

FROM COTTON TO CARPOOLS: POWDER SPRINGS GOES TO WORK

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NARRATOR: After the removal of the Native Americans from Georgia in 1838, permanent residents were beginning to settle in the tiny town of Springville, Georgia. Named for its medicinal mineral springs, the town boasted five hotels and became a popular resort area as tourism fueled the town's growth for over twenty years. By 1859, the town's name had been changed to Powder Springs and farmers had become well established, with cotton as their main crop.

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ABERNATHY: It was a farming community...at first it was cotton, and then the boll weevil came in just before that time, and it did away with most of the cotton crops and so they started doing just...raising produce that they took down to the farmer's market in Atlanta and sold it.

NORRIS: Well it was a farming area, and outside of the ones that had businesses in town, everybody farmed. It was a farming country, and people grew most of what they ate. We had just a couple of grocery stores, small grocery stores and then more stores that they called dry goods stores, and some of the buildings are still being occupied now as antique stores, but they sold all kinds of dry goods, and then they bought and sold fertilizer and brought the cotton back in the fall when the farmers gathered the cotton, and they would bring – come back to them and settle up on their bill, where they had bought fertilizers and seed all season, and then they would settle. And if there was any left over, that's all the income they had for that year.

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NARRATOR: By 1920, the boll weevil had destroyed the local farmer's cotton crop and residents of Powder Springs were looking for a new way to make a living. As farming declined, industry began to come to the town.

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NORRIS: Well the Coats and Clarks Thread Mill was the turning thing of the time in Powder Springs. It was the first big industry to come that employed so many people. It was just such a blessing to this community, because it was the first industry in this area that we had where we could find work other than farming, working on the farm, or just, you know things like that.

ABERNATHY: During the war, Bell Bomber Plant was built in Marietta, and so that brought more people in. More people moved in to live in the area, so they'd be closer to work, because after Bell Bomber, after the war it was changed to Lockheed.

MOON: My father worked for the Norfolk Southern which was then known as the Southern Railroad and we would walk down to the tracks that are back of the Seven Springs Museum and we would know about what time his train was coming through and he would be on the caboose, they had cabooses then, he would be standing out on the caboose and he would throw off a little white sack with two donuts in it for his daughter.

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NARRATOR: Today, most residents of Powder Springs commute to work in places like Marietta and Atlanta. The increase in the number of commuters in the town has resulted in the widening, reshaping, and creating of roads and bridges, and of course, has led to an increase in traffic.

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NORRIS: I guess a good part of them work in other places, because there's not that much – see the mill closed down, I've forgotten what year it closed but it's been several years since it closed down. Most of all the work other than just the local stores and things like that, you have to go off somewhere else to work.

D. BEAVERS: They built the East West Connector and that was supposed to relieve some of the traffic but it ended up making things worse.

K. BEAVERS: I was really concerned about the wetlands that were in there and I know they had to do a lot of studies to put those bridges through there but it always concerned me that they were putting that road across there. It did get heavy usage once they opened it, in fact it was so heavy that I didn't even use it, even from the first month or two that they opened it up.

L. COCHRAN: I live probably about 8 miles from where I work, but when it takes you thirty to forty minutes to get there because you're fighting traffic, that's absurd. It's ridiculous. The conveniences are good, but when you continue to have enormous amounts of growth that just adds to the traffic problem.

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NARRATOR: Over the last one hundred years, Powder Springs has transitioned from a small farming town to a bustling suburban society. Some things, however, have not changed.

R. BODIFORD: Taxes have always been low out here. A good place to live. And like DeLane says, people have always been super friendly. I tell you, these people would just give you the shirt off their back. All you got to do is ask for it.

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