive responses.[17]

The CC&O, as the Clinchfield Railroad's predecessor, cut across the Southern Appalachians by constructing tunnels, bridges, and grading that in combination make the 277 miles of line an outstanding example of engineering skill. The maintenance of the entire route and its engines, cars, and other equipment depended upon the railroad yards

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[17]The National Register criteria for evaluation as found in the *Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Part 60* determines significance in one or more of four ways. Consideration of districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects is restricted to those "[A] that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or [B] that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or [C] that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or [D] that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history." *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 2.

National Register Bulletins that provide instructions, examples, clarification, and other information useful in the process of surveying, documenting, and nominating a historic district include *15* and *24*, mentioned earlier, as well as *14, Guidelines for Counting Contributing and Noncontributing Resources for National Register Documentation*; *16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*; and *39, Researching a Historic Property*.

District #2 - Residential area and road system laid out by Grosvenor Atterbury

District #3 - Commercial and civic centers radiating out from Main Street

District #1 - Railroad yards and buildings

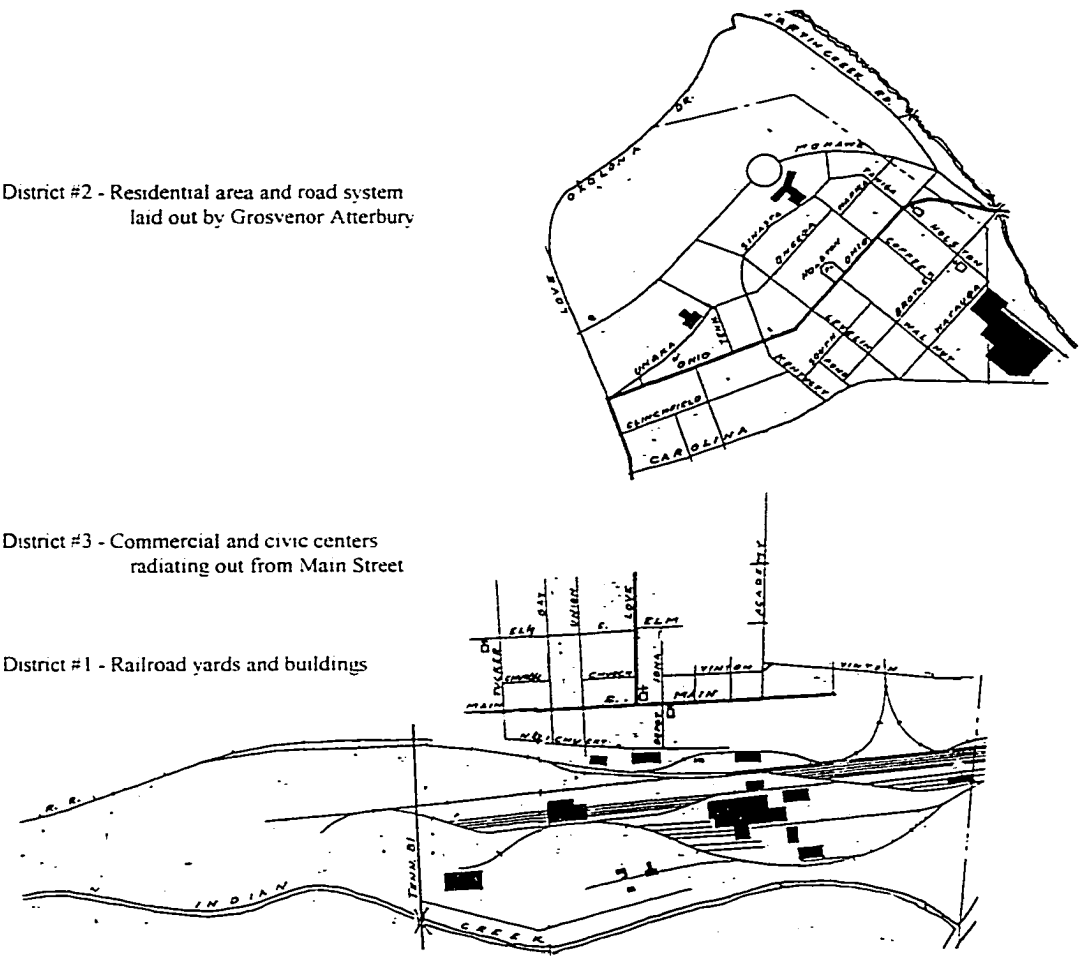

Figure 61. Three proposed historic districts in Erwin

beside the Nolichucky River at Erwin. That work area represents a significant and distinguishable entity and as such qualifies for nomination to the National Register under criterion C. Contributing buildings include the Turntable and Shop buildings (see Figures 62 and 63); the General Offices Building of 1915 (expanded in 1926 to be the rail line's headquarters); the passenger depot of 1925 with its Craftsman-style details; and perhaps the residence built for L. H. Phetteplace, general manager from 1913-1950, located on the hillside at Vinton and Academy above the tracks with a clear view of the yards and their operations under his command (see Figures 64, 65, and 66).

At the same time, the significance of the railroad headquarters to the movement of coal out of the Appalachian region qualifies this district under criterion A. The drive to reach the coal fields and get that natural resource out of the mountains to buyers typified the New South era in the nation's history. Clearly here at Erwin was the machinery that made such a New South, and that period in the region and nation's history has shaped what followed in the twentieth century. One man, George L. Carter, stood as the force behind that drive in southwest Virginia, northeast Tennessee, and western North Carolina. Carter created Kingsport and improved Johnson City. His decision to place the railroad yards and the general offices of his line at Erwin changed that town's identity and its future. The historical significance of the railroad yards and adjacent buildings at Erwin, then, is multilayered. For more than three-quarters of a century the people of Erwin identified their community with the Clinchfield. Recognition of the railroad's historical significance through placement of the railroad yards on the National Register as a district acknowledges that sense of pride in association as justly felt.[18]

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[18]Sources worth examining in relation to this transportation/industrial district include Bonnie L. Gamble, "The Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad, 1845-1880: Preservation of a Railroad Landscape" (M.A. thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1993); Thomas E. Leary, "Shadows in the Cave: Industrial Ecology and

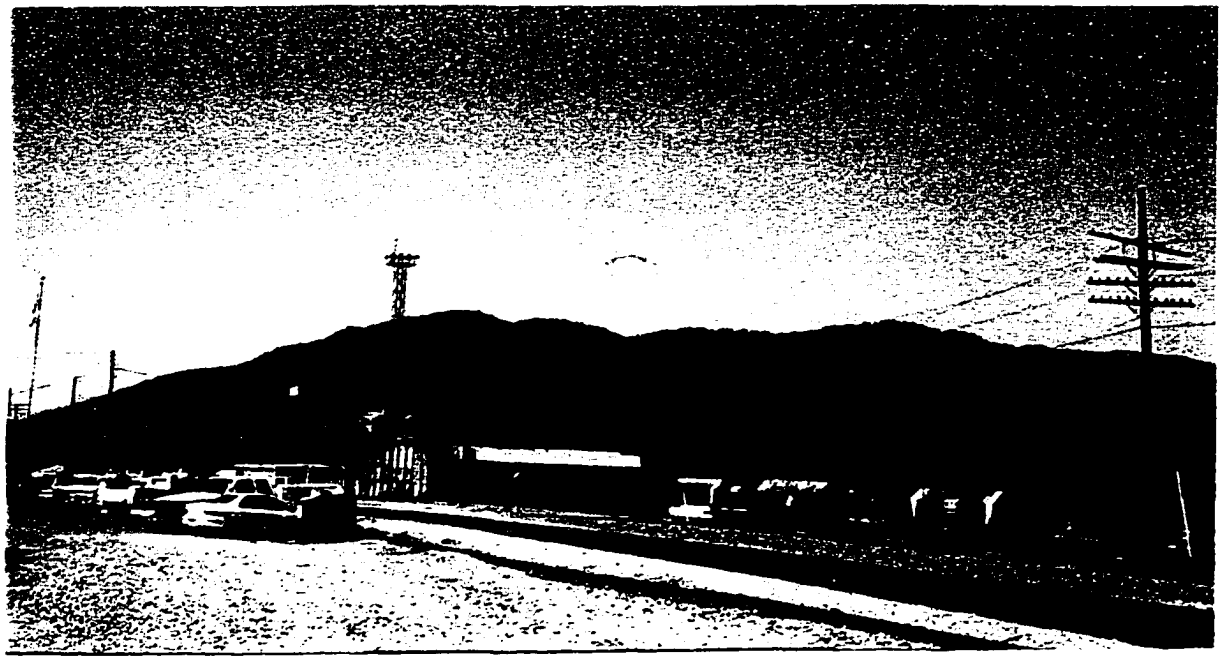

Figure 62. CSX Machine shops (former Clinchfield shops)

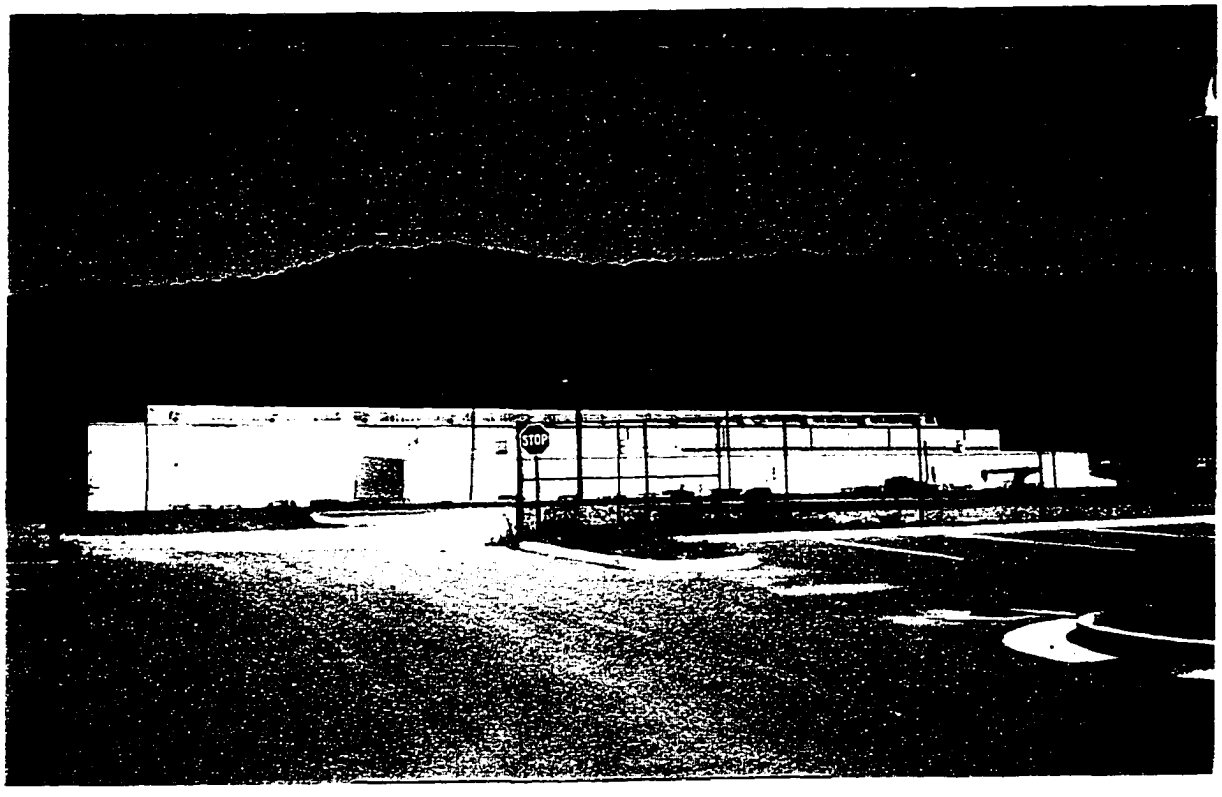

Figure 63. CSX Car shops (former Clinchfield shops)
Photographs by the author

Figure 64. Col. L. H. Phetteplace home

(Reprinted by permission of the Unicoi County Historical Society, from their Historical Photographs Collection, Col. J. F. Toney Memorial Library, Erwin, Tenn.)

Figure 65. former Phetteplace house today

Photograph by the author

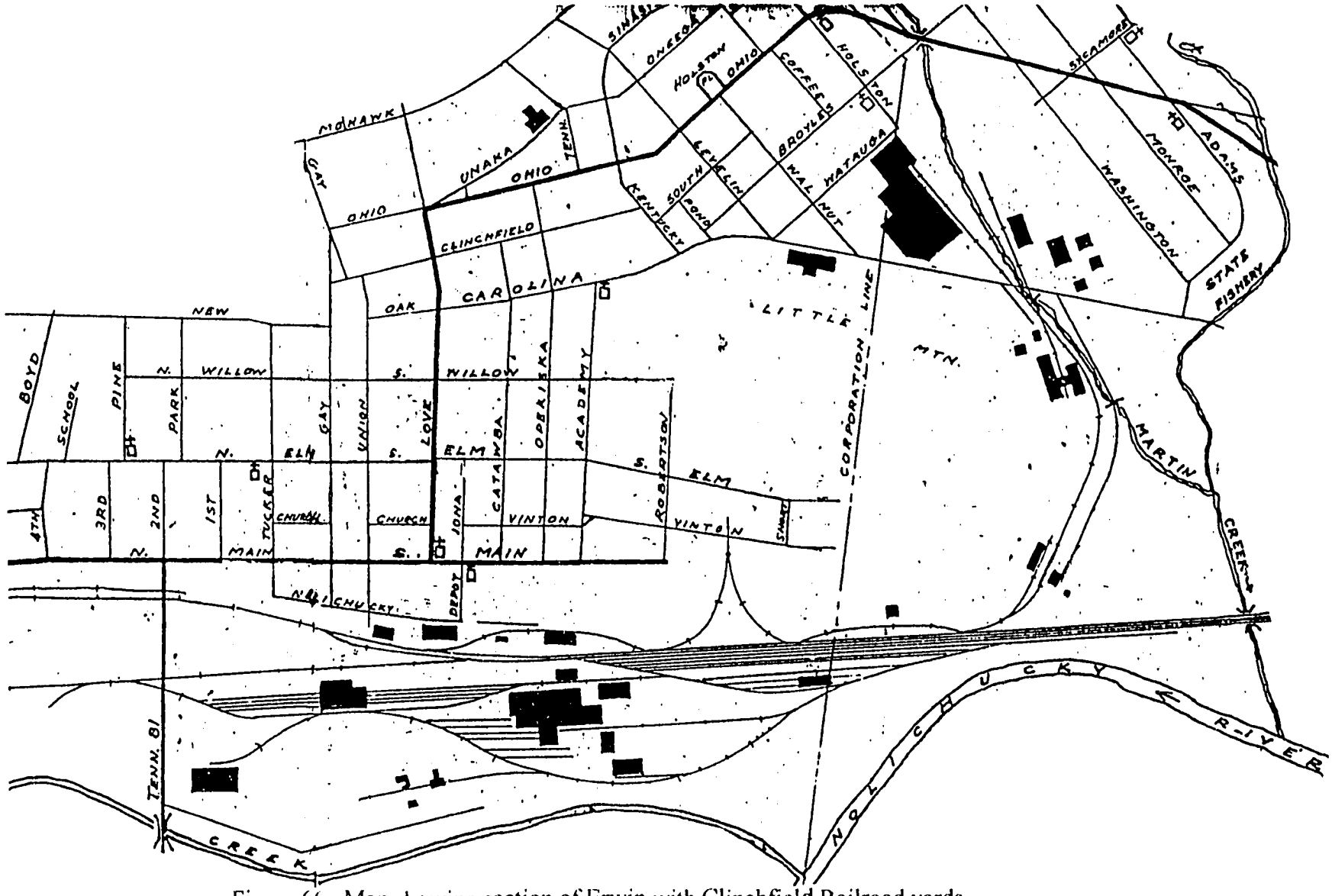

Figure 66. Map showing section of Erwin with Clinchfield Railroad yards

The residential section of Erwin located south of Love Street along Ohio Avenue and Unaka Way and bordered by Mohawk stands out because of its distinctive appearance and unity (see Figure 67). The origins of this area make it worthy of nomination as a historic district. Within this streetscape, itself laid out by architect and community planner Grosvenor Atterbury of New York, construction of worker housing qualifies the neighborhood for the National Register under criteria C and A. The forty-five extant houses built to three different designs by Atterbury represent the only southern example of the work of a master (see Figures 31, 33, and 35). Throughout his long career, one of Atterbury's chief aims was the development of good but not expensive housing for the working class. The collection of his houses in Erwin provides an excellent example of that goal of his work. At the same time, architectural historians acknowledge Atterbury's position as the leading proponent and designer of early garden city efforts in the United States. In the long history of attempts to improve upon housing conditions associated with industrialization, the garden city effort looked hopeful both for more urbanized locations in the Northeast and for the southern mill villages. The Atterbury houses in Erwin give tangible and local proof of the reform efforts undertaken across the nation in the Progressive era, while their Craftsman-like appearance conjures up the Arts and Crafts movement that ran concurrently and nationwide as well.[19]

Museum Practice," *Public Historian* 11 (Fall 1989): 39-60; and Doris J. Dyen and Edward K. Muller, "Conserving the Heritage of Industrial Communities," *Historic Preservation Forum*, July/August 1994, 37-43.

[19]Over the last eighty years the overall integrity of the neighborhood has been maintained, including the original dimensions of the lots fronting on the streets and Atterbury's road system. See Alison K. Hoagland, "Industrial Housing and Vinyl Siding: Historical Significance Flexibly Applied," in *Preservation Of What, For Whom?: A Critical Look at Historical Significance, March 20-22, 1997*, by the Center for Graduate and Continuing Studies (Baltimore: Goucher College, in association with the National Council for Preservation Education and the National Park Service, 1997).

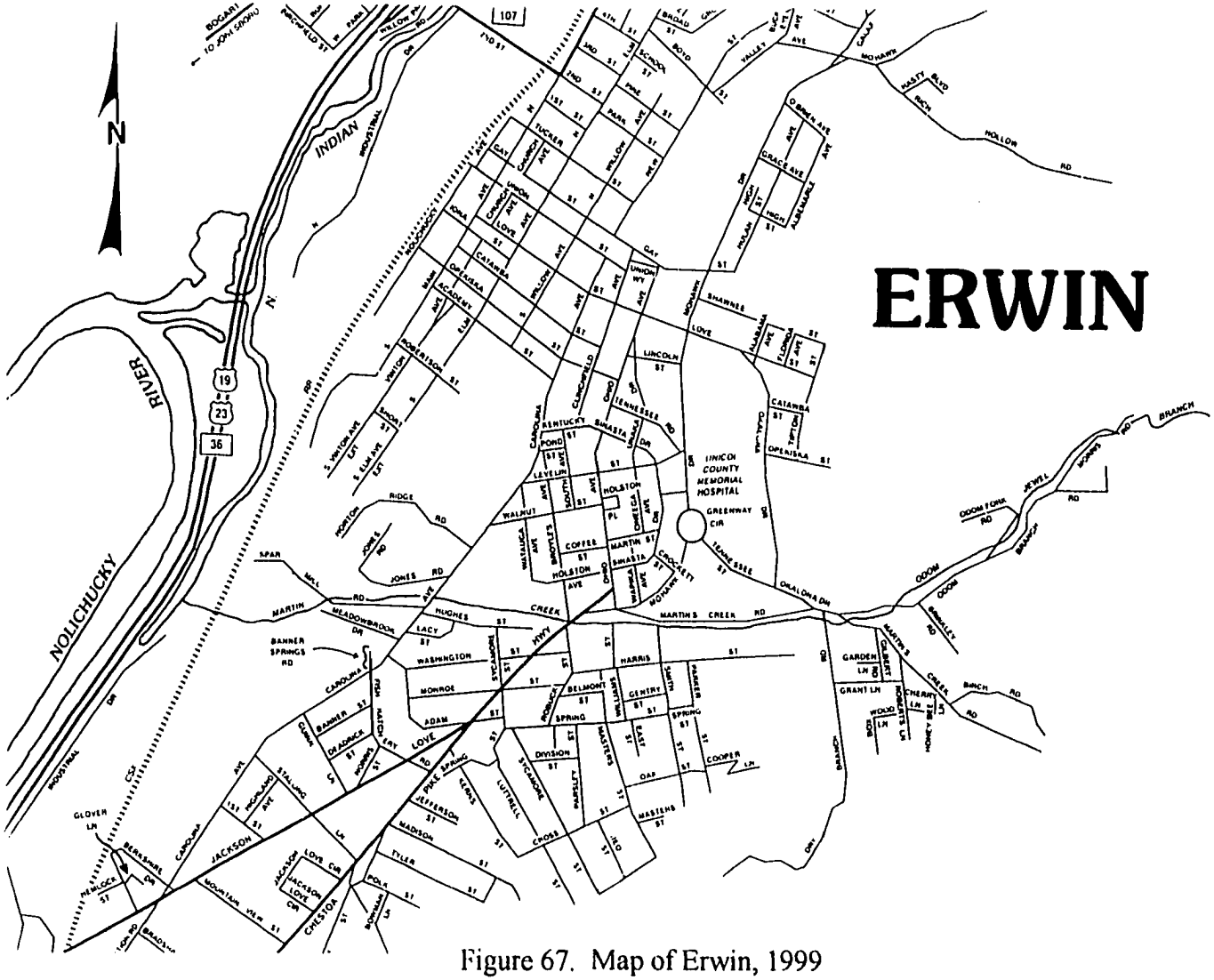

Figure 67. Map of Erwin, 1999
(Source: Erwin/Unicoi County Chamber of Commerce)

Attractive and intact, this residential area built by the railroad for railroad employees has been known instead in Erwin as "the pottery houses" for generations. While that confusion seems understandable, since Southern Potteries took over most of that housing in 1920, more inaccurate and outlandish ideas about these houses exist as well. One version told by Howard Bogart in 1997 goes as follows:

> There was an addition to the town called the Pottery Addition. Are you familiar with these Pottery Houses they had up here? Well, I was born and raised in one of them. The Pottery owned the houses. At the time my family rented one of them. They were all rental properties. You couldn't buy them. I was born and raised right in the middle of most of the Pottery people. I knew all of them and they were what we called at the time Northern People. Most of them came from Ohio. I lived there and grew up with their children. Most, about all, of [the Houses] have been remodeled. They made a lot of nice homes out of them now. In fact, they were nice homes at the time. I don't know whether it's right or whether it's wrong, but I've heard it more than once about how those houses came to be up there. They were all pre-cut and they're all alike. I mean, there's some four room houses which are one story. Then there's the five room house, they called it, which was a two story, and a six room which was a two story. That's what they called them, either four room, five room or six room. They were all pre-cut and they were supposed to have been built in Florida. They were going through here on the railroad. The way I hear is that the company that owned them went bankrupt. They got to Erwin on the railroad and that's as far as they could get with them because the company went bankrupt and nobody was going to pay to send them on. The Pottery bought them and bought this land and had all the houses built then rented them to whoever wanted them--Pottery people. That's the reason it was called the Pottery Addition, because they bought all these houses. I don't know whether you've heard that tale before or not. That's the way I understand why those houses were up there.[20]

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[20]Howard Bogart, "Meet Howard Bogart, Postman," *The Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (March/April 1997): 14.

Nomination to the National Register as a district will bring a fuller and more accurate account of the neighborhood's history and its relation to developments outside the region to public attention.[21]

The buildings of the Atterbury residential district are aesthetically a unit, whereas a district created in the commercial and civic center of Erwin would be based on its physical development during an important period of the town's history. When George L. Carter decided in 1907 to place his CC&O railroad yards (which opened in 1909) at Erwin, his action precipitated an expectation of growth and prosperity among the community leaders. They responded to the railroad's arrival by introducing other modern inventions: the telephone (first tried in Erwin in 1907) had seventy-five subscribers by 1912; electricity arrived about 1909; and the town installed a water system in 1910. The town leaders owned Erwin's businesses and functioned as the doctors, lawyers, and bankers. They enhanced Main Street's appearance and accessibility by adding sidewalks in 1909; paving the street came later, in 1917. Brick buildings of two or three stories replaced the wooden structures of the town as it had been set out after 1876.[22] The solid

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[21]Reference material regarding architecture and its terminology that might prove useful includes John J.-G. Blemenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, rev. ed. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History Press, 1981); Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993); and Steven J. Phillips, *Old-House Dictionary: An Illustrated Guide to American Domestic Architecture 1600-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1994).

[22]*Erwin Record*, 30 June 1976, commemorating the community's centennial year, ran articles about all aspects of its history, and facts in this paragraph came from columns appearing in sections B, D, and F. To help put Erwin's commercial architectural developments into context, see Richard Longstreth, "Compositional Types in American Commercial Architecture," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, II*, ed. Camille Wells (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, for the Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1986).

construction and improvements along Main Street matched the emergent infrastructure of local leadership. Erwin entered a period of civic capitalism that lasted through the mid-1920s. In this period of town and technological development, local elites and entrepreneurs cooperatively supported each other's endeavors. The intended results included personal gain but equally too the community's best interests. This balance between the sense of stewardship and economic advancement depended upon control remaining (or appearing to remain) local and autonomous.

A historic district, then, can be based on that significant time of Erwin's growth over the two decades from 1907-1926.[23] The spine of that district is Main Street, stretching from Tucker south to Depot and along the cross streets of Gay and Union between Nolichucky on the west and Elm to the east (see Figures 23 and 38).[24] The town's first city directory, published in 1924, and its first Sanborn fire insurance maps, prepared in 1925, are helpful sources for this time period, in addition to deeds, records, newspapers, and the buildings themselves. The area within this proposed district remains the center of town today, though businesses, banks, shopping centers, and fast food and chain stores line Main Street a little distance north of this downtown area. The central business area draws thousands of visitors annually on the first weekend in October for the

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[23]Another possibility worth considering would be an enlarged district including the residential areas extending up Gay and Union streets. Such a shift from what is suggested above would require changing the dates and modifying the statement of significance somewhat to include the time before the arrival of the railroad. Because of the great impact of the railroad on Erwin, though, I choose to emphasize, instead, the district that reflects that influence most clearly.

[24]Given the suggested boundaries for this business district and those for the transportation/industrial district of the railroad yards, the 1925 Clinchfield depot would be a contributing element in both districts, just as it was in both aspects of community life.

Apple Festival activities. Visitors view that older section of Main Street as the heart of Erwin, and the community continues to do so as well. Placement of this district on the National Register acknowledges its importance to the town's very identity. Such recognition can enable a new sense of civic cooperation and local leadership and control in the maintenance of that area as well.

Fundamental to preservation efforts undertaken anywhere is the absolute need to "bring the public along." David Bush emphasizes this point in the third chapter of his thesis, "A Historic Preservation Plan for Beaumont, Texas." Erwin's good fortune is the presence of a number of buildings which reflect the town's heritage. Revitalizing spaces downtown will depend in part upon getting correct information to the public. Altoona, Pennsylvania, another railroad town, has been successful in its attempts at revolving funds and putting together packages of public, private, and nonprofit monies to redevelop downtown properties.[25] This town's efforts might provide a model for work in Erwin. Fundamental to Altoona's accomplishments was a public made aware and knowledgeable of the plan, its risks, and its implications. Misinformation works against everyone's best interests.[26]

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[25]David W. Bush, "A Historic Preservation Plan for Beaumont, Texas" (M.A. thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1995), and Jed Duval and Kim Keister, "Altoona Turnaround," *Historic Preservation* (January/February 1995): 44-49.

[26]One shop owner on Main Street in Erwin related to the author how another individual with a building in the next block had fixed it up and as a result seen his property's appraised value and its taxes go up. Why, the narrator of this tale asked, should he spend money in such a way that would increase his taxes but not advance his profits? If making Main Street into a historic district involved such actions, he would certainly fight that designation. An employee for the Chamber of Commerce expressed a similar attitude based on her understanding that shops located in buildings in a historic district would have to revert to the original interiors, carry items that went with such interiors, and give tours--all on top of conducting matters for whatever business now occupied the space.

As an early step, Erwin needs a preservation education program for its home owners, realtors, and business development board members. The Unicoi County Heritage Museum, located in the Fish Hatchery supervisor's former residence (itself eligible for listing in the National Register) receives community support and does well at showcasing local history during the half-year it is open each May to October (see Figure 68). Preservation education, though, has a somewhat different emphasis. The historic preservation movement proposes "to conserve the nation's cultural environment through the protection and enhancement of sites, buildings, districts, and objects of local, state, and national significance." Preservation education on the local level recognizes a relationship between the condition of the built environment and the value a community assigns to sense of place as part of its inheritance and its collective memories. Therefore, in preparing an explanatory program for local adults, "preservation education must include local social, ethnic, economic, technological, environmental, and cultural historical investigation."[27] Community awareness is vital to the success of any

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[27]Committee on Public History, *Historic Preservation: A Guide for Departments of History* (Bloomington: Organization of American Historians, 1982), not paginated. In anticipation of preparing such a program, see Michael Hough, *Out of Place: Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), particularly chapter 7, "Tourism: Searching for the Differences"; Page Putnam Miller, ed., *Reclaiming the Past: Landmarks of Women's History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); and Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).

In terms of local history, the events surrounding the 1916 hanging of a circus elephant named Mary at the railroad yards continues to receive more coverage than probably any other event or development in the town. As David R. Logsdon, "Unicoi planning memorial to set the record straight on 1916 elephant hanging," *Nashville Banner*, 7 December 1995, 15 [A], reports:

"Mary had killed an inexperienced trainer in Elizabethton, and since no one had a gun big enough to kill an elephant, officials decided to hang Mary.

"'They brought her over here because we were the only place with a big enough crane,' says Joy Stoots of the [Unicoi County] Bicentennial committee."

Figure 68. Unicoi County Heritage Museum (former residence of the Superintendent of the U.S. Fish Hatchery in Unicoi County, constructed 1903)

Photograph by Lynn Morback, distributed by Clinchfield Drug Company

preservation attempts. Only then can questions of creating historic districts downtown or in a residential area, the boundaries of these, the impediments, potential problems, and benefits of each be addressed from a base of common knowledge.

Erwin's business owners want tourist trade. Already successful in the Apple Festival each October and in a newer enterprise, the Valley Beautiful/Strawberry Festival weekend in May, Erwin also feels the influx of visitors to the nearby Bristol International Speedway in the summer months. Developing districts or individual sites that tourists might visit on these occasions can benefit the local economy. Increased tourism looks like a mixed blessing if excessive commercialization or traffic congestion develops, but planning for growth in tourism can occur.[28] Protection of those things that Erwin's citizens value develops in part from learning and recognizing the value of what comprises and defines the community. Some unsuspecting citizens with pieces of Blue Ridge dinnerware have already learned that among the pottery collectors are individuals who will take advantage of others. Developing the public awareness of what makes a community special fosters goodwill, and therefore preservation education is essential for good relations both within the community and between residents and visitors.

A dedicated group, organized for action and with a survey of historic resources in hand can instigate and maintain the preservation process from which momentum will likely build. Helpful information and funding for preservation projects exist outside the community and can be harnessed for the good of Erwin and Unicoi County. The key to that external aid, though, remains exhibition of local initiative and evidence of public

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Where the destruction of the elephant may deserve some mention, other elements exist in Erwin's past that would be worthy of highlighting as well.

[28]Parrish, "Management of Cultural Resources at the Local Level," 157.

support. In terms of building long-term commitment to the idea of community stewardship and pride in local history, the development of a heritage education program for school children can work well. The historic preservation movement has regularly listed as one of its aims the introduction of preservation to students of the primary, secondary, and collegiate levels. To this end, a variety of professionals in preservation and education, following passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, worked throughout the 1970s to develop and provide appropriate materials and methods, resulting in significant publications on heritage education and local history by the early 1980s and continuing since that time.[29]

Some of the literature concentrates on the theoretical, and some of the guides are more practical.[30] Studied in combination, these resources for teachers encourage the

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[29]At the same time, the view of what was considered historically significant had broadened within the academy; social and student unrest in the 1960s helped turn historians to a "new social history" as relevant, and its focus on non-elite groups, ethnic minorities, and resources beyond the printed public record dovetailed nicely with the nascent local history efforts.

[30]In terms of ground-breaking theoretical work, see Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1975): 153-73; James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1977); and Thomas J. Schlereth, *Artifacts and the American Past* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1980).

In terms of more practical guides, see David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past around You* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982); Fay D. Metcalf and Matthew T. Downey, *Using Local History in the Classroom* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982); Ronald E. Burchardt, *Local Schools: Exploring Their History*, Nearby History Series, ed. David E. Kyvig (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1986); Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1986); Gerald A. Danzer, *Public Places: Exploring Their History*, Nearby History Series, ed. David E. Kyvig (Nashville: American Association for

synthesis of local materials and research into their teaching, using the nearby as case studies that support issues of national significance. Heritage education, defined as "the use of local cultural and historic resources for teaching the required curricula of grades K-12," does not have to be limited to history classrooms.[31] And given the availability of helpful publications, teachers do not have to depend upon bringing in trained personnel from outside their schools to introduce local history items into the curriculum. Heritage education calls for students to observe carefully the environment around them in which they have grown up. Local history projects based on oral histories or artifact study can make students more aware both of the distinctive past of their community and how its elements reflect the national patterns they read about in textbooks. When some part of that community functions as a primary source for a teacher's lesson plan, the students will

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State and Local History, 1987); Barbara J. Howe et al., *Houses and Homes: Exploring Their History*, Nearby History Series, ed. David E. Kyvig (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1987); K. Austin Kerr, Amos J. Loveday, and Mansel G. Blackford, *Local Businesses: Exploring Their History*, Nearby History Series, ed. David E. Kyvig (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1990); and James P. Wind, *Places of Worship: Exploring Their History*, Nearby History Series, ed. David E. Kyvig (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1990); Maurie Van Buren, *House Styles at a Glance* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1991); and Carol Kammen, ed., *The Pursuit of Local History: Readings on Theory and Practice* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Alta Mira Press, 1996).

Patricia Mooney-Melvin, "Urban History, Local History, and Public History," *History News* 51 (Spring 1996): 18-23, lists pertinent periodical articles as well.

[31]Caneta S. Hankins, *Focus on 2000: A Heritage Education Perspective* (Murfreesboro: Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University, for the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, National Park Service, 1997), 4. *Focus on 2000* provides in one book other information that has been scattered, and therefore perhaps less accessible, in the past. The report contains addresses and telephone numbers in all fifty states and the District of Columbia to contact for information on heritage education materials. It includes as well addresses, telephone numbers, and web pages or e-mail listings for organizations, agencies, and institutions that offer services and materials on a nationwide basis.

see a building, a streetscape, or an individual from a new perspective. They may be able, for example, to draw comparisons between the local situation and others in a larger context. Questions may follow and lead to further observations. Learning something new about a familiar landmark makes the experience and the landmark memorable. The same can be said of holding interviews with community members to gather oral histories. As educator Kathleen Hunter has commented, "Heritage education focuses . . . attention on the actual evidence of our history and culture, . . . then engages learners in an interactive exploration of this evidence."[32]

The commitment of the National Park Service (NPS) to historic sites and cultural resources management has led it to develop educational programs meant to assist teachers. As one example, the NPS, in conjunction with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, initiated a program in 1991 called "Teaching With Historic Places." This endeavor involves properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places as primary sources for each lesson plan. The various time periods covered range from America prior to the entrance of Europeans to the second half of the twentieth century. Designed for eighth-grade students, each lesson can be adapted for older or younger groups. The lesson plans can also serve as models from which teachers can borrow in order to tailor their lessons around local sites, events, and developments.[33]

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[32]Kathleen Hunter, *Archaeology and Public Education* 6, no. 2 (1996): cover. For an example drawn from Drayton Hall in South Carolina that supports Hunter's idea very nicely, see in the same issue Meggett B. Lavin, "So, You're Still Not Sure About Archaeology and Eighth Graders? Both are part of heritage education," 4-5, 14.

[33]At this time the Teaching with Historic Places program uses properties in thirty-two states and the District of Columbia and has available fifty-nine classroom-ready lesson plans. The number of properties and lesson plans continues to grow as the NPS adds new units to the teaching program.

The NPS also maintains an Archeological Assistance Program that functions, in part, as a clearinghouse for activities in public education about archaeology. See Daniel

In Erwin's case, incorporating aspects from its past could occur throughout the school year. The transportation corridor created first by the valley with its river and creeks and then by the railroad relates to the study of geology, geography, and various modes of transporting goods and people, as well as the effects of improved technology upon transportation through history. Interviewing people who worked for the Clinchfield Railroad or who grew up using it could expand a unit on transportation in a variety of directions. Delving into the industrial developments around Erwin encouraged by the railroad's management could enliven an economics class with local examples to define useful terms. As just two instances, certainly the decisions made at Southern Potteries depended in part upon the principles of supply and demand, and the elimination of passenger service on the Clinchfield reflected its increasingly negative profit margin. The role of unions among Erwin's occupations introduces another component of local study that combines elements of economic, political, and social history.[34] So, too, do the issues raised around women's work outside the home in the silk mills or at RedKap and in the pottery. In support of Kathleen Hunter's observation, the use of actual evidence from within the community engages students of any age. With this new comprehension of what surrounds them, citizens can develop appreciation for it. An informed public

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Haas, "Education and Public Outreach in Federal Programs," *CRM* 18, no. 3 (1995): 43-48, for various organizations and programs working together to educate the public against looting of archaeological sites Teachers interested in adding units about conservation archaeology will be encouraged by the range of publications and outreach programs that make information available to them.

[34]For two sources that might prove helpful in undertaking study of occupations and union activities, see Robert H. Byington, ed., *Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folklife*, Smithsonian Folklife Studies, no. 3 (Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, for the California Folklore Society, 1978), and James R. Green, "Workers, Unions, and the Politics of Public History," *Public Historian* 11 (Fall 1989): 11-38.

facing decisions concerning the built environment in which local history occurs, then, can base its responses on knowledge of its past foundations as well as its future hopes.

Erwin's history has always built upon dreams of its future, beginning with the donation of the town site by David J. N. Ervin in 1876. George L. Carter's boosterism three decades later gave the town its railroad as its sustaining industry. Additional business ventures brought employment and sometimes prosperity to other parts of the local population and to the owners of those businesses. In its optimism, Erwin shows clear similarities to other New South communities sprinkled throughout the region. At the same time, the particular details of Erwin's subsequent developments help to distinguish it from other places and grant the community its individual identity. Acknowledging these distinctive and defining features of its past can enable Erwin to incorporate its heritage into the community's design for its future. And once a community decides to maintain connection between its legacy from the past and its envisioned future, there is no urgency to choose and no need to sacrifice one over the other.

CONCLUSION

The closing of Southern Potteries meant the transformation of Erwin's identity by 1960. Though other businesses continued to exist or opened after that time, the county seat of Unicoi County functioned basically as a single-industry town, known for its railroad.[1] Freight trains maintained their regularly scheduled passes over the tracks and through the yards situated between Erwin's Main Street and the Nolichucky River, but other activities flagged. The decrease in worker paychecks affected the local merchants, and the county population declined. The figure of 15,886 from the U. S. census of 1950 fell to 15,082 in the 1960 census.[2] Concerned individuals formed a Citizens Committee for Industrial Expansion in Erwin and the newspaper highlighted any hint of new developments, but the community's vitality apparently had dissipated. The second half of the twentieth century looked to be lean in comparison with what Erwin had experienced in its first half. What had made those earlier years in this Appalachian community good ones? The major contributing factors that transformed work and place had not been solely of Erwin's own making. Erwin was a New South town, developed by men who

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[1]Even the railroad's identity would be lost when the Seaboard System (which resulted from the L&N's merger with Seaboard Coast Line in 1982) closed the Clinchfield division in 1984. The Seaboard System itself ceased to exist following its merger into the CSX in 1987; see George H. Drury, *The Historical Guide to North American Railroads* (Milwaukee: Kalmach Books, 1985, second printing 1988), 98.

[2]Improvement in 1970 to a county population of 15,254 was minimal, and only in 1980 did the population figure of 16,362 rise above what it had been when Southern Potteries operated. Terry Elmer Epperson Jr., "Geographic Factors Influencing The Manufactural Industries of Upper East Tennessee" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1960), 98, and loose papers prepared and distributed by the Erwin/Unicoi County Chamber of Commerce.

opened the mountain valley to industry and who used regional resources, including local labor, to turn a profit. Through the vision of George L. Carter and others like him, a railroad crossed the Appalachians, and it transported new businesses into Erwin and carried the items they produced out. During its good years, the Southern Potteries plant produced annually 24 million pieces of hand-painted underglaze ware, and its momentum had helped carry the community along with it.[3] Southern Potteries' success had resulted from the times in which it found itself, its association with the union, and the company's product. Changes that occurred over time among these three factors undermined their successful combination. The pottery foundered and closed, and economic stagnation descended on the town.

Timing is always an issue better recognized and evaluated in hindsight, and in the case of Erwin and Southern Potteries, timing proved critical. Coming into existence in 1917 while World War I continued, the pottery in Erwin enjoyed the advantage of relatively little competition for its first products from the smaller amounts of ware imported from overseas. The company also benefited from a decade of solid community growth and civic boosterism during its early years. Both situations meant that Southern Potteries was a firmly established business by the time of the Depression, a fact which helped the plant survive that economically troubled time. Because of the factory's small-town, semi-rural location, its employees could farm to help themselves through the lean years of the 1930s and the war years of the 1940s.[4] Consequently the pottery did not struggle with major turnovers among employees. The reduction of imported ceramics

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[3]"Southern China," *Esso Oilways* 17 (March 1951): 2.

[4]Lois Johnson, interview by author, tape recording, Jonesborough, Tenn., 31 August 1999, and W. C. Callahan, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 15 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author.

just prior to and during World War II helped Southern Potteries as well, as it rebounded from the period of slack orders of the early Depression years. And warfare meant more women worked, a situation the management used to great advantage as the factory developed the Blue Ridge line to meet consumers' desires for objects that looked hand-crafted. Southern Potteries did quite well by the times in which it found itself.[5]

The building of Southern Potteries in 1917 occurred at a good point in terms of the pottery industry as well. By this time, the causes of various work-related illnesses had already been pinpointed. Though, as William Gates writes, "working conditions had not ameliorated to any great degree prior to 1915," a new pottery facility could avoid repeating at least some of the same old mistakes. Where the earlier pottery buildings in Ohio stood three or four stories high and required workers to climb many stairs, the plant in Erwin covered just one level. The floor itself was cement, which may have been hard on the legs, but it cut down on the fire hazard. Cement floors also helped deter dust better than the wooden floors of older potteries, and windows abounded for ventilation and air circulation. These features helped minimize the inhalation of clay dust that could lead to lung diseases, including bronchitis, asthma, and silicosis.[6]

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[5]In the *Esso Oilways* article featuring Southern Potteries, the following statistics give an indication of the need to compete effectively for shopper dollars. "The average income-group family spends only about $13 every 7 years for tableware. Above average-income group families spend $36 every 5 years." "Southern China," 2.

[6]William C. Gates Jr., *The City of Hills and Kilns: Life and Work in East Liverpool, Ohio* (East Liverpool, Ohio: East Liverpool Historical Society, 1984), 165. See also pages 92-94, 166, and 269 in Gates; 1925 and 1948 Sanborn maps of Erwin; and U.S. Treasury Department, United States Public Health Service, *Lead Poisoning in the Pottery Trades*, by Bernard J. Newman et al., Public Health Bulletin No. 116 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 46 and 57-60, which describes conditions in ninety-two pottery plants in four states in 1919.

Lung diseases associated with dust developed among a larger percentage of the workers in those departments where dust was prevalent. Decorators, for example, were

As a feature of its initial construction, the Southern Potteries building had numerous skylights to help provide adequate lighting, and the greatly expanded decorating room of the 1940s had a sawtooth roof design that incorporated windows in order to provide light and air even in the innermost part of the room (see Figure 69). Elizabeth Johnson remembers the hand painters being tested once for tuberculosis, but the only employees in much danger from clay dust in this modern facility were the men who worked in the clay and slip shop. Edythe Manfull's father, who had been a mould maker in East Liverpool, Ohio, died in 1932 from complications in the lungs. By the time Charles Duncan went to work in Erwin in the mid-1940s, the routine for the clay shop included wearing respirator masks and taking two treatments of aluminum oxide each week to combat development of lung ailments. A nurse's station existed at least from the time of the decorating room expansion, and a nurse was there daily during the first shift.[7]

Two negative characteristics of pottery facilities that seemed unavoidable continued at Southern Potteries. The heat of the kilns could not be easily combated, and the pottery kept salt tablets available for workers who needed to counter their losses from perspiration.[8] The dampness associated with the clay- and dish-making processes could

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at a smaller risk than men in the clay shop of becoming ill with a lung ailment.

[7]Elizabeth Johnson, interview by author, tape recording, Jonesborough, Tenn., 31 August 1999; Edythe Manfull, interview by author, tape recording, Erwin, Tenn., 31 August 1999; and Charles Duncan, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 14 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author.

[8]The conversion from coal-burning kilns to ones using electricity first and later oil for fuel did not reduce the temperature when the kilns were firing, but it dramatically cut down the smoke entering the atmosphere. "Southern China," 6.

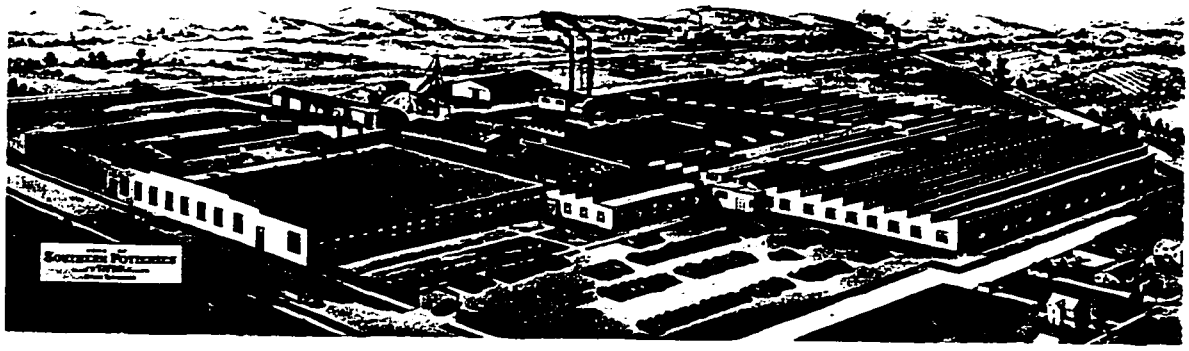

Figure 69. Southern Potteries, after 1945

(Reprinted courtesy of Edythe Manfull of Erwin, Tenn.)

not be eliminated either. Regular cleaning in those areas of the plant could keep clay debris from accumulating on the floor and adding to the problem, but as Hachita Mashburn recalls, "You had to be careful where you walked. If you didn't, you might slip in some water, maybe, and fall."[9]

Lead poisoning was one health risk the industry could control through the formulas potteries concocted for their glazes. Plumbism, with its obvious symptoms of wristdrop and blue-lined gums, was never a problem at Southern Potteries.[10] The disease certainly had been a serious hazard to pottery workers and to their offspring, even in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Survey work carried out in pottery plants by Drs. Alice Hamilton in 1910 and 1911 and Emery Hayhurst in 1914 indicated a high rate of plumbism. And as Ronald Bayer has written of Hamilton, "because lead could be passed on through exposed women to their children, [she] termed it a 'race poison' affecting not only one generation but two."[11]

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[9]Hachita Mashburn, "Meet Hachita Mashburn, Finisher," interview by Kim Snyder, *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (January/February 1997), 3. Later Mashburn commented that "evidently, that's what's wrong with a lot of our feet--walking on broken pieces of half-dried dishes. I know we had some meetings about it and they had to determine when they were going to get all that cleaned out so we could walk on it and be careful and not fall."

[10]For full descriptions of causes, symptoms, and treatments of lead poisoning and silicosis, see *Hamilton and Hardy's Industrial Toxicology*, 4th ed., rev. by Asher J. Finkel (Boston: John Wright PSG Inc., 1983), 62-87 and 337-49.

[11]Ronald Bayer, "Scientists, Engineers, and the Burdens of Occupational Exposure: The Case of the Lead Standard," in *The Health and Safety of Workers: Case Studies in the Politics of Professional Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 221.

In England, the Women's Trade Union League assisted women potters in a campaign against lead poisoning during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century; see Richard Whipp, *Patterns of Labour: Work and Social Change in the Pottery Industry* (London: Routledge, 1990), 120. Their stand proved so successful that the effect of lead

In 1919 and again in the late 1930s, the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) conducted further studies on lead poisoning and silicosis in the pottery industry. The latter report showed great improvements against lead poisoning in the years since Hamilton's first efforts to counter it.[12] The solution, in fact, rested with the potteries themselves. The problems of lead poisoning from glazes had been understood at least from the end of the eighteenth century, but pottery owners had feared and fought against government regulation and profit reduction.[13] Perhaps with the owners' previous stance in mind, the 1919 USPHS study pointed out in its report of 1921 that "working conditions have a direct bearing upon the health and efficiency of the worker, upon the quantity and quality of his production, and hence are vital factors in production cost." Pottery manufacturers could make larger profits, in other words, if they cleaned up working conditions so their employees did not become ill. Potteries could and should use glazes with lower levels of lead (or no lead at all) or see to it that the lead was fritted, that is, that the lead was made insoluble. As William Graebner points out in his essay on

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poisoning among pottery employees is not even an issue in Jacqueline Sarsby's study of English women pottery workers between the first and second world wars; see Jacqueline Sarsby, *Missuses and Mouldrunners: An Oral History of Women Pottery-Workers at Work and at Home* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1988).

[12]Silicosis remained a problem, however, though one that the USPHS believed could be controlled and eliminated. "The most effective means of preventing the development of new cases of silicosis is to prevent the formation and dispersal of dust by installation and maintenance of dust-control equipment." U.S. Treasury Department, United States Public Health Service, *Silicosis and Lead Poisoning Among Pottery Workers*, by Robert H. Flinn et al., Public Health Bulletin No. 244 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), 156.

[13]Andy Leon Harney, "From the American Earth," in *The Craftsman in America* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1975), 75, and William Graebner, "Private Power, Private Knowledge, and Public Health: Science, Engineering, and Lead Poisoning," in Bayer, ed., *The Health and Safety of Workers*, 22.

the industry's history of lead poisoning, after 1920 United States potteries began to use fritted glazes and as a result reduced plumbism almost to a disease of the past.[14]

Southern Potteries began operations only shortly before the USPHS study, and its pottery building might have served as a model for the sorts of improvements older potteries could make. The plant in Erwin also eventually shifted to using only fritted glaze. Thus, the timing of the pottery's opening made for a more healthy environment than probably would have been so had the pottery begun earlier. Mechanization of parts of the pottery process also helped the situation. Lead poisoning most often affected the dippers, the people who covered the ware with a coat of glaze. Changing the method of application from one of hand immersion to that of a spraying machine kept down contact with the skin and lowered the possibility of absorption of the lead. Additional types of mechanization at Southern Potteries helped other employees as well. Kiln placers no longer had to stack saggers on their heads and enter kilns to arrange them there for firing. Raymond White's father, who worked at Southern Potteries in the 1930s as a kiln placer, wore a cap with horsehair inside to make the top of his head a flat surface for carrying purposes. That was with the old kilns, though; the continuous, or tunnel, kilns had ware going through them on moving belts.[15] The pace for workers increased with mechanization, but in many cases the physical debilitation declined somewhat. Southern Potteries and its employees benefited from its founding at a time of various improvements in the pottery industry.

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[14]*Lead Poisoning in the Pottery Trades*, Public Health Bulletin No. 116, p. 173, and Graebner, "Private Power, Private Knowledge, and Public Health," 21.

[15]Raymond White, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 15 May 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author.

Since other industries in the Appalachian and Piedmont regions also experienced growing awareness of health issues and continued development of automation, their differences from Southern Potteries were not particularly attributable to timing. The New South industries that had sprung up along the railroad tracks so necessary to them had required an availability of labor as well. Towns like Erwin saw an influx of workers from more rural locations to fill the jobs that management controlled. The categories of old families and newcomers, of land owners and hourly wage earners who had been part of the older community changed somewhat with the arrival of industrialization. As the ranks of the less powerful swelled, social divisions became more marked, and as classes became more defined they also became more rigid. Differences of opinions between the old categories began to be identified more often as conflicts, and class consciousness emerged. Towns saw their definition of community change.[16] Erwin's citizens looked upon the Atterbury addition and the plants near it as the industrial section, situated on the other side of a natural obstruction called Little Mountain (see Figure 22). The employees at Southern Potteries also recognized themselves as a distinct community within the corporation lines of the town of Erwin. And for the wage-earning element of the pottery payroll, their involvement in Local Union 103 of the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters (NBOP) reinforced that identity.

From the pottery's opening, its workers had representation through their union both locally in Erwin and in industry-wide negotiations on a national level. Southern Potteries' initial group of skilled employees had migrated from the Ohio pottery towns

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[16]For careful studies and fuller development of social patterns mentioned only briefly here, see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, 1964), and Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978).

where the NBOP first organized and established its headquarters. Those workers knew from previous personal experience the significant role the union played on their behalf. The prowess union negotiators developed at collective bargaining over wage scales placed the pottery workers among the better paid labor groups. Correspondence from Local Union 103 to NBOP headquarters also includes inquiries regarding wages and practices carried out in Erwin in comparison with practices at other pottery plants. The union served, therefore, as an arbiter between local units at different plants and as a champion for the workers in their talks with the owners' organization, the United States Potters Association (USPA). At least in theory, the NBOP promoted fairness within its ranks and decent treatment of workers by management.

Creating the Local Union 103 at the company's outset suggests the workers' awareness of themselves from the beginning as a group separate from Southern Potteries' management. The presence of organized employees in the plant may have helped counter moves toward paternalism by those in charge. With the apparatus in place to protest discrimination, should it ever surface, the workers acknowledged a readiness to take an adversarial stance. Possibly management's awareness of workers' self-confidence helped to settle various disagreements during the 1920s and 1930s before the workers felt compelled to strike. Clearly, the union's presence served as a point of difference when comparing Erwin with other New South towns.

The fact that a good portion of Southern Potteries' initial labor pool came from outside the region contributed to the separateness of this segment of Erwin's residents and certainly made it different from many New South communities. So too did the pottery industry's continued reliance on the craft tradition of apprenticeships and journeyman rankings. But the Southern Potteries people were not just a northern community in a southern locale. As the years passed, more workers from Erwin's vicinity moved through

apprenticeships and gained skilled positions at the pottery. Both among the workers and on the management level too what began as an Ohio-dominated leadership became a mixture of local and Ohio-related individuals. At the same time that Southern Potteries began to differ from pottery factories in Ohio in this way, it made an even bigger break from those other potteries by commencing production of the distinctive decorated dinnerware of the Blue Ridge line.

This blending of characteristics of New South towns with aspects from Ohio pottery towns created a singular situation in Erwin. When speaking in general terms, class distinctions like those seen in other New South communities remained clear cut between the pottery and the rest of Erwin. And within the pottery itself the union represented workers who came from an economic and social class lower than that of their management. But some movement of employees from work floor to management did occur. While still a teenager Alvin Miller commenced work in the early 1920s at Southern Potteries in an unskilled position as a water boy. By the time the company decided to switch from decal work to hand painting, he had advanced, and he became the supervisor of the entire decorating department. His brother Roscoe supervised the packing and shipping department. A few years later another local boy, E. C. Sellars, started work at the pottery as a straw boy in the packing department. He left the workers' ranks to join management when his application for the opening as assistant sales manager was approved. In these specific examples at Southern Potteries, the class lines within the plant could blur, at least slightly.[17]

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[17]"Legacy," *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (September/October 1996), 6; Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999; and Kim Snyder, "Meet E. C. Sellars, Assistant Sales Manager," *Blue Ridge Beacon Magazine* 1 (September/October 1996): 7.

Management's acknowledgment, no matter how reluctantly given, that the NBOP position carried equal weight at the bargaining table set Southern Potteries workers apart from and granted them an advantage over most other industrial workers in the Piedmont and Appalachian regions. The union fought well for its skilled members and their needs. The all-male union leadership failed, however, to question society's assessment that women workers deserved less pay than men. The women at Southern Potteries received better wages than their female friends down the block at Industrial Garment because of the NBOP, but, like women workers throughout the region, in unions or not, management figured their wages using lower pay rates than those set up for men. This disparity between wage scales for men and women points out one negative aspect of the times in which Southern Potteries functioned. The situation favored male employees, and it remained the same throughout the life of Erwin's pottery company. The discrepancy reflected a characteristic attitude of the nation and the decades under discussion.

Devastating to male and female employees alike in industries protected by tariffs could be competition from imported goods when tariffs were lowered. Not just once but twice during Southern Potteries' existence cheap imports seriously cut into domestic pottery production and profits. Southern Potteries survived the difficulties created by Japanese, English, and German wares in the decade prior to World War II. Times and attitudes changed, however, after the war (and some would say on account of it), and the NBOP and USPA representatives could not persuade Congress to curb the renewed influx from across the Pacific in the late 1940s and 1950s. A number of factors, including the union's stance, shifting consumer tastes, and inadequate plant modernization, caused Southern Potteries to falter before the competition's challenge, and the pottery closed.

Southern Potteries produced ware at a profit for almost forty years. The company had known spectacular success for over a decade during that time, when management's

decision to concentrate on hand-decorated dinnerware in 1938 led to a period of great growth in its payrolls, facilities, and product recognition. Consumers across the nation bought patterns of hand-painted Blue Ridge dishes that had been produced in an Appalachian town by union members and shipped out of the mountains on a railroad. Since the beginning of the American Federation of Labor, one common link among the AFL constituents had been craftwork, and the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters, as a member union, tried to protect the potters trade. The pottery company in Erwin with its handcrafted look epitomized the type of work the AFL and NBOP supported.

More importantly, to the people who worked at Southern Potteries, their product stood out because individuals made it. The creation of a dish involved multiple actions and several steps. Portions of the procedures could and had been mechanized since the onset of industrialization, insuring uniform results. Still, standardization by itself did not guarantee better quality. Careful and skilled work by employees who recognized the value of their contribution toward the final product still made a difference in the pottery industry in the middle of the twentieth century. As Oscar Riddle repeated amidst his descriptions of the various departments' routines at the pottery, "there was an art in that." There was an art in Alvin Miller's mixing of the paint so that it did not "spit out" through the glaze. The making of the plaster of Paris moulds and the requirements for caring for them involved a special knowledge that some would call an art. With casting, one had to know how thick to let the piece of ware be and how long to let the slip set before unmoulding. And jiggering well meant knowing when the ware being turned reached the right thickness so it would not crack in the kiln. Riddle's memory of these different operations is itself impressive, but his point that he found "art" in places beyond the decorating department is instructive.[18] There was an art to the patterns the decorators

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[18]Oscar Riddle, interview by Kim and Bryan Snyder, videotape recording, 12

painted, too. When Lois Johnson criticized the piece rate-incentive wage plan of the company's last few years, she explained about painting chinaware, "I wouldn't have messed up a piece of ware for extra money for nothing--because I was too proud and I was proud of it, we all was proud of it. It was beautiful. It was absolutely beautiful."[19]

At Southern Potteries jiggermen made dishes and decorators painted designs to fill orders placed by people they did not know and were not likely to meet. In the decorating department the work day began for a crew of four with instructions about the number of dozens of this type of dish that needed a certain design painted. Following completion of one assignment, a crew received a new set of instructions for other dish shapes in any of a number of patterns. In chinaware, where decorators worked individually, a similar situation existed. Lois Johnson might be told to paint twenty-four chocolate pots in one pattern and then move on to a specified number of celery dishes in the same or some other design. Freedom of choice did not fit into such a schedule. The pottery workers at Southern Potteries could experience monotony on the job, just as people who placed decals on ceramics or operated machines that rolled cigarettes or wove and wrapped bolts of cloth lived with monotony in their routines. Those other workers, however, lived as well with a look of mechanical uniformity in their results. Even when manufactured and decorated at an assembly-line pace, hand-painted pottery came out with slight variations, an indication that humans had a part in the process. That distinction may seem a simple one, but its effect on workers and consumers alike is much larger.

June 1996, audiotape copy in the possession of the author.

[19]Lois Johnson interview, 31 August 1999.

In a consumable world, ceramics stand out because use does not equate to loss. In an increasingly disposable world, china differs by its very durability. A piece of pottery can be broken, but even then its pieces usually survive, as any archaeologist will attest. The consumer's purchase of semi-vitreous dinnerware may convey first of all the appeal of a particular design, but it also suggests a value decision: here is something worth keeping. Once acquired, these dishes can be kept, even inherited, until the pieces break or tastes change. When the latter occurs, antique stores and flea markets serve as depositories, standing as witness to an earlier period.

Indeed, the presence of Blue Ridge dinnerware in collections and in dealers' stalls forty years after Southern Potteries' liquidation creates a link to that past. The dishes produced by this pottery plant provide evidence that such a factory existed, and the surviving material culture has led to an interest in the workers responsible for those dishes. Former employees serve as links to Southern Potteries' history as well. The knowledge expressed by interviewed employees and their relatives reinforces the information that research, map study, and deed searches have unearthed. Without the Blue Ridge dishes to trigger curiosity, however, the story of Southern Potteries might otherwise have vanished when its last living employees die.

In similar fashion, the knowledge of who was involved with the houses in Erwin near the high school and hospital and the original purpose of that residential area had almost disappeared. The "pottery" houses that line Ohio Avenue testify to decisions made by individuals, now long dead and most forgotten by the local population. George L. Carter, Mark Potter, and Grosvenor Atterbury, among others, each desired to create a town as they envisioned it should be. The transformation of place, then, is partly of their doing. The New South momentum and Progressive reforms these individuals introduced in Erwin made the community different from the county seat that began on land donated

by David J. N. Ervin in 1876. Ervin moved away in 1909, selling his holdings to George L. Carter's land company for railroad shops.[20] Later, Carter, Potter, and Atterbury each turned his attention from the town of Erwin to other projects in far-flung places. These people left their mark, so to speak, but the town's residents who remained and newcomers and leaders who appeared later influenced the effective outcomes of the work begun by these earlier individuals and the community's memories concerning them. Those who stood to inherit Erwin's distinctive legacies invoked transformations of their own upon that inheritance.

The history, then, of this Appalachian town with its New South background varies from that of every other place. With the introduction of industrialization the region sprouted communities with certain similarities. Later generations should recognize, though, that none of them was cut from a die or created exactly alike. And how the citizens responded to the developments in their towns made them even more distinctive. Like the variations that came with Blue Ridge pottery's method of production, in Erwin the human element led to what makes its history both comparable with and different from that of other communities. And in response to the recently revived interest in Blue Ridge pottery among collectors, the transformation of Erwin continues.

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[20]Viola Ruth E. Swingle, *Ervin* (Johnson City, Tenn.: Overmountain Press, 1975), 49.

APPENDIX 1

"A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS OF MANUFACTURING POTTERY TABLEWARE IS HERE PRESENTED"

The chief raw materials–kaolin, feldspar, flint, and ball-clay come from various deposits chiefly in the United States or England. They are dumped from railroad cars into their respective bins in the mixing room of the pottery.

Each pottery has its particular formula, usually secret, according to which the different materials are combined. A workman makes up a mixture according to this formula, and dumps it into the mixing tank, or "blunger". Water is turned into the tank and revolving paddles whip the clay and water into a creamy liquid. The liquid is then allowed to flow out of the blunger and through one or more fine screens or "lawns" which strain out all particles above a certain size. Then the mixture flows past a set of magnets designed to remove any particles of iron which might later cause a discoloration in the completed ware. Whatever clay liquid is not needed for immediate use, is stored in large tanks where it is constantly agitated to prevent the suspended particles from settling and caking on the bottom.

The next task is to reduce the liquid mixture to a plastic solid. The filter press does this work quickly and effectively. This device consists of heavy canvas bags clamped between metal frames. The liquid is forced, under considerable pressure, into and through each of the bags. The clay particles remain in the bags, and soon a solid cake of clay the size of a barrel head or larger fills each compartment.

In order to remove air bubbles and to obtain greater plasticity and uniformity, the workman feeds the cakes of wet clay into a "pug mill". This machine contains revolving knives which cut and knead the clay and finally squeeze it forth into a solid column.

An elevator carries the clay to the "clay shop" where the modern version of the ancient potters wheel awaits it. A clay carrier brings the clay to the table where a "batter-

out" and a "jiggerman" are working, let us say, on an order of plates. The former seizes a chunk of clay and with a heavy plaster of Paris block, mashes it into a flat circular shape. He then slaps it over a plate mold. The jiggerman takes the mold and fixes it in the revolving head of his machine. As it revolves he uses a profile tool to press the clay firmly against the mold to give the plate the proper thickness and to remove the surplus clay. The profile tool is a flat piece of metal with one edge cut to the shape of a cross section of the back of a plate. The tool is fixed to a rigid metal arm and is set so as to give the required thickness to the ware.

The mold, with the plate formed over it, is carried away by "mold runners" to a drying room or "stove room". In some plants the dryers are of the automatic revolving type which receive the molds directly from the hands of the jiggermen. (The making of other kinds of ware by the jiggering process differs only in small details from the foregoing.)

Dishes of square or rectangular shape are often made by the "hand pressing" method. This differs from jiggering mainly in that hand tools are used, and the mold is revolved slowly by the workman instead of rapidly by machinery. "Casting" is still another process by which ware is formed. Briefly described it consists of making a liquid mixture of clay or "slip" and pouring it into plaster of Paris molds. The molds soak up the water, and when the slip is poured out after a brief time, it leaves a shell of clay adhering to the mold. Hollow ware, particularly that of irregular and delicate shape, is made by this process.

When the ware has dried and shrunk away sufficiently it is removed from the molds. The "finisher" scrapes off such ridges of clay as may have been left by the mold and sponges down rough spots. It is the practice in some potteries to perform the

finishing process for cups on a turning lathe. In many cases, also, the foot of the cup is not formed completely by the mold but is left to be finished by the "turner".

As soon as the ware is dried completely it is ready for its first trial by fire. The baking or "firing" is done in brick kilns. The prevailing type is circular and domed. The hole in the center of the roof carries off the smoke and flames produced by the six or eight fireplaces spaced around the wall. A bottle shaped superstructure surrounds and surmounts the kiln proper and serves as a chimney. The dishes are packed into oval shaped fire clay boxes called "saggers", and the saggers are stacked one upon another until the kiln is completely filled from floor to roof. Then the fireplaces begin to send up smoke and flame, slowly at first and then in greater volume, until, after a day or so a tremendous heat is attained. This heat is held for a few hours and then is gradually reduced.

When the temperature permits, the kilnmen enter the kiln and carry out the saggers filled with ware. The dishes have now reached the "bisque" or "biscuit" stage. They are hard and durable but their surface is porous. In order to make the surface smooth and impervious the glazing process is resorted to. The "dipper" immerses each piece of bisque ware in turn into a tub of cream colored glaze mixture, removes the surplus glaze with a dexterous snap of the wrist and sets it out to dry. When the water evaporates or is soaked up by the porous ware, the glaze remains in the form of a powdery deposit evenly covering the surface of the ware.

The formula for the glaze mixture is usually guarded even more jealously than the formula for the body of the ware. The elements of the glaze mixture are much the same as those of the body—china clay (kaolin), feldspar and flint. They are combined in different proportions, however, and such materials as lead, boracic acid, borax, zinc oxide and whiting are added. One peculiarity in the method of combining these

ingredients should be noted. The boracic acid, borax and flint are put into saggers or into a "frit kiln" and melted. The molten mixture is poured into cold water. The sudden temperature change causes it to "shiver" into many small pieces. The resulting product, called "frit", is combined with the other ingredients in the grinding mill, and the mixture is reduced to a fine powder. When this powder is combined with water and strained through screens it is ready to serve as glaze mixture.

After the pottery leaves the glaze tub and had thoroughly dried it is ready for a second visit to the kilns. The powdery glaze that covers the dishes must be fused into a durable glassy coating. When the ware is placed in the saggers for the second firing it must be suspended or perched on "stilts", "spurs", or "thimbles" so that the points of contact with the sagger or with other pieces of ware are minimized. Otherwise the glaze would cause the dishes to fuse solidly to any object they touched during the firing process. As it is, the places on the bottom of the ware where the supports have touched are marked by small imperfections which appear in the finished ware. High grade ware, expecially [sic] chinaware, is often placed in small saggers, one piece of ware to the sagger. In this case the piece of pottery is allowed to rest on its own bottom which has previously been wiped free of glaze mixture. In much the same manner as in the first firing, the saggers are stacked in the kiln, the kiln is sealed up, and the fires are made in the fireplaces around the circumference of the kiln. The temperature is not raised to quite so high a point for the glaze fire as for the bisque fire. In absolute terms, however, the heat is intense--sufficiently so to fuse the powdery glaze into a smooth, transparent, glass-like coat, completely covering the surface of the ware and rendering it impervious to dirt and moisture.

As soon as the glazed pottery has been sorted and selected and the small rough spots left by the stilts and pins have been removed, the product may be said to have

acquired all of its strictly utilitarian qualities. But a dish must possess artistic merit as well. For that it is sent to the decorating department for further processing. The decoration on expensive pottery may be hand work by skilled artists. In the United States, however, most decoration owes its existence to more mechanical methods. Simple bands and lines may be applied by hand as the dish is whirled on a spindle. Certain kinds of colors may be sprayed on by a pressure sprayer. The bulk of decoration, however, is done by the decalcomania, or "transfer paper" process. Commercial companies make up sheets of designs on special paper and sell them to the potteries. Occasionally the pottery may make its own designs. Workers cut out the designs from the large sheets, cover them with a size, and paste them on the dishes. As soon as the color has had time to transfer and harden, the paper is washed off leaving the design on the white surface of the ware.

Then the dishes are ready for their third experience with fire. They are put into the decorating kiln for the purpose of hardening the decorations. This kiln is small and is of the "muffle" type, i.e., unlike the bisque and glost kilns, the flames do not enter the room with the ware. Therefore it is not necessary to put the dishes in saggers. After a low heat, usually of less than 1000 degrees Fahrenheit, has been attained, the kiln is cooled and the ware removed.

The foregoing is a skeleton outline of the process of manufacture in a modern American tableware pottery.

from "Factors in the Development of the American Pottery Industry," 103-9
by Herman John Stratton, 1929

APPENDIX 2

AGREEMENT BETWEEN CC&O RAILWAY AND SOUTHERN POTTERIES CORPORATION

Form M. W. 20—12-10-13-1m K-52922

This Agreement, Made this Tenth day of July, 1916, between the CAROLINA, CLINCHFIELD AND OHIO RAILWAY, a public service corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Virginia, and authorized to do business in the State of Tennessee, hereinafter called "The Railway," party of the first part, and The Southern Potteries Corporation party of the second part:

WITNESSETH:

THAT WHEREAS the party of the second part desires to locate a Pottery hereinafter called "Plant," at Erwin, in the State of Tenn. near the main line and tracks of The Railway at a point described as follows: Between Watauga St. & Carolina Ave, & Martine Ave & Holston Ave, in the Holston Add. No. 1 to town of Erwin as fully shown by map marked X-1596 on file in Chief Eng's office, CC&ORy and desires The Railway to put in a side-track at said Plant connecting with the main track; and

WHEREAS the party of the second part recognizes that there will be great probability and danger of fires originating at this point, either from the Plant itself or from the engines and trains of The Railway, or from other sources, and damaging or destroying said Plant, or its contents or appurtenances, or parts thereof, and the buildings thereat; and that the location at such point of such Plant will of necessity create a risk and increase the hazard to The Railway:

Therefore, the party of the second part agrees, as a condition precedent to the location and construction of the side-track running from the main line of The Railway to said Plant, and as an inducement to The Railway to make this agreement and construct and operate said side-track, that The Railway, its successors or assigns, shall not be liable, (a) for or on account of any loss or damage which may at any time, in any manner, arise to the party of the second part, its successors or assigns or bailors, by reason of fire communicated to the Plant or buildings of the party of the second part, now or hereafter to be erected, or to the contents or appurtenances, or any part thereof, or to property of any kind owned or stored by said party of the second part, or its agents or lessees, along or near the main line or side-track of The Railway, whether said side-track shall be located on the land of The Railway or not, and whether said fire shall originate from the Plant itself or from the locomotives, engines, cars or trains of The Railway, its successors or assigns, operated or being either upon the main line or said side-track; nor (b) shall the Railway, its successors or assigns, be liable for or on account of any loss or damage which may at any time, in any manner, arise to the party of the second part, its successors or assigns or bailors, by reason of fire communicated to its Plant or buildings, or any of the contents or appurtenances, or any part thereof, or to other property owned or stored by the party of the second part along or near said main line or side-track, arising in any manner from the operation of said side-track, whether said side-track shall be located on the land of The Railway or not; and (c) the party of the second part agrees that it will make no claim against The Railway, its successors or assigns, for any loss, damage, charge or expense of any kind that may grow out of fire set by or communicated to said Plant or buildings, or to the contents and appurtenances, or any part thereof, caused by the locomotives, trains or cars of The Railway, operated upon the main line or upon said side-track, unless such fire or fires shall have been originated by the wilful and reckless negligence of The Railway, its agents, successors or assigns.

And the party of the second part agrees that before said side-track is constructed by The Railway it will provide, free of cost the road-bed, all switch timber and cross ties reasonably necessary for the operation of the side-track, as per the estimate of the Chief Engineer of The Railway.

In consideration of the premises and conditions above, and of the sum of one dollar ($1.00) by each of the parties hereto to the other paid, the receipt of which is acknowledged, it is mutually covenanted and agreed:

1. That The Railway shall maintain and operate a side-track from its main line to the Plant of the party of the second part; and the party of the second part hereby licenses and consents to the construction, maintenance and operation of said side-track and to the possession and use of the land upon which the same shall be constructed for and during such time as The Railway may desire to maintain and use the same, without any liability on the part of The Railway to erect and maintain fences and cattle-guards. And the party of the second part grants and conveys to The Railway, its successors or assigns, the right at all times to enter upon said land for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and operating the said side-track, and of exercising any right existing under this agreement.

2. That the party of the second part shall not store or stack any lumber, wood or material of any kind upon the right of way of The Railway without having first obtained the written consent of The Railway to do so, and only then upon the condition that if at any time, in any way, such lumber, wood or other material, so stored or stacked by the party of the second part, shall be damaged or destroyed by fire, from whatever source originating, or if it shall be damaged or destroyed by any other means or causes, no claim shall be filed against or presented to The Railway for any loss or damage accruing from such fire, or other means or causes; and if at any time, in any way, a fire shall originate in or be communicated by the lumber, wood or other material, so stored upon the right of way, to the Plant or buildings of the party of the second part, or to the contents and appurtenances of said Plant or buildings, or any part thereof, or to any other wood, lumber, material or property of any kind, owned or controlled by the party of the second part, wherever situated, The Railway shall not be liable, and the party of the second part, its successors or assigns, shall not present any claim therefor, unless said fire shall have been originated by the wilful and reckless negligence of the party of the first part, or its agents; and the party of the second part agrees that if under any circumstances it should obtain the consent of The Railway to store or stack lumber or wood, or material of any kind, upon the right of way, or any part thereof, and the same should afterwards be destroyed by fire or other means or causes, the party of the second part will make no claim for damages on that account, even though this condition might not have been expressly mentioned at the time the consent to store or stack such lumber, wood or material upon the right of way is obtained.

3. That the party of the second part shall ship and send all freights or material to be forwarded from or destined to said side-track by the line of railroad of The Railway, where the point to or from which said freight is sent may be reached by said line of railroad or its connecting lines, in preference to any other line of railroad now or hereafter constructed, where the rates charged by The Railway are equally favorable; otherwise The Railway shall not be bound to operate said side-track and may abandon its use.

4. That if the revenue from the transportation of freight from and to side track & plant or business or industries upon said side-track is not, in the judgment of The Railway or the General Superintendent thereof, sufficient to justify it in maintaining and operating the same, or if the said side-track shall, in the judgment of The Railway or the General Superintendent thereof, be likely to endanger or interfere with the proper operation of the railroad of The Railway, The Railway shall have the right to remove it, and it may abandon its use.

5. That the title in and to and the ownership of the rails, ties, fastenings, and all other material of every kind and description used in the construction of the said side-track, are and shall remain in The Railway, and The Railway, its agents, servants and employes, shall have the right at any time peaceably to enter upon the premises of said party of the second part for the purpose of taking up and removing said side-track, whenever it may determine, under the terms of this agreement, to remove the same.

6. That the party of the second part shall promptly load and unload at its own cost any and all cars which may be moved to and from its plant or other point designated by it on the said side-track, consigned to or by it; and the said cars shall be subject to car service rules. All cars placed upon the said side-track, on the property of said party of the second part, shall be returned to The Railway in the same condition as when delivered, and in the event of the destruction of any of such cars while on the property of said party of the second part, the said party of the second part will make good to The Railway all loss occasioned by such destruction.

7. That The Railway may use such side-track in connection with any extension of the same which it may construct for the purpose of reaching business and industries other than the business and industries of the party of the second part, and that it may handle and transport the business of others, either upon or along said side-track, and any extension thereof; and it is distinctly understood and agreed that the said Railway shall not be deemed to have waived or restricted by anything herein contained, its exclusive power and right to control and operate the said side-track, to extend the same from time to time at its option, or otherwise to exercise its ownership or franchise in and about the same, in all respects as if the said right of way had been acquired and the said side-track had been acquired or constructed at the original and sole expense of The Railway.

8. That this agreement shall be binding on the heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns of the parties hereto.

WITNESS the following signatures and seals, the day and year first above written.

CAROLINA, CLINCHFIELD AND OHIO RAILWAY,

By L. H. Pettefleace
General Superintendent.

WITNESS: D. W. Toncray

Southern Potteries Inc.
per E. J. Owens
Mgr.

APPENDIX 3

PAGES FROM *CITY DIRECTORY OF ERWIN AND SUBURBS*, 1924

PREFACE

ERWIN, UNICOI COUNTY, TENNESSEE

(Data compiled by Toney Insurance Agency)

Erwin, the county seat of Unicoi County, Tennessee, is situated in the heart of the Appalachian Forest Reserve and has an altitude of 1,683 feet, and is a modern, progressive and growing city. Erwin has fine water which is supplied from a spring that flows from the foot of one of the mountains which surround the city. The flow from this spring is 800 gallons per minute. The city has over six miles of paved streets, which cost approximately $270,000 00, eleven miles of granolithic sidewalks, and electric lights which extend to all parts of the city. The population is approximately 5,000. Macadamized highways lead from Erwin to all parts of the county. Erwin is also on the adopted Federal Highway from Washington, D. C., via Bristol to Asheville, N. C.

Erwin has four churches, a Y. M. C. A., two grammar schools, and $60,000.00 has been appropriated by the city for additions to these. The Unicoi County High School is located within the city limits and money has been appropriated by the county for the addition of an up-to-date gymnasium. The scholastic population is 1,040 pupils. A live Kiwanis Club of sixty members, active and very much interested in the upbuilding of the city. Erwin has a new $100,000.00 hotel, modern equipment and up-to-date management.

Erwin has the following industries with number of employes and monthly pay-roll:

	No.	Amount
Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Ry.*—		
General Locomotive and Repair Shop	9 0	$113,000
Transportation and M. of W. Dept.	800	190,000
General Offices	95	20 000
Southern Potteries, Inc.	250	20,000
A. P. Villa & Bros. (Silk Mill)	125	5,000
Clinchfield Products Corp. (Feldspar)	34	3,500
Erwin Feldspar Corp. (Feldspar)	23	2,500
Carl Willms, Jr. (Feldspar)	20	2,0 0
Southern Electrical Porcelain	20	1,000
Erwin Manufacturing Co.	11	600
Crystal Ice, Coal & Laundry Corp.	37	2,200
Erwin Electric Light & Power Co.	15	3,000
Erwin Water Works	6	450
Liberty Lumber & Mfg. Co.	9	1,500
M. F. Parsley & Co. (Lumber)	8	1,000
N. D. Riddle & Son (Shoes-Harness)	4	900
H. R. Parrott Motor Co.	7	1,000
Mercantile Stores	85	8,750
Total pay-roll		$276 400

*The Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railway has under construction a $65,000 storehouse which will be 60 x 166 feet and will be one of the most up-to-date storehouses in the country: with basement under the entire building for baths and other conveniences for the employes.

Two Banks Combined Resources $950,000—
Erwin National, Capital $25,000, Surplus $10,000
First State Bank, Capital $35,000, Surplus $10,000

U S Fishery, Fishery.....157-A

—V—

Vandergrift E J, Tucker St.....93
Villa A P & Bro, Silk Mill.....45-A

—W—

Warick F J, res Opekiska St.....223
Webb J R, res Main St.....104
White J C, Jewelry Main St.....178
Whitehead A L, res Third St.....Exchange
Whitehead F L, res.....90-66
Whitehead F L, office Union St....173
Whitson Carl, res Fairview Add.....204-42
Williams R L, res Academy St....6-A
Willis T F, res Love St.....119
Willms Carl, Feldspar Main St.....174
Wilson J B, res.....67-66
Wilson Silas, res Flag Pond.....83-K
Witcher R L, res Clinchfield Ave....46
Wizard Bakery, Union St.....202
Wohlford C R, res Love St.....128
Wohlford W T, res Vinton St....196-30
Woodward G B, res Willow St.....74
Woodward Dr W T, res Love St....148
Worley Rev E D, res.....78
Wright J W, res Unicoi.....91-K
Wright W H, res Elm St.....3

—Y—

Y M C A, Union St.....197
Young F W, res Carolina Ave....89-30
Young Millard, res Clinchfield Ave.....89-30

GENERAL SUMMARY

Erwin Has 45 Mercantile Firms—Including—

—2 Up-to-Date Drug Stores.
—1 Wholesale Grocery House (Annual business $250,000).
—1 Wholesale Flour and Feed Store.
—2 Furniture Stores.
—3 Department Stores (Annual business $616,000.)
—1 Piggly-Wiggly Store.
—1 Up-to-Date Gents Clothing Store.
—1 Gents and Ladies Furnishing Store.
—1 Hardware Store.
—2 Sanitary Meat Markets.
—4 Automobile Garages and Salesrooms.

Erwin Has—

—Approximately 1100 dwelling houses.
—Plans for white way on all business streets.
—Plans for new and up-to-date Y. M. C. A. building.
—Plans for one modern theater building.
—Plans for two modern store buildings.
—Plans for city delivery of mail.
—Fifty homes under construction.
—Main shops and operating offices of the C. C. & O. Ry.
—One newspaper.
—A new fully equipped printing plant.
—A Government Fishery within two miles.
—Two large lumber yards.
—Near it, deposits of iron, zinc, asbestos, feldspar, kaolin and other valuable minerals.
—Gained in population, since 1920, 96%.
—Its future development is taken care of by the holdings of the Holston Corporation, approximately 600 acres, and the Erwin Development Company, approximately 400 acres, lying largely within the city limits. Both companies have set apart land for industries accessible to the railway.
—More home owners per capita than any other city within the state.
—Within from twelve to fifteen miles of its limits on the Nolachucky river undeveloped water power sufficient to aggregate from fifty to sixty thousand horsepower. One large dam site is owned by parties in North Carolina, who have recently surveyed the propo-

APPENDIX 4

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF AN INCENTIVE PLAN FOR SOUTHERN POTTERIES

The Southern Potteries' decorating shop incentive plan was worked out under the direction and supervision of a West Coast firm of engineers specializing in this kind of work. The working up of data preparatory to starting the system required about one year's time and the services of a full time employee with a varying number of assistants. This employee made two trips to the West Coast, and the head of the engineering firm made two trips to our factory.

The incentive plan is based upon time studies. Thousands and thousands of stop watch timings were made covering a multitude of operations involved in the hand painting and hand decorating of dinnerware. These operations were broken down into many classifications based upon complex factors peculiar to our operation. Size, shape and handling ease of each piece of ware had to be considered. Under each classification a sufficiently large number of stop watch readings had to be made on each item with many different operators to insure accuracy. Each operator was speed rated to resolve the reading to normal or standard time. The volumes of data thus obtained were classified, studied, arranged, and drawn up in the form of graphs which were translated into standard time elements from which master specification charts were made.

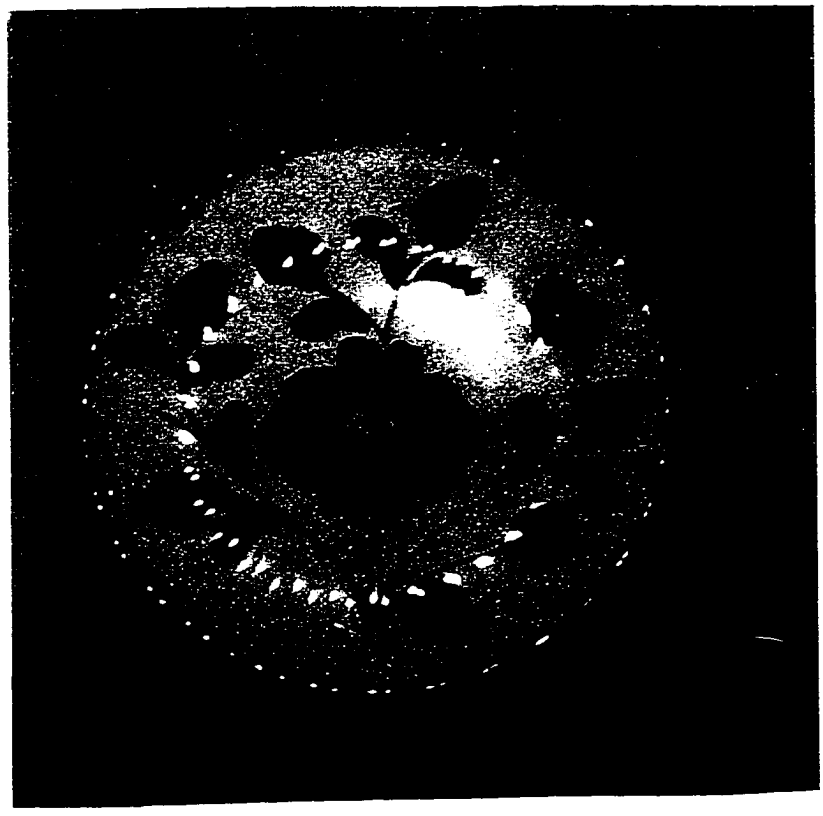
All indirect activities necessary in our shop, but not directly a part of decorating were studied, timed, and evaluated. These included "get-ready", "clean-up", mixing color, going after color, all handling of ware, cleaning off smudges and smears, changing patterns, changing colors, waiting time, etc., etc. Also a flat fatigue and personal attention allowance was worked out and given consideration.

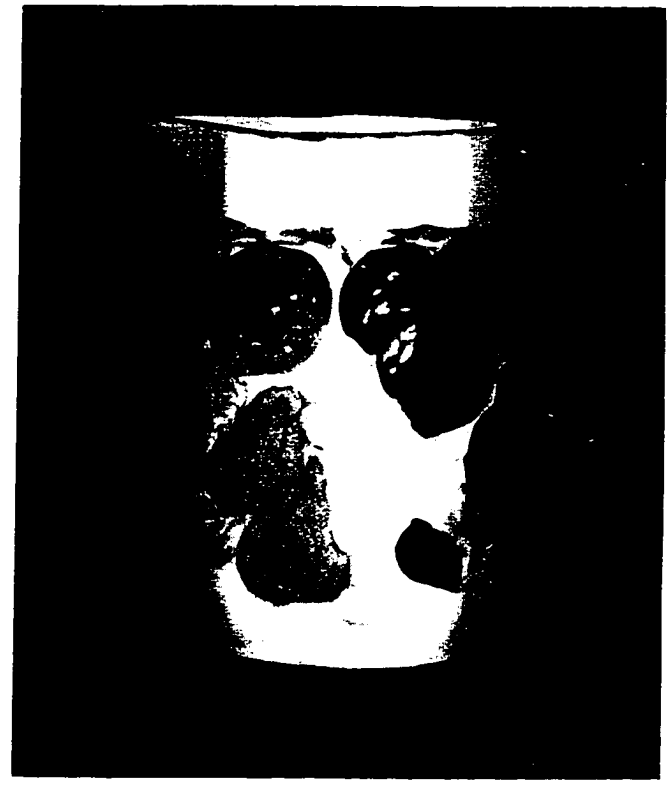
To operate the plan a special time-keeping office had to be set up in the decorating shop, with inspectors and counters employed for the floor work. A file on each pattern is maintained in the incentive office. Each item in each pattern is evaluated in terms of standard minutes per dozen. Counters on the floor keep a written record on a special form in front of the operator all day long with a carbon copy for the operator. Dozens in each item of each pattern are counted. The following day these work sheets are translated into standard hours produced and posted on shop bulletin boards. If an operator fails to produce were equivalent to a standard day's production she is paid the basic hourly wage for clock hours worked. If she produces over a day's standard production she is paid for all over in the form of bonus at the basic hourly rate for the standard hours produced. For ten hours of production in seven clock hours of work she is paid for ten hours, etc.

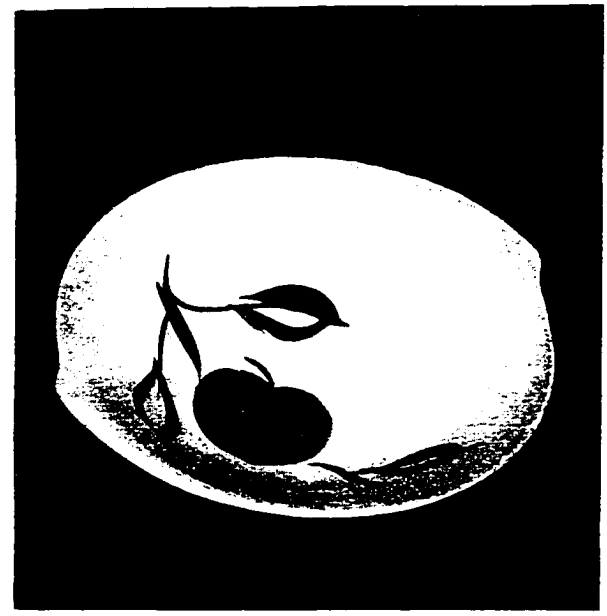
APPENDIX 5

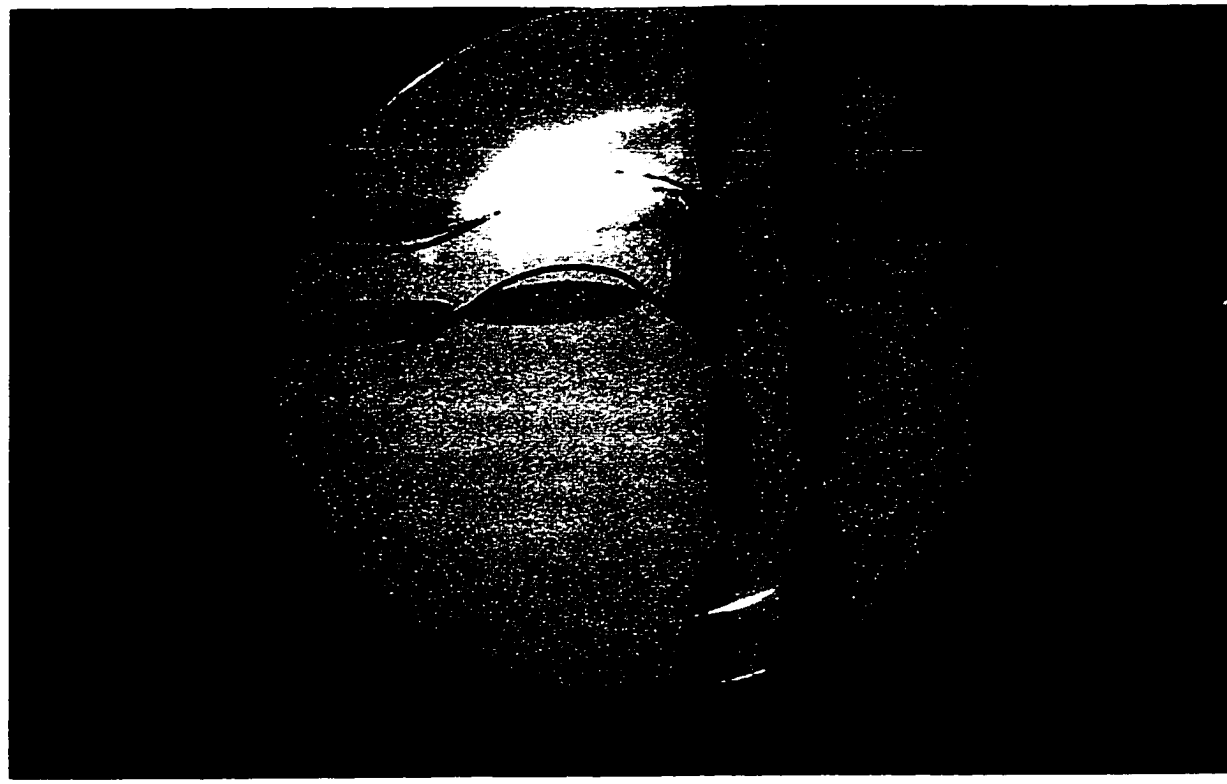
EXAMPLES OF BLUE RIDGE DINNERWARE

Photograph above and those found on
the following three pages
by the author

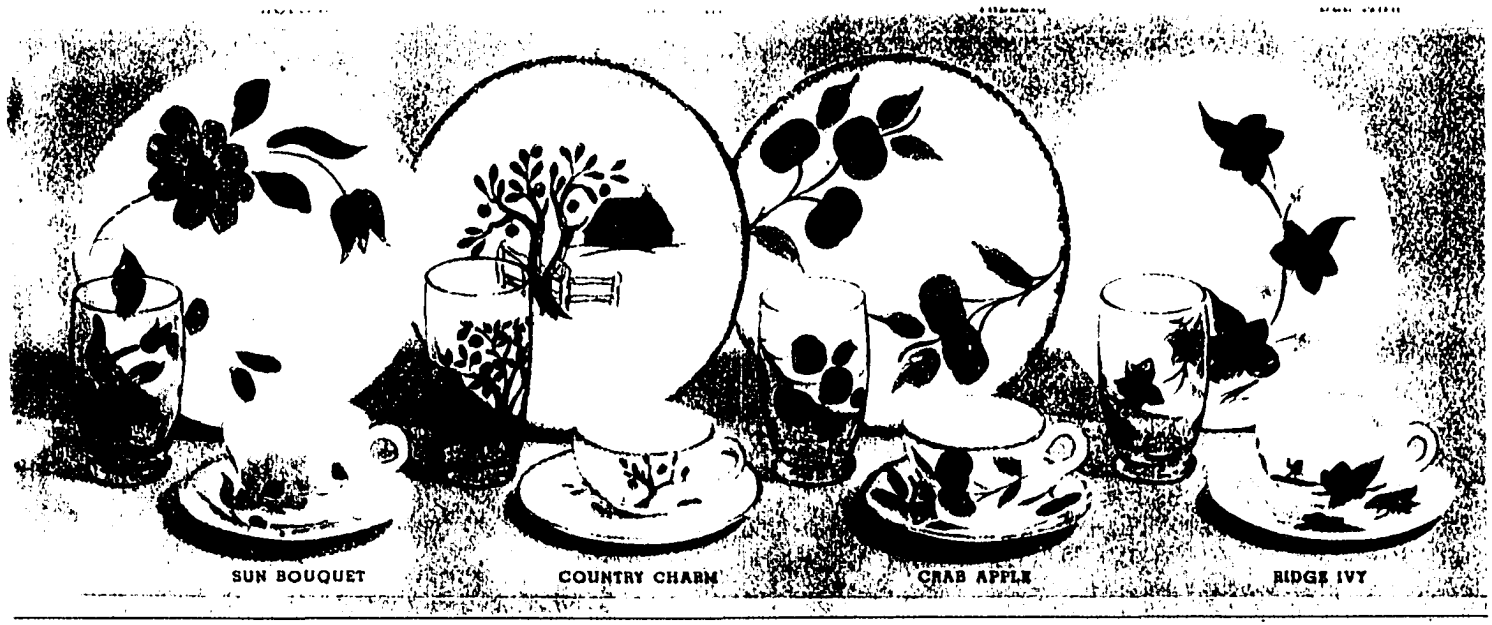








(Reprinted courtesy of Kim and Bryan Snyder of Mountain City, Georgia)



SUN BOUQUET 6.95 20-Pc. Set

Its garden gay flowers in deep hues. Pieces are feather-edged in yellow

6 B 9216 MC —20-Piece Set. Service for 4. Shipping weight 12 lbs. $6.95

6 B 9212 MC —32-Piece Set. Service for 6. Shipping weight 21 lbs. $11.95

6 B 9213 MC —53-Piece Set. Service for 8. Shipping weight 31 lbs $21.50

Matching Glassware. Design fired on

Set of 8 Tumblers (shown). Cap. 11 oz. 6 B 8028 LC —Ship. wt. 5 lbs $1.29

Set of 8 Juice Glasses. Capacity 6 oz. 6 B 8029 LC —Ship. wt. 3 lbs $2.29

Set of 8 Dessert Cups. Capacity 7½ oz. 6 B 8030 LC —Ship. wt. 3 lbs $2.29

COUNTRY CHARM 8.95 20-Pc. Set

Enchanting Country scene gives table new interest. Pieces are edged in brown

86 B 8671 MC —20-Piece Set. Service for 4. Shipping weight 12 lbs. $8.95

86 B 8672 MC —32-Piece Set. Service for 6. Shipping weight 21 lbs $14.95

86 B 8673 MC —53-Piece Set. Service for 8. Shipping weight 31 lbs $27.50

Matching Glassware. Design fired on

Set of 8 Tumblers (shown). Cap. 11 oz. 86 B 8189 LC —Ship. wt. 5 lbs $1.45

Set of 8 Juice Glasses. Capacity 6 oz. 86 B 8190 LC —Ship. wt. 3 lbs $2.89

Set of 8 Dessert Cups. Capacity 7½ oz. 86 B 8194 LC —Ship. wt. 3 lbs $2.89

CRAB APPLE 6.75 20-Pc. Set

Ripe apples hang from leafy branches. Each piece feather-edged in red.

86 B 8946 MC —20-Piece Set. Service for 4. Shipping weight 12 lbs. $6.75

86 B 8942 MC —32-Piece Set. Service for 6. Shipping weight 21 lbs $11.50

86 B 8943 MC —53-Piece Set. Service for 8. Shipping weight 31 lbs $19.95

Matching Glassware. Design fired on

Set of 8 Tumblers (shown). Cap. 11 oz. 86 B 8091 LC —Ship. wt. 5 lbs $2.98

Set of 8 Juice Glasses. Capacity 6 oz. 86 B 8092 LC —Ship. wt. 3 lbs $2.69

Set of 8 Dessert Cups. Capacity 7½ oz. 86 B 8056 LC —Ship. wt. 3 lbs $2.69

RIDGE IVY 7.95 20-Pc. Set

A sprig of ivy on smart rimless shapes adds interest to your table setting.

86 B 8851 MC —20-Piece Set. Service for 4. Shipping weight 12 lbs. $7.95

86 B 8852 MC —32-Piece Set. Service for 6. Shipping weight 21 lbs $13.25

86 B 8853 MC —53-Piece Set. Service for 8. Shipping weight 31 lbs $25.95

Matching Glassware. Design fired on

Set of 8 Tumblers (shown). Cap. 11 oz. 86 B 8220 LC —Ship. wt. 5 lbs $3.19

Set of 8 Juice Glasses. Capacity 6 oz. 86 B 8221 LC —Ship. wt. 3 lbs $2.98

Set of 8 Dessert Cups. Capacity 7½ oz. 86 B 8222 LC —Ship. wt. 3 lbs $2.98

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