Cobb County, Georgia
and the Origins of the Suburban South
A Twentieth-Century History

By
Thomas Allan Scott
The history of Cobb County in the last century was the history, in microcosm, of the modern suburban South. As the cover photo illustrates, Kennesaw Mountain, the scene of a major Civil War battle, serves as the backdrop for the new Cobb. Well into the twentieth century, Cobb and the rest of the South suffered the consequences of defeat: a below average standard of living, a lack of national power, and a tradition of segregation and one-party politics that set the region well outside the national mainstream. Cobb began to change when two mid-century wars brought Bell Aircraft, Lockheed, and Dobbins Air Base to the county. Military spending triggered a population boom and a more progressive, more affluent society. By the late twentieth century, Cobb was a very different place. The numerous upscale office buildings of the Galleria-Platinum Triangle area represented one of America's richest business centers. A dynamic two-party system produced a U.S. Speaker of the House, a Georgia governor, and other state and national leaders. By the year 2000 the metropolitan Atlanta suburbs led the way in making Georgia one of the fastest growing states in the Union. Counties such as Cobb took on a greater significance than ever before. Cobb County, Georgia, and the Origins of the Suburban South is an attempt to explain how and why this remarkable change came about.
1 March 2006

For the KSU Archives

[Signature]

Thomas A. Scott
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Cobb Landmarks & Historical Society, Inc.
Marietta, Georgia
COBB LANDMARKS AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
gratefully acknowledges the encouragement and financial support of

Jennie Tate Anderson (1912-1985),
its co-founder, who set up the fund which enabled the Society
to assist with the completion of this history,

and of

The Brumby-Leonard Family Foundation, Inc.,
whose generous grant made possible its publication.
For my wife,
Kathy
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Cobb County’s twentieth-century history was shaped by rapid population growth and the abandonment of rural and small-town folkways for a suburban lifestyle. The county was not alone in this transition. Following the Civil War northern industrial centers grew greatly in size as poor farm people from around the world flocked to their factories and shops. While the masses crammed into the inner cities, the affluent headed for the outskirts of town, first to streetcar, then automobile suburbs. After World War II, with affordable housing projects such as Levittown on Long Island, ordinary, working people joined the trek to the urban borders. By 1970 more Americans lived in suburbs than central cities. By 1990 more resided in suburbs than cities and the countryside combined.

On the losing side of the War Between the States, Southerners were slow in building teeming cities and suburbs, and the states of the old Confederacy in 1900 were the poorest in the nation. Other than Fulton County (Atlanta), the State of Georgia lacked any jurisdictions that approached a hundred thousand in size. When the century opened Cobb was a middle-sized Georgia county, with about a fifth as many people as neighboring Fulton and less than half the population of Chatham (Savannah), Richmond (Augusta), or Bibb (Macon). Its 24,664 residents made Cobb the sixteenth largest county in Georgia, comparable in size to other predominantly rural localities such as Coweta, Jackson, and Troup. A little less than a fourth of Cobb’s population was concentrated in the county seat of Marietta, which by most accounts was a charming and pleasant place to live, at least for the business and professional elite that dominated the city’s political and social life. But wages were low in Marietta’s small industrial and commercial establishments, and the working classes eked out a marginal existence.

Outside Marietta and the other small towns, life was hard for practically everyone. At the turn of the century the average farm had
only seventy-two acres, and more agrarians rented than owned their fields. Electricity arrived only after the Rural Electrification Administration in 1938 made possible the stringing of rural lines. Running water and indoor plumbing were even slower in reaching the countryside. If life was rough for white farmers, it was particularly difficult for the 30 percent of Cobb’s 1900 population that was black. Despite a few notable success stories, African-Americans were much poorer than whites. In the Jim Crow era blacks were segregated into inferior schools, discouraged from voting by a host of legal devices, and denied most rights that Caucasians took for granted. When they came into contact with the law, blacks had almost no prospect of fair treatment unless they had forged relationships with prominent white families who provided paternalistic protection.

For Georgia and the South, World War II proved to be the turning point that set the region on the pathway to prosperity and social change. The influx of federal dollars into military bases and defense plants started the flow of public and private capital. Marietta exemplifies how federal aid helped to produce an affluent Sunbelt. The arrival of the Bell Aircraft plant in 1942 marks the origin of modern Cobb. At that time the county population was a little above thirty-eight thousand. By the end of the century it had grown sixteen times larger, surpassing six hundred thousand.

As Cobb expanded in size, it also became more diverse. In the old days few non-southerners moved to the county, because the local economy offered little to attract them. A hundred years ago Catholics and Jews stood out like exotic foreign imports, and northerners were immediately detected by their strange dialects. After the Leo Frank lynching on Roswell Road in 1915, Jews tended to stay far away; and Catholics thought twice about moving to a place where Klan demonstrations and parades were commonplace. As late as 1960 over three-fourths of all Cobb residents were Georgia natives.

Gradually, the cultural climate changed as a growing number of transplants overcame their fears and responded to the county’s job opportunities, affordable housing, and high quality of life. By 1990 for the first time a majority of Cobb’s residents were born somewhere other than Georgia and a tenth came from the North. The last two county commission chairmen of the twentieth century were born in the vicin-
ity of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Syracuse, New York. By the end of the century some of the largest congregations in east Cobb were Catholic or Jewish, and these groups had produced county commissioners and state legislators.

For a long time African-Americans played a declining role in the county’s diversity. As a result of the Great Migration of southern blacks to northern cities, the proportion of African-Americans in Cobb County dropped from 30 percent in 1900 to just 4 percent in 1980. The next two decades witnessed a remarkable demographic reversal, as the African-American population rose to 19 percent by the 2000 census. Including Hispanics and other ethnic groups, minorities at the end of the century made up over a fourth of all county residents. While Cobb was hardly free of racial prejudice, it had come a long way from where it had been a century earlier. For the most part, African-American newcomers shared in the county’s prosperity, and many held leadership positions. In the year 2000 the general manager of the county’s largest business, Lockheed-Martin, and the manager of the county’s forty-six hundred government employees were African-Americans. Demographic patterns constitute one of our most democratic measurements of personal preference. The county could take satisfaction at century’s end that people of many ethnic and religious backgrounds found Cobb an attractive place to be.

This book is an attempt to explain how Cobb made the transition from what it was a hundred years ago to what it has become at the start of a new millennium. It is also an attempt to explain the new Georgia. The 2000 census indicated that half the state’s people lived in the twenty-county Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area and nine-tenths of the metropolitan residents lived outside the Atlanta city limits. Increasingly, Georgia has joined the rest of the country in becoming a suburbanized state. For many urban dwellers this is a fearful trend. They sometimes look with horror at suburbs as places of bigotry, exclusion, and conformity. For most suburbanites, however, the reality is quite different. Hopefully, this volume will provide an objective view of one suburban county and shed some light on how a progressive South finally moved into the national mainstream.
I would like to thank those who took the time to read my manuscript as I wrote it. My wife, Kathleen Sherlock Scott, was always the first to see new drafts and saved me from many errors while chapters were still under construction. Kathy and I have been discussing and living Cobb County history together for almost three decades. She has taught me to appreciate local government, from courts to planning and zoning, and she knows more about historic preservation than I ever will. She has tolerated my obsession with this book over the last three years. I have frequently been late coming home from the office and have spent many Saturday and Sunday afternoons researching and writing. Hopefully, I haven’t been quite as bad as one of the central characters of Cobb’s history, Rip Blair, who hardly noticed that his wife had renovated their house while he was working night and day to bring Bell Aircraft to the county.

As I finished each part of the book, I gave copies to Dr. Florence Fleming Corley and Dr. Kent Anderson Leslie, two outstanding historians with first-rate books to their credit. They have exposed fuzzy thinking, prodded me to further research, and caught a great many errors. They have also provided positive reinforcement. Florrie has done her best to encourage the inclusion of more women’s history, and Kent has done the same for black history. The book is far richer for their constructive comments. I am also grateful to Florrie’s husband, James W. Corley, Jr., who did a careful reading of the second draft, making a number of suggestions on substantive matters and catching many typos and grammatical errors. As I finished the first draft of the manuscript, a former colleague, Dr. Christina F. Jeffrey, became a reader. She was especially helpful on some recent political events in which she was involved. I am deeply appreciative for the support of all my manuscript readers. It goes without saying that I alone am responsible for the book’s deficiencies.
I owe a huge debt to Cobb Landmarks and Historical Society. Kathy and I served on the board of directors in the 1980s and early 1990s and co-chaired the society in 1992. Throughout that period I was aware of the Anderson publication fund, set up originally by Jennie Tate Anderson to produce an update to Sarah Gober Temple’s *First Hundred Years*. Unfortunately, no one seemed to have the time or expertise to take on the project. In 1999 I first suggested that the society donate some of the Anderson fund to the Department of History & Philosophy at Kennesaw State University. A ninety-six hundred dollar donation was made during the 2000-2001 academic year. It allowed part-time faculty members to cover four sections of U.S. history that I otherwise would have been expected to teach. The two course releases in the fall of 2000 and two releases in the spring of 2001 gave me time to research and write a substantial part of the manuscript. I am grateful to Kennesaw State University for giving me a further course release each semester to conduct interviews for the KSU oral history project, which I have headed for the last quarter century. Oral histories with a wide variety of Cobb’s citizens have greatly enriched my historical knowledge and understanding and, I think, have added to the quality of the book.

No one could ask for better department chairs than I had while this project was under way. First Ann Pullen and then Howard Shealy have been enthusiastic about the book and supportive administratively. I owe much to colleagues in the history department and the college of Humanities and Social Sciences. They are committed to teaching and learning, and they have helped me develop intellectually. We have great students at Kennesaw State University. A number from my Georgia history, oral history, and local history research classes have contributed directly to various parts of the book. In the endnotes I have made frequent references to term papers and oral histories produced by KSU students or former students. The cited works are only a small part of what I owe to those who have taken my classes, listened to my ideas, and challenged me to look at things in different ways.

I certainly want to acknowledge all those who helped provide photographs. Years ago, Sylvia Ingram headed up the effort of Cobb Landmarks and the Cobb County Library System in collecting old photographs for the state archives’ Vanishing Georgia Project. The local sponsors were responsible for the addition to the collection of some eight hundred photos, the largest amount from any county in Georgia.
A number of those images are included in this book. Hugh M. Neeson of Buffalo, New York, gave me a large collection of original Bell Aircraft photographs. I have also made use of a series of photos provided years ago by Commissioner Herbert McCollum and images in the Blair collection at Kennesaw State, donated by Jack and Barbara Renshaw. For their help in scanning photos onto CDs, I am extremely grateful to my history colleague, Dr. LeeAnn Lands, and to student intern Tetyana (Tanya) Ivanova.

Dr. Mark W. Patterson, a geography professor at KSU, prepared several maps for the book. Those who contributed photos include Kathy Scott, Janice Oliver, Kent Anderson Leslie, Jim and Florrice Corley, Louis and Josetta Walker, John and Dede Yow, Murl and Beverly McCall, Moses Nathaniel McCall III, Hoyt and Helen McClure, Lorenzo Woods, Christina Jeffrey, Bobbie Cook, Dorsey Dodgen, Kathy McDonald, Carolyn Price, Mel Steely, Buddy Darden, the Johnny Isakson congressional office, the Bob Barr campaign office, the Democratic Party of Georgia, Carolyn Crawford and the staff of the Georgia Room (Cobb County Public Library), Dan Cox (Marietta Museum of History), Harold Smith (Smyrna Museum and Smyrna Historical & Genealogical Society), Abbie Parks (Acworth Society for Historic Preservation), Brian Johnstone and Anna M. DiPaola (Lockheed Martin), Robert Quigley and Gary Witte (Communications Department, Cobb County Government), James R. (Jay) Dillon (Communications, Cobb County Public Schools), Paige Walden (Childress Klein Properties), John D. Furman (Chattahoochee Technical College), Patricia Garrett (Southern Polytechnic State University), Lynda Johnson (Kennesaw State University), Daryl Barksdale (Cobb Landmarks & Historical Society), Palmer Wells (Theatre in the Square), Roger Merritt (Omni Images), Janie Maddox (Post Properties), and Jeffrey B. Gribble (Industry).

Many people have given freely of their time to tell me their life stories and relate their impressions of the county. The Kennesaw State University oral history project preserves their memories. Copies can be found at KSU and in the Georgia Room of the main Cobb County public library. The book has benefited greatly from the contemporary record captured in the pages of the *Marietta Daily Journal* and the *Cobb County Times*. I became a big fan of Otis Brumby, Sr., as I read his "Jambalaya" columns of long ago and relived the battles he fought for progressive reform. I am also grateful to all the clerks who maintain county commission, school
board, and city council minutes; and to all the historians, preservationists, librarians, and museum curators who have kept alive our history.

Throughout this project I have been guided by the wonderful example of Sarah Gober Temple's *The First Hundred Years: A Short History of Cobb County, in Georgia*. Written two-thirds of a century ago, it is still widely read and much admired. It sets such a high standard for local historical writing that authors have been discouraged from trying to write a sequel. Like most books, it reflects the prejudices of its era; but few works from the 1930s have better stood the test of time. Created during the dark days of the Great Depression, prior to the phenomenal transformation that started with World War II, it nonetheless tells a story of progress and hope. At the start of a new millennium, it is still the first source to which one turns to know about Cobb County history.

Over the last decade I have gone for many morning jaunts through the Marietta Confederate and City cemeteries. They are good places to meditate on local history. I like to pause in the Gober-Temple section at Sarah Temple's gravestone and reflect on the spirit that so filled her writings. My prayer is that I have caught a small part of that spirit and that this volume will remain half as useful as *The First Hundred Years*. In deference to the wishes of Jennie Tate Anderson (Cobb Landmarks Society minutes, 5 April 1983), I would like to conclude my acknowledgements with a special recognition of Aunt Em (Emma Katherine Anderson), a good friend of Sarah Temple, who typed and proofread the manuscript of *The First Hundred Years* and offered to pay its publication costs. She represented the old Cobb County at its best. Back in 1942, when local people first learned that a giant aircraft plant was coming, the Cobb County Times urged them to welcome and work with newcomers, building a new order on the foundations of the old. The following pages attempt to document the remarkable degree to which they did so. As a beneficiary of the achievements of that generation, I delight in expressing my appreciation to all who went before.

Thomas A. Scott
Marietta, Georgia
2 June 2003
Cobb County, Georgia
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Chapter One

Start of a New Century

The Burden of the Past

As the twentieth-century dawned, the people of Cobb County looked backward more than forward. Their life styles and relationships were shaped profoundly by the Civil War, fought less than four decades earlier. In 1900 some 30 percent of the people of Cobb County had African roots. For them, the war brought freedom from slavery, but not equality. After an extremely brief period of Republican rule, white-supremacist Democrats returned to power. For nearly a hundred years they maintained legal restrictions in Cobb and throughout Georgia that severely limited the rights of African-Americans.

In white southern mythology the Civil War was a valiant struggle for states’ rights. The Reconstruction era was imagined as a time when southern society endured a plague of vindictive northern carpetbaggers, unprincipled southern scalawags, and ignorant blacks. Fortunately, the Lost Cause was not totally lost. The Ku Klux Klan, supposedly a heroic society of responsible property holders, came to the region’s rescue. Confederate veteran and Klan member William Penn McClatchey spoke
for many of his Marietta contemporaries when he wrote, years later, "The Ku-Klux Klan is all that ever saved the south from utter ruin socially, politically and materially." McClatchey's family lived on Powder Springs Road just beyond the Georgia Military Institute, where he was a cadet when the war began. His mother Minerva was a talented author. After the conflict, Penn joined a local Klan headed by General William Phillips of the famed Phillips' Legion that fought valiantly on many Civil War battlefields. McClatchey singled out for special condemnation Reverend Ephraim Rucker, the founding pastor of Marietta's Zion Baptist Church (incorporated in 1866), who "persisted in trying to make trouble" by encouraging the freedmen to vote.1

Possessing a worldview shaped by fears of black power and northern domination, southern white voters resolved not to let blacks or Republicans hold positions of authority again. In the late nineteenth-century Georgia and other southern states developed a Democrat-dominated one-party political system designed to maintain white supremacy. In 1900 Georgia Democrats started holding white primaries to choose their candidates, confining the black vote to the general election. Eight years later, the voters adopted a constitutional amendment, championed by Governor Hoke Smith, that created a literacy test and other devices further to disenfranchise black males. At the same time the legislature enacted a host of "Jim Crow" laws to establish racial segregation in public places.

The Democrats tended to be anti-urban as well as anti-black. By giving small counties a disproportionately large number of legislative seats and by using the infamous county-unit system to undercount the urban vote, the Democrats ensured rural domination throughout the first three-fifths of the twentieth-century.2 Not surprisingly, Democrat office holders catered to farmer interests over those of urbanites. Large landholders were often wealthy in property, but short on cash, and therefore reluctant to approve high real estate taxes. Consequently, the public schools were shortchanged and Georgia put too few dollars into railroad and utility improvements. Excessively frugal fiscal policies guaranteed that the South failed to create an environment for industrial growth.3

Despite their own policy failures, ex-Confederates found scapegoats to blame for the sluggish economy. It was not difficult to discover evidence that aggressive northerners were exploiting the South. For example, the northern-headquartered railroad lines charged far higher industrial freight rates at southern terminals than they did at those in the North. With
transportation costs adding significantly to the price of goods, southern manufacturers could not compete on equal terms with their northern counterparts. The existence of a "colonial economy" contributed to the myth of a victimized South, a crutch that allowed local leaders to blame someone else rather than focusing on solutions that might have pulled the region out of poverty.
The Agricultural Depression and Farmers' Revolt

With industrial development aborted, southern cities of the late nineteenth century were small, and farming remained the chief occupation despite precipitous drops in agricultural prices. Virtually every economics textbook of the age identified overproduction as the central farm problem. A basic rule of economics is that prices go down whenever supply exceeds demand. The tragedy of these years is that the overabundance resulted not from better agricultural practices, but from the rapid expansion of cotton after the Civil War into previously undeveloped parts of the Southwest and into north Georgia counties such as Cobb, where little cotton was grown in the days of slavery. Cotton increasingly became the cash crop that farmers used to purchase the supplies and mass-produced consumer goods they wanted.

Following Reconstruction, the market price of cotton in Cobb County declined from 15 cents a pound in 1873 to under 5 cents in 1898. Seeking a political solution, many local farmers of the 1890s joined the Populist movement, led in Georgia by rabble-rousing Tom Watson, a brilliant lawyer-planter from Thomson. The Populists explained the farmer's problem as one of under-consumption rather than overproduction. Instead of focusing on oversupply they focused on the causes of low demand. Citing the exploitation of northern workers, the agrarian radicals asked the logical question, “If workers earned higher wages, wouldn't they try to buy more food and cotton clothing, thus increasing demand?” From this perspective the northern robber barons exploited farmers and workers alike. Writing in the early 1930s Sarah Temple claimed that “the salty tales which are told now in Cobb County about the political machinations of the eighteen nineties are among the most interesting to which I have listened.... The vigor of the language, bristling with epithets, the recollections of those days, told with such gusto, deserves preservation.”

Nonetheless, the Populists never carried Cobb in a major election, partly because local Democrats appropriated their most popular issues. A leading Marietta Democrat, Senator Alexander Stephens Clay, first opposed, then endorsed Populist attempts to inflate the currency through free silver. In 1896 both the Democrats and the Populists nominated for the presidency a Nebraska Democrat, William Jennings Bryan, on a pro-
farmer, free silver platform. Bryan won the South and much of the Midwest. He failed, however, to persuade northern laborers that they had a common interest with small farmers. Carrying the industrial states President William McKinley, a pro-business Republican, swamped Bryan's silver crusade. Outside the national mainstream and defeated once again, a majority of Southerners, Populist and Democrat alike, viewed themselves as victims of capitalist tycoons and a corrupt federal government, which used its vast powers to keep the little man down.  

Tenant Farming

A major symptom of the agricultural depression was the rise of farm tenancy, an institution existing since colonial days, but relatively insignificant before the Civil War. In the late nineteenth century tenancy replaced slavery for many freedmen, who desired emancipation from the daily supervision of white landlords, but lacked the opportunity to purchase land of their own. With cash and credit scarce in the postwar era, planters were more than willing to collect rents from former slaves rather than pay them wages. So the prejudices of white planters and desires of black farm laborers were forced to coincide. By 1880, when U.S. census enumerators first asked Georgia farm operators whether they owned or rented, some 45 percent were tenants, many of them ex-slaves. At that time 47 percent of all Georgians had African ancestors. However, Cobb County was located in the red clay hills of the Upper Piedmont, where subsistence farms had always predominated. As a consequence, Cobb in 1880 contained a smaller percentage of blacks (29 percent) than the state as a whole and, correspondingly, a lower percentage of farm renters (34 percent).

While the end of slavery helps to explain the sudden rise of farm tenancy by 1880, it does little to interpret the phenomenal growth of the institution over the next twenty years. By 1900 some 60 percent of all Georgia farm operators (and 56 percent of Cobb's) rented their land rather than owning it. Farm tenancy continued to expand in the early twentieth-century until it peaked during the Great Depression. By 1930 the figure in Georgia was 68 percent.  

Tenants can be divided into two major categories: fixed renters who paid either in cash or in a predetermined number of cotton bales, and sharecroppers who paid their rent with a proportion of the crop they grew.
In 1900 about 22 percent of Cobb’s tenants were fixed renters, while 78 percent were sharecroppers. The former expected relatively low rents because of the greater risk they took, since they were obligated to pay the full amount whether they had a good year or bad. A drought or low market prices could run the fixed renter deeply into debt. In exchange for shouldering a greater risk the fixed renter gained a great deal of freedom in operating the farm as he pleased. In contrast, the sharecropper could expect much supervision, since the landlord’s profits were contingent on the size of the crop.

Sharecroppers were further divided into two types. The more affluent croppers owned their mules and plows and rented only their land. Generally, their payment was a third of the corn and a fourth of the cotton. Poorer croppers, who had to rent draft animals and tools as well as land, expected to pay higher rents, usually half of their corn and cotton. The third- and fourth-croppers were mainly white, while the half-croppers were disproportionately black. Legally, the half-cropper was a day laborer, with
the landlord owning the crop, subject only to the amount due the worker at the end of the year. Contracts rarely were registered at the courthouse and were fairly informal. Born in 1898 on Mars Hill Road in west Cobb, Harvey Durham recalled: “I furnished the stock, my land, half of the fertilizer. They done the work and we went fifty-fifty on what they growed.” When his tenants grew syrup cane, the division “was just according to what you agreed on. If he was a good man, and a poor man having a hard time, I’d say, ‘Go ahead.’ And if he made a big crop of it, well, we shared.”}

**Farm Prices, Merchants, and the Crop-Lien System**

Based on census figures and average market prices, the typical Cobb County tenant farm produced a crop worth about $400 in 1880 and some-
what less at the turn of the century. After giving the landlord his share, a third- and fourth-cropper retained commodities worth about $300, while a half-cropper was left with a little under $200. The tenant rarely saw that much money, however, since he had debts to retire with a local merchant, who extended him credit throughout the growing season. As collateral for credit purchases, the storekeeper took a lien on the crops in the field. Since most renters had no other way to guarantee a loan, they had little choice but to continue buying on credit from the same merchant until the harvest. Consequently, the business owner charged whatever he pleased and simply recorded it in his record book by the tenant’s name. A study using Georgia data from the 1880s concluded that farmers paid the equivalent of 59 percent interest per annum for their credit purchases.

Growing up in the 1920s in the Blackwell community off Canton Road, Ercelene Adams experienced life from the point of view of a black sharecropping family. Her father had a one-horse farm where he grew cotton, wheat, corn, and vegetables. She remembered that he “rented the farm on the halves and half of everything you made, half they took away.” Some years her father had a line of credit to buy fertilizer and supplies at Johnson’s Store in Woodstock. In other years he went into Marietta to Fred Dunn’s, just off the Square on Cherokee Street, or Anderson Brothers (after 1926 Harry DuPre’s), a general merchandise store on Whitlock Avenue. Every other Saturday the family spent the whole day traveling to and from Marietta to do business and socialize. Even as a child, Adams understood that her father had to stay with “one particular store per year. If you weren’t satisfied with that, next year you would go to the one or the other.” She recalled, “Things were cheap in those days, but half of it was credit. They could charge what they wanted to; and you had no say-so about how much they were charging, because that’s where your credit was.”

James T. Anderson, Jr., kept the books as a young man for the family-owned Anderson Brothers Company. One of his first jobs as a child was to work after school on Fridays, grinding and packaging coffee for farmers to pick up when they came in the next day. Anderson Brothers sold groceries, dry goods, shoes, groceries, animal feed, wagons, and farm equipment. In the fall farmers from as far away as Paulding County would bring their cotton crop to town to sell. Marietta was a popular destination, because it had more buyers than the neighboring
small towns. In addition to Anderson Brothers and Dunn Feed and Grocery, another major competitor was Manning Brothers.

As the farmers arrived with their cotton bales, a merchant cut a slit in the bagging, pulled out a sample, and graded it, depending on color, condition, and length. Anderson remembered that cotton grown on gray soil had a bluish tinge, while that grown on red clay had a pinkish tinge. Different mills preferred different lengths of cotton staple and different colors for their spinning operations. If Anderson Brothers made the highest bid, they carried the cotton off to their warehouse in the back of the store next to the Western & Atlantic railroad tracks. The farmers then paid off their bill for their fertilizer and other purchases from the previous year.

Anderson Brothers sometimes sold their cotton directly to manufacturers such as the Canton Mills in neighboring Cherokee County. But just as frequently they did business with an agent who put together a railroad car's worth of cotton to ship to distant mills. In the early twentieth-century J. M. Fowler & Company and Pierce Latimer were two such cotton merchants in Cobb County. On rare occasion a desperate farmer tried to cheat the shopkeepers. One of Anderson's favorite stories was about the time the family received a letter from Liverpool, England, complaining about opening a cotton bale and finding a rock of considerable size. He remembered, "They weighed the rock and charged us back for that much cotton. We lost the freight on the rock from Marietta, Georgia, to Liverpool, England."

The tale is a good reminder of the risks taken by small businesses. They had considerable capital tied up in merchandise and frequently had to wait for extended periods of time to be paid by their customers. The storekeepers existed on credit too, frequently from faraway banks. When chain supermarkets arrived in Marietta in the 1920s, Anderson Brothers could no longer provide an adequate income for five owners. So they dissolved the partnership in 1926, with a brother-in-law, H. N. DuPre, Sr., becoming the sole owner.14

**Industrial Development**

Despite the lack of state and federal support, boosters in small towns such as Marietta and Acworth joined with Atlanta civic leaders in promoting a
Cotton time in Acworth, c. 1895 (Cobb-353, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
New South spirit. Progressive journalists and urban businessmen developed a crusader spirit in their promotion of industry as a cure for the region’s postwar poverty. Atlanta’s International Cotton Expositions in 1881 and 1895 prophesied the arrival of a new age and proudly promoted examples of regional progress. The Marietta Journal joined its big-city counterparts in preaching the message of social salvation through industrialization. The paper praised northern textile mills for moving southward and called upon public-spirited citizens to start factories and mills in Cobb. The efforts seemed to pay off. Between 1860 and 1900 the number of industrial establishments in Cobb County increased sevenfold, expanding from sixteen to 109. Capital investment by the turn of the century reached almost $1.2 million, more than double the total of just twenty years earlier.
According to the 1900 federal census, the county's modest industrial development provided jobs for 1,195 local workers, two-thirds of whom were adult males; of the rest, children under age sixteen slightly outnumbered adult women. These jobs paid better than sharecropping, but offered pathetically little by national standards. Labor historians often describe the exploitation of immigrant workers in Northern cities a century ago. Yet the average American industrial worker in 1900 earned $503 a year, far above that of the typical Georgian, who received $242. The median in Cobb County was $223—less than half the national average. In Cobb men averaged $270, women $157, and, before child labor laws reached Georgia in the early twentieth century, children only $104. Only after the New Deal and World War II would the wage gap between the South and the rest of the nation begin to diminish.16

By the start of the twentieth century, several local industries found regional and national markets for their products; and one company, the Glover Machine Works, competed internationally. John Heyward Glover started the family business in Marietta in the 1840s, when he opened a tannery, a bank, and a telegraph office. His son, James Bolan Glover I, bought the Edward Aaron Withers' iron foundry in 1892. Withers had begun to build small steam locomotives. Glover converted the Marietta foundry into a shop designed primarily to manufacture narrow-gauge locomotives for the private railroads of large corporations. In the first two decades of the twentieth-century the company built approximately two hundred engines, which they shipped to businesses on the east coast and as far away as Russia. A number went to South America for use on fruit and sugar plantations. In the early 1920s Glover stopped building locomotives, realizing that corporations were replacing their private train cars with trucks. But the plant continued to manufacture steel castings and high-pressure fittings for power plants and refineries in the U.S. and abroad.17

The Brumby Chair Company also reached a national market, particularly with its popular rocking chairs. A Confederate veteran, James Remley Brumby was so angry at the United States that he almost moved to South America at the end of the Civil War. Instead, he married a Marietta girl and started making barrels, a skill he learned from an African-American business partner named Wash, a former slave of Brumby's stepmother, Elouisa Foard Bostwick Brumby. When flourmills
converted locally from barrel containers to bags, Brumby bought a lathe at a sheriff’s sale and learned to make chairs with the assistance of a black man, Frank James. In 1878 Brumby built a substantial brick factory off Kennesaw Avenue, near the Western & Atlantic railroad tracks. The first building burned within a few months, but the enterprising industrialist rebuilt it and was back in operation in the spring of 1879 with a partner, his younger brother, Thomas M. Brumby. About a decade later bad health forced the senior Brumby to sell the business to his brother. Apparently, the parting was not entirely pleasant. When the older sibling’s health improved, he started the rival Marietta Chair Company. Nonetheless, the two avoided direct competition, since the new company primarily made tables. Both businesses thrived and Tom continued as president of Brumby Chair Company until 1924, when his son, Tom, Jr., took over the day-to-day operations.¹⁸

A local admirer described the Brumby Rocker as “a big, old, very comfortable rocking chair. If you’ve seen an old, ancient hotel, you’ve seen Brumby Rockers out on the porch. They’ve got big, wide, flat arms and are cane bottomed, woven by hand.”¹⁹ Like most southern factories
the two chair companies paid low wages by national standards—about fifty to seventy-five cents a day in 1899 and roughly 10 cents an hour in the 1920s. However, the plants provided several hundred jobs and were among Cobb’s largest employers. The labor force was largely black, and much of the work was done in the home. At least one African-American, Osborne Winkley, rose to the position of foreman at the Brumby Chair Company.  

By the early twentieth-century Cobb County had several textile mills. The oldest and largest were in the industrial town of Roswell, which remained part of Cobb County until it joined Fulton in 1932. The Marietta Knitting Company dated back to 1896. The original owners sold their interests the following year to the Northcutt family. John H. Barnes served as general manager, while his brother-in-law, Robert Hull Northcutt held the position of president. The factory made men’s cotton socks. When Northcutt died in 1923, his son, Ralph Winters Northcutt, replaced him, with James J. Daniell serving as vice
president. Ralph's brother, Guy Haynes Northcutt, a Georgia Tech graduate, also worked for the company and was a part owner. They shipped their products by rail to all parts of the nation, with a large market as far away as California.

Guy Northcutt recalled a work force mainly of single women, whose fathers typically held industrial jobs at other local firms. Wages remained fairly level in the 1910s and 1920s, and the mill "had skilled help here earning as little as 10 cents an hour" for a workweek of fifty-six and one-fourth hours. The fixers who kept the machines in operation were the highest paid workers. Most factory hands had only a few years of education, but Northcutt remembered them as "good folks—good, substantial, Anglo-Saxon, loyal, industrious, frugal. You won't get me to say anything against that crowd. I doubt if any of them would low rate me." Like virtually all textile mills in the South, the Marietta Knitting Company used only Caucasian workers around the machinery, although at one time it had an African-American driver and a few black sweepers. The company owned about twenty cottages that it rented to workers. Nonetheless, the employees did not have to live in these two-to four-room company houses, and some walked as far as two miles to the mill.21

Under the direction of Orlando Awtrey, the Acworth Cotton Manufacturing Company, created in 1905, produced hosiery yarn, primarily for mills in Philadelphia. Built near the railroad tracks on the old Kitchen farm, the Acworth firm before World War I had about forty workers and a mill village of eighteen houses. In 1922 Helen K. Sill of Rockville, Connecticut, purchased the property and employed her sister, Esther K. Sill, as manager. The two women came from an old New England textile family and were experienced in running a hosiery operation. With their leadership the mill expanded in the 1920s and added a school and church for the mill workers and their children.22 Another manufacturing enterprise near the tracks in Acworth was a three-story mill that started out in 1873 producing a fine flour called lynette. Under the name of Elizabeth Bartlett Mills, and then Cherokee Mills, the factory converted to the production of women's cotton hosiery in the early twentieth-century.23

A woolen mill on Nickajack Creek near Smyrna is a good local example of rural industrialization. About a decade before the Civil War, Martin Luker Ruff and Robert Daniell built the first woolen mill on this
site, along with nearby grist and sawmills. Around these small industries a flourishing village developed. Since the Concord mill produced wool cloth for Confederate uniforms, the Union army destroyed it in 1864. Three years later Ruff sold his interests in the woolen mill and surrounding property to the Concord Manufacturing Company, which consisted of Robert Daniell and several relatives. While the Daniells rebuilt the mill and put it back into operation, they did not make the profits they desired. So in 1872 they sold the company to three Atlanta businessmen: Zachariah A. Rice, Seaborn B. Love, and James H. Porter. Mill products included jeans and cashmere cloth.  

The factory, unfortunately, burned again in 1889, but the company of Rice, Love & Porter rebuilt and continued producing woolen products until 1912, when new technologies made their operation obsolete. Z. A. Rice kept the telegraph from the day of the 1889 fire instructing him to come out from Atlanta on the 5:00 train. His granddaughter, Judith Rice Lowery, heard the story and saw the document while she was growing up in Smyrna. Born in 1905, Lowery visited the mill as a young child, saw the looms, and watched the women operating sewing machines, on which they stitched the jeans the company produced. She described the laborers as mainly girls from fairly successful surrounding farms and "not of the class of people that you think of as being mill workers." She recalled electric lights in the woolen mill by 1910, powered by a dam on Nickajack Creek. Since many of the workers commuted from neighboring farms, the mill village was fairly tiny, with houses of three or four rooms, each with a well and a privy. According to Lowery, the company gave thirty acres of land to build Tillman's Chapel, named for a prominent Methodist evangelist, Charlie Tillman, who preached a tent revival to start the congregation. A one-room country school was next to the church. In 1907 the owners sold the mill to Mrs. Annie E. Gillespie Johnson, who published the Rome Tribune, in northwest Georgia. She attempted to work through the Galveston Movement to bring a colony of Russian Jews to the mill site, but the efforts failed when the movement decided to confine its efforts to west of the Mississippi.

The Marietta paper mill on Sope Creek was another nineteenth-century example of rural industrialization. The original enterprise was burned by Union troops during the Civil War. Its replacement was also damaged by fire in 1870, but was rebuilt. To the original rag paper oper-
tion, Saxon A. Anderson and Superintendent Jeff Land added a wood pulp mill in 1886 and a paper twine factory three years later. In 1895 they moved the operation into Marietta, next to the railroad tracks, in the building of an old flour company. 27

Cobb County took advantage of the large supply of marble in the mountains of north Georgia to develop two important marble companies. The McNeel Marble Company started in Marietta in 1891, producing tombstones and public monuments with a diverse labor force of white and black workers of all ages. The Kennesaw Marble Company was even older, dating back to 1885. In 1917 Kennesaw Marble merged with the larger Georgia Marble Company, headed by President Sam Tate of Tate, Georgia. The business produced finished marble for both interior and exterior projects, under the local direction of Adrian V. Cortelyou, a company vice president. A variety of gristmills, cotton gins, planing mills, and other small factories complemented this industrial development. 28

Unless their families owned these establishments, bright and ambitious young people found the pay scales too low and chances for advancement too limited to want to stay in the county. Few residents of other states found Cobb sufficiently attractive to move to this location. A study of geographic mobility among family heads and independent boarders reveals that only 15 percent of Cobb's industrial workers and 21 percent of its skilled artisans of 1880 still resided in the county at the turn of the century. Farm owners were most likely to stay in the county for this twenty-year span and laborers and industrial workers most likely to leave. But the average persistence rate for all occupation groups was only 19 percent.

As many residents departed, others took their place; but the newcomers rarely came from other states. At the turn of the last century the vast majority of Cobb County family heads gave Georgia as their place of origin (83 percent for whites; 88 percent for blacks)—statistics far different from what they would be a century later, when a majority of the local population would be transplants from beyond Georgia's borders. Until the local economy became strong enough to provide ample, well-paying jobs, the county had little to attract people from far away.

Of course, Cobb County in this respect was typically southern. While millions of European immigrants poured into northern cities and large numbers of Asians and Hispanics migrated to the southwest, the
old Confederacy received few new Americans. Indeed, poor southerners, resembling uprooted peasants and laborers of the Old World, joined the movement to the teeming cities. As we will find in the next chapter, the Great Migration of African-Americans, beginning in the early 1900s and lasting for most of the century, had a profound impact on Cobb's racial composition and politics.
The Nadir of Race Relations

Segregation in Cobb County

The great activist and scholar, W. E. B. Du Bois, argued that the low point for American race relations came not at the end of Reconstruction, but at the turn of the century, when segregation became embedded in southern law codes and the lynching of black males reached epidemic proportions. In addition to the Jim Crow ordinances, southern race relations operated under an unwritten code of subtleties and nuances that outsiders found virtually incomprehensible. In studying Atlanta's streetcar system, liberal northern muckraker Ray Stannard Baker noted that the sign over each door ordered whites to sit from the front to the back and blacks from the rear to the front; but nowhere did the directions explain where white seating ended and black seating began. According to Baker, "this very absence of a clear demarcation is significant of many relationships in the South. The colour line is drawn, but neither race knows just where it is. Indeed, it can hardly be definitely drawn in many relationships, because it is constantly changing."
The lack of clear rules made the system dangerous for African-Americans who ran the risk of crossing the color line without knowing it. On the other hand, the fluidity of the unwritten code could work to their advantage if they were able to establish friendships with powerful whites. J.A.G. (Chuck) Anderson is a good example of the perplexing nature of southern mores and folkways. Described as a “woods colt” (i.e., of illegitimate birth), this Caucasian livery stable owner in downtown Marietta was remembered fondly by local people, white and black. He wore the traditional clothes of the ante-bellum era and had a goatee and sideburns, which made him look like a southern gentleman. Lifelong Marietta resident Guy Northcutt recalled: “He was quite a character. I can see him now, sitting in front of that livery stable down there. Some fellow stuck his head out the train going through Marietta and said, ‘How many folks live in this little town?’ Chuck said, ‘Well, we’ve got a couple thousand that live here, but we’ve got ten thousand dead Yankees buried over here [in the National Cemetery] on the hill!’”

Anderson seemed to be highly regarded, despite his penchant for flaunting the rules of respectable society. Another Old Mariettan, Rip Blair, delighted in describing Chuck’s light-skinned African-American mistress, who drove out of the stable each evening in one of the finest carriages, pulled by two high-stepping horses. After circling the Square, she journeyed through some of the finer neighborhoods before returning to her starting point. For black patrons, Anderson operated a motion picture theater in the rear of the livery stable and a dance hall upstairs. He had a reputation for taking good care of his animals. Dee Black recalled that his grandfather, an undertaker, relied on Anderson to provide horses and carriages for funerals. If a horse was overworked, Chuck berated the client and refused to do business with him again. He rented out horses in rotation, requiring a customer to take the first in line, so that all the horses would receive approximately the same amount of exercise. The livery stable business provided a good income until the coming of the automobile.

Race relations typically were at their worst where strangers came together in public. In a big city such as Atlanta one did business everyday with individuals who were casual acquaintances at best. This lack of knowledge of one’s background led to suspiciousness and hostility. In a small town like Marietta, where everybody knew everybody else, people were more likely to relate to each other in a neighborly fashion. Born in 1902, Rosalie Andrews remembered a vast difference in racial customs in
Marietta and Atlanta. Her African-American mother was a cook in some of the finest homes in Atlanta, but Andrews spent her pre-school years with her grandmother in Marietta. As a child she often rode the streetcar from Marietta to Atlanta. “I knew Mr. Haynes and all the [white] motor-men,” she recalled. “I’d just sit up front, and we’d chatter, chatter, chatter, all the way to Atlanta.” She sat with the whites when she attended a friend’s wedding at St. James Episcopal Church and reflected that everyone in Marietta spoke courteously to each other, regardless of race. As a result, she concluded, “It never dawned on me that I was black until I went to Atlanta.”

After her grandmother died, she enjoyed a sheltered existence, living with her mother in the servants’ quarters of the Arkwright7 and Rhodes families in Atlanta, playing with the Arkwright children, and attending Spelman Seminary, where she roomed with Alberta Williams, the future mother of Martin Luther King, Jr. But when she was about fifteen, she had a memorable experience that shocked her into an awareness of her ethnic identity. Her mother asked her to ride an Atlanta streetcar to run an errand for her. She recalled, “I just dropped my 15 cents, and I sat down, because I’d been doing that in Marietta. The motorman stopped and said, ‘You can’t sit there.’ I said, ‘I beg your pardon.’ He said, ‘You can’t sit in that seat.’ I said, ‘Why not?’ He said, ‘Because colored folks sit in the back.’ I said, ‘When did they start doing that?’ He said, ‘Where are you from?’ I said, ‘Marietta.’ He said, ‘That accounts for it.’” Andrews summed up her contrasting experiences by exclaiming, “How blessed I was to live in a town of love and friendship,” but “if you want to be ostracized, go across the [Chattahoochee] River.”

Black Farmers and Business Owners

Rosalie Andrews’ observations are supported by the personal testimony of numerous individuals from that era. In Cobb County and throughout the South, black and white people who lived and worked in close proximity seemed often to develop warm and caring relationships, based on mutual respect. Nonetheless, these anecdotal stories were played out in a caste society where Caucasians enjoyed special privileges denied to anyone of African ancestry. In Marietta and elsewhere, Jim Crow ordinances segregated blacks into poorly funded schools, excluded them from restaurants or
hotels that served whites, and forced them to use separate public water fountains and bathrooms. As a rule, African-Americans lacked political power and were relegated economically into traditional service and laboring roles. While blacks made up 30 percent of Cobb's 1900 population, they accounted for only 9 percent of farm owner-operators and less than 2 percent of the taxpayers with at least one thousand dollars of property.

Yet a handful of African-Americans overcame the societal handicaps imposed upon them and achieved notable successes. Two former slaves, Isom and Millie Gresham, became large landowners in the northern part of the county along Shallowford Road between Bells Ferry and Canton Highway. Although they were illiterate, they paid taxes by 1900 on some six hundred acres of farm property, the largest African-American landholding in the county. Community benefactors, they gave the land for Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church on Shiloh at Wade Green Road. In old age they moved to Chestnut Street in Atlanta where they accumulated a number of rental properties. In their wills, registered in the Fulton County Probate Court, they divided this huge estate among their five daughters. They also left 104 acres on Shallowford Road to a Caucasian neighbor, William G. York, an executor of their estate. In exchange for that property, York agreed to pay six hundred dollars in cash to the Greshams' children.

In 1900 a total of 171 African-Americans paid taxes on at least one acre of land, and thirteen of this number owned one hundred acres or more. The largest black landholdings were concentrated in the Gritters, Marietta, and Powder Springs districts, but a few African-American property owners could be found everywhere in the county. At the turn of the last century, seventeen African-Americans paid taxes on at least one thousand dollars of property.

In the early twentieth-century Marietta produced a number of successful black entrepreneurs, most notably two brothers, Andrew J. and Frank P. Rogers, born in 1854 and 1858, respectively. Sarah Temple remembered Andrew Rogers's outstanding string band, and he also had a talent for making money. In 1900 he paid taxes on $3830 of property, making him the third largest black taxpayer in the county, behind only his brother Frank and the Greshams. When Captain R. W. Boone came to Marietta in 1888 to organize the First National Bank, he went from business to business around the Square, soliciting stockholders. Along with a number of white investors, Andrew Rogers bought a share and became one of the original partners.
The Rogers brothers jointly owned a barbershop on the south side of the Square on the ground floor of the three-story Masonic Building. The barbers were black, but the customers were white. A future mayor of Marietta, Rip Blair, had fond childhood memories of going there for haircuts. The only building facing Glover Park to survive Sherman's invasion, the Masonic Hall was run down by the turn of the century, and the top two floors were vacant, but the barbershop was a lively place. Blair recalled that each regular patron had a porcelain shaving mug with his name on it. The barbers provided individual brushes and soap as well. Haircuts were twenty cents, but Blair's parents always gave him a quarter. For a child who did not receive a regular allowance, the opportunity to spend a nickel in town was a cherished occasion.12

Frank Rogers had a grocery and drug store next to the courthouse on the east side of the Square. One admirer described him as a "pistol ball," because he was always trading real estate on the Square and all over town.13 In his 1899 comments on Marietta, the Atlanta University scholar, W. E. B. Du Bois, described Rogers' grocery as a family enterprise in the center of town among white merchants. Frank Rogers, Jr., also worked in the store, so it was not necessary to hire clerks. The grocery did about forty to fifty dollars of business a week, enough to employ a wagon to make deliveries.14

Successful entrepreneurs like the Greshams and the Rogers brothers clearly won the respect of their neighbors, white and black, but Caucasians had no intentions of sharing political power with them. A story told by Rip Blair, perhaps apocryphal, demonstrates how whites justified the disfranchisement of blacks. Blair recalled a tale from his youth of an office seeker who went into a neighboring county and bribed about one hundred black men to come to Marietta and vote for him. When they reached town, the supporters of the other candidate met them with an even greater offer—fried ham, plenty of whiskey, and lots of nickels and dimes for games of chance. Consequently, the group spent the evening drinking and gambling on the second floor of Frank Rogers's establishment, next to the courthouse. The next day they came down and voted for the opponent of the man who brought them to town. After changing coats, they allegedly went back later in the day and voted for their new champion again.15

Of course, impoverished African-Americans knew that people like them rarely held office in the post-Reconstruction era. They were merely pawns in the game of powerful individuals of another color and class. Yet
these victims of society were often blamed for electoral fraud. The victor in the 1906 gubernatorial race, Hoke Smith, campaigned on a platform calling for black disfranchisement, arguing that he was crusading to purify politics by eliminating rule by “ignorant, purchasable Negroes.”

Taking his election as a mandate from the people, Governor Smith pushed through the 1908 amendment to the Georgia Constitution, establishing a literacy test, a property qualification, and other devices to limit the franchise.

The Lynching of John Bailey

Black men were never in greater danger than when they found themselves alone with white women. Two cases from Cobb County in 1900 illustrate how bad race relations could be. On the afternoon of 15 March 1900 a teenaged girl, Amanda Snellgrove, wandered several hundred yards from her family farmhouse, gathering firewood to prepare the evening meal. There she encountered a young black man, later identified as John Bailey, who apparently threatened her and cut her nose with his knife. From the account in the Marietta Journal it is not clear whether the meeting was accidental or Bailey was lying in wait. But Amanda obviously feared she was about to be raped. She started screaming, and a terrified Bailey ran away. Amanda rushed home and told her mother and brother, who contacted the landlord, J. Gid Morris. Morris telephoned the sheriff, A. A. Bishop, who came quickly to the site of the alleged crime, about a mile and a half outside Marietta.

Based on the frightened girl’s description, Sheriff Bishop stopped at the Bailey house, about a mile further out, and picked up two Bailey brothers. Confronted by the suspects, Amanda identified John as her alleged assailant. The sheriff arrested him and took him to the jail, just off the Marietta Square. Two days later, on Saturday morning, Bailey, represented by the law firm of Mozley & Weaver, was taken to the courthouse for a preliminary hearing before Judge E. W. Frey. The judge found sufficient evidence to bind the defendant over for trial, and he was returned to his cell. Hearing rumors of a possible lynching, the sheriff ordered one of his deputies to remain on the streets until almost midnight. After the deputy went to bed, the mob appeared on early Sunday morning. The Marietta Journal described what happened next. Sounding suspiciously like a par-
participant, the unnamed reporter related that about one hundred masked men assembled at the waterworks standpipe on Roswell Street, east of the Marietta Square. At about 12:45 A.M. they surrounded the jail and demanded the keys from one of the deputies inside. When he failed to comply, the mob used a crowbar and sledgehammer to demolish a rear door. Hearing the commotion, Sheriff Bishop rushed to the jail from his nearby house. While mobsters waved their guns in his face, the officer pleaded with them to let justice prevail. Despite his promise of a speedy trial in the next ten days, the mob could not be dissuaded. Their leader told Bishop: “You are all right Mr. Sheriff. You are here to do your duty and we don’t blame you to save your prisoner, but the lawyers will scheme and defeat justice by delays and appeals and we are here to administer speedy punishment and protect our Southern women from the assaults of brutes.”

Pushing the sheriff aside, the mob broke into the jail, knocked the locks off the cell doors, and carried Bailey out into Glover Park. There on the Square they attempted to hang him from one of the tall trees. Despite all their preparations, the masked men had somehow lost their rope. Discovering some available wiring, they strung it around Bailey’s neck and attached it to a limb. The wire was not sufficiently strong, however, and Bailey dropped to the ground. The mobsters next pulled out their pistols and shot him a number of times until he appeared to be dead. Then they dispersed, most rushing north of town out Cherokee and Church Streets. When the sheriff and his deputies reached their prisoner, he was still alive and conscious. They carried him back to the jail, where Dr. C. T. Nolan attempted to treat his numerous wounds: three bullets through the lungs, one through the liver, one in the leg, and several more in the back. He also suffered from a deep gash on the head from a crowbar blow. Realizing the end was near, poor Bailey allegedly confessed to the sheriff, the doctor, and his father. He lingered from Sunday until Tuesday morning before he died. According to the Marietta Journal, African-American women became extremely angry and made veiled threats of burning the town down. The reporter said he could not understand why the women put loyalty to their race above their gender, when the real issue was the protection of females from brute attacks. The distraught black women obviously regarded the murder of a suspect in state custody as the central issue.

White Georgians soon forgot the murder of John Bailey. He was just one of at least 441 African-American and 19 Caucasian victims of lynch law in this state during the half-century between 1880 and 1930. No other
state recorded so many extralegal executions. In contrast, 70 blacks and 16 whites were lynched in the same years in Virginia. These totals were high by national standards, but less than a fifth of those for Georgia. Mobs seemed more likely to take the law into their own hands in Deep South counties where blacks constituted a majority of the population. In Georgia the greatest number of extralegal executions (202) occurred in the Cotton Belt, stretching through the central part of the state. There blacks made up over 60 percent of the population in the late nineteenth century. In North Georgia’s Upper Piedmont (including Cobb County) less than 30 percent of the population was black, and a relatively smaller number of victims (42) were lynched between 1880-1930.

Statistics on lynching, however, mask the larger story of racial injustice in the court system. The truth is that it made little difference whether black suspects were lynched or received a judicial hearing. In the early twentieth century southern justice for African-Americans was swift and seemed little concerned with legal standards of guilt. About the only time a black suspect could hope for leniency was when a prominent white patron intervened on his behalf. The primary goal seemed the maintenance of white supremacy. The case of Sam Robinson, just a few months after the Bailey lynching, is a good example.

### The Execution of Sam Robinson

With its emphasis on sex and race, the Robinson case parallels that of Bailey. Sam Robinson was a black man who had only recently moved to Cobb County. On Monday afternoon, 6 August 1900, Robinson apparently was cutting through a field when he ran into Mrs. Ida Inzer, a white woman, walking home down a dirt highway. The details of the alleged crime are somewhat confusing. Inzer claimed that she was assaulted. At the Robinson trial, a physician testified that he treated wounds on her person, including gashes on her head made by rocks. Sheriff Bishop told the court that Robinson confessed after his arrest that he met Inzer on the road. But the defendant admitted only that the white woman became frightened when she saw him, screamed, started to run, and tripped, hitting her head when she fell. Possibly more terrified than his alleged victim, Robinson ran the other way. By the time the posse caught up to him, he was ten miles from the scene of the crime.
Cobb County authorities were determined to avoid another lynching; so they carried Robinson to Atlanta and placed him in the Fulton County jail known as the Tower. The judge of the Blue Ridge Circuit, George Fletcher Gober of Marietta, set the trial date for 8 A.M. Friday, just three and a half days after the alleged crime. On Thursday the court appointed two lawyers to defend Robinson. One of them, E. W. Frey, was the judge in the preliminary hearing for John Bailey. The other, J. Z. Foster, was a prominent local attorney. Selected less than twenty-four hours before the trial, the counselors obviously had little time to prepare. Nonetheless, they seemed to believe that they had all the time they needed. They journeyed to Atlanta for one meeting with Robinson, where they apparently advised him to throw himself on the mercy of the court. When the all-white jury was selected, the defense attorneys raised few objections. Only four potential jurors were excused, one for prejudice, one for opposing capital punishment, and two for living in the neighborhood of the alleged crime.

According to the Marietta Journal, the defendant gave confusing testimony in court, claiming never to have been in trouble before, but admitting guilt. On the stand he sobbed uncontrollably and was not able to finish speaking. In the ninety-minute trial, Solicitor General Thomas Hutcheson of Cherokee County told the jury that the evidence was so clear-cut he could summarize it quickly. In their closing argument, the defense attorneys said nothing in behalf of their client. Instead, they attempted to justify themselves, arguing that they were merely acting as officers of the court, trying to ensure a fair trial. Following the judge’s charge, the jury left the courtroom for just seven minutes before returning with a guilty verdict. Judge Gober then sentenced the condemned man to be hanged in Marietta on 1 September 1900.

Robinson was carried back to the Fulton County jail for the last three weeks of his life. On the designated day Sheriff Bishop and five armed guards took the prisoner from the Tower to an awaiting freight train for the ride up to Marietta. Near the courthouse a local guard of fifty men assembled to keep order. Marietta school superintendent Steadman V. Sanford, later chancellor of the Georgia university system, commanded one company. The Marietta fire chief, A. H. Legg, headed the other. They marched up Atlanta Street to the Confederate cemetery crossing, where they met the train. When Robinson arrived, he was placed in a little wagon and carried to College Hill on Powder Springs Street, where the
pewar Georgia Military Institute was headquartered.

C. E. Henderson, who completed a major renovation of the courthouse that year, also constructed the gallows. He built a sixteen-foot fence around the site to close out all but a few invited witnesses. But just before the execution the crowds apparently knocked down the part of the enclosure closest to the street. Guards moved into the empty space to keep the masses back. Two local African-American pastors, Rev. S. A. Paris and Rev. D. B. Bonds, read a scripture and offered a prayer. Robinson then admitted his guilt, asked forgiveness, and was quickly executed. At the moment the trap was sprung, some in the crowd shouted out, "Hurrah for Cobb County." Otherwise, the crowd seemed to be orderly. As a postscript, Robinson's father requested the body, so that he could carry it for burial to the family home in Anderson, South Carolina. When the older Robinson was unable to raise enough money to pay the transportation costs, Sheriff Bishop turned the body over to the medical college in Atlanta.

The Leo Frank Case

The Bailey and Robinson cases illustrate the terror many blacks felt when they encountered the criminal justice system. They also provide a broader perspective for understanding one of the most infamous events in Cobb County history—also involving an ethnic minority—the 1915 lynching of Leo Frank. This Jewish businessman was convicted of sexually assaulting and murdering a little girl named Mary Phagan, who had Cobb County roots. Her grandfather, William Jackson Phagan, owned a farm on Mars Hill Road in west Cobb until 1895, when the entire family moved to Florence, Alabama. There, Mary Phagan was born on 1 June 1899 to Fannie Benton Phagan, a widow, whose husband, William Joshua Phagan, had died of measles three months earlier. Shortly after Mary's birth, Fannie took her five children back to Cobb County. They appear in the 1900 census on a rented farm with Fannie's mother and brother. In time all the Phagans returned to Cobb County, and Grandfather Phagan bought a farm on Powder Springs Road. He gave Fannie a house on the property, and there Mary and her siblings lived until 1910. Then Fannie relocated the children to East Point, on the other side of Atlanta, where she ran a boarding house. Shortly afterward, Mary went to work at the National Pencil factory in Atlanta.
In 1912 Fannie remarried. Her new husband, J. W. Coleman, was a hard-working cabinetmaker with a home in Bellwood, a working class neighborhood of Atlanta. He tried to encourage Mary to give up her job and resume her education, since her income was no longer needed. But Mary seemed to enjoy the opportunity to earn her own money and continued to work.\textsuperscript{26} At the factory she was a machine operator, fixing metal caps on pencils. On Confederate Memorial Day, Saturday, 26 April 1913, Mary rode the streetcar to the factory to pick up her pay for the week. There, just after noon, she was brutally murdered, just five weeks shy of her fourteenth birthday.\textsuperscript{27}

A few months later her employer, Leo M. Frank, was put on trial in Fulton County for her murder. Solicitor-General Hugh Dorsey argued that Frank's motive was lust. He produced a host of witnesses who accused Frank of immoral conduct, including the sexual harassment of workers. The star witness, Jim Conley, was an African-American custodian at the National Pencil Company. He testified that he helped Frank move the body to the basement only a few minutes after the murder. Another employee, Monteen Stover, contradicted Frank's statement that he did not leave his office for at least thirty minutes after Mary received her pay envelope. Stover arrived at 12:05, just a few minutes after Phagan, yet she claimed in court that she found both the outer and inner offices empty. She said she waited five minutes and then left. Frank later revised his testimony to claim that he must have gone to the bathroom during those five critical minutes.

The trial lasted almost a month (28 July-25 August 1913), a very long trial for that age. The defense put about two hundred witnesses on the stand who testified to Frank's good character.\textsuperscript{28} Frank himself was allowed to make an unsworn statement without the prosecution having a chance to cross-examine. He denied everything. Nonetheless, Frank's claims of innocence and the general remarks of Frank's friends and employees persuaded the jury less than the compelling story of Jim Conley and the fact that Frank's learned attorneys failed to break the testimony of an ignorant black man. In the end, the jury brought in a verdict of guilty.

Despite the strong case presented by the prosecution, there is much about the Frank trial that is contradictory and confusing. One of the astounding features of the case is how supposedly excellent attorneys provided such an inept defense. Even in 1913, one had good reason to question the reliability of Conley's testimony. He had a criminal record, admit-
Crowd milling around following Leo Frank lynching (Cobb-252, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
ted that he had changed his story several times, and clearly was coached by the Atlanta police. A major error in his version of events was the claim that he and Frank carried the body to the basement by elevator. He admitted that he defecated in the elevator shaft the morning of the murder. When the elevator went down, it should have smashed the excrement. Yet that had not happened before the police reached the basement, by ladder, to begin their investigation. One could logically conclude that the elevator had not been taken to the basement between Mary's arrival and the time that the police entered the building many hours later. Yet somehow Frank's attorneys failed to make the connection. Two years later the fact became significant when Governor John M. Slaton reviewed the evidence while trying to decide whether to commute Frank's death sentence.

An alternative version became plausible in 1982 after the revelations of Alonzo Mann. A fourteen-year-old employee at the time of the murder, Mann claimed to see Conley alone on the first floor carrying a body, which he seemed ready to dump down the trap door into the basement. After the custodian threatened him, the boy fled the factory, confided only in his parents, and never told the police what he knew. Years later, some newspaper reporters discovered him and made his story public. By shifting suspicion to Conley, Mann's account heartened those who long had argued for Frank's innocence.

Almost as soon as Frank was convicted, he began petitioning the courts for a new trial. The defense argued that the judge should have thrown out Conley's inflammatory testimony about improper sexual liaisons. They also argued that loud demonstrations outside the courtroom influenced the jury. Finally, they pointed out that the judge, fearing mob reaction, persuaded Frank's attorneys not to bring their client into the courtroom while the verdict was read. Without his permission, Frank was denied the right to be present at that critical moment of the trial. To these arguments the prosecutor responded with affidavits from the jurors that they had neither heard nor been intimidated by the crowds. On 13 October 1913, Judge Leonard Roan denied the defense motions, but issued a statement in which he expressed doubts about the verdict: "I am not certain of the man's guilt. With all the thought I have put on this case, I am not thoroughly convinced that Frank is guilty or innocent. The jury was convinced. There is no room to doubt that." In 1914 the Georgia Supreme Court twice rejected appeals. The case was carried to the U.S. Supreme Court, but that body also twice failed to overturn the verdict, the last time
in a seven to two vote. The two dissenters, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Charles Evans Hughes, discovered a strong presumption that the jury was influenced by the "passions of the mob," but the other justices deferred to the judgment of Georgia's highest court. Frank next appealed to the Georgia Prison Commission, which held a public hearing in June 1915. However, by a two to one vote, the commission recommended against clemency.

Although the convicted man had now exhausted all judicial remedies, he had one last hope. After reviewing the case, Governor Slaton decided just before the end of his term to commute the sentence to life in prison and to remove Frank from the Fulton County jail to the state prison farm in Milledgeville. The governor claimed he was disturbed by Judge Roan's doubts, by the discrepancies in Conley's testimony and other parts of the government's case, by the circumstantial nature of the evidence, and by the divided decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court and the prison commission. Comparing himself to Pilate, he said that he did not want to wash his hands while another Jew was turned over to a mob. When he expressed his fears to Mrs. Slaton, she reportedly told him that she would "rather be the widow of a brave and honorable man than the wife of a coward." No sooner did Slaton announce his decision, however, than mobs began to form in Atlanta. As armed men marched toward the Ansley Park location of the governor's mansion, Slaton declared martial law. With rioting continuing for a week, the governor and Mrs. Slaton slipped out of the state, not to return for sometime.

Like everything else about the case, the role of Governor Slaton has been variously interpreted. To some he is a hero who sacrificed his political career by doing the honorable thing. For others, his objectivity was tainted by his partnership with Luther Z. Rosser, one of Frank's lead attorneys. Throughout this ordeal, Atlanta city directories listed the names of both Rosser and Slaton in the law firm's title. Ex-Populist leader Tom Watson argued that Slaton brought "eternal disgrace upon himself and our State" by selling out "to Jew money." Describing the prisoner as a "satyr-faced Jew," the passionate Georgia demagogue bemoaned the fact that "Leo Frank is now at the State Farm, an honored guest of the managers, awaiting his triumphant release from even the politely formal fetters of the Law. His little victim, whose upraised hands—fixed by the rigor mortis—proved that she had died fighting for her virtue, lies in Georgia's soil, amid a grief-stricken and mortified people." Watson imagined the governor in
years to come, troubled in conscience and unable to sleep, "a wretched, conscience-smitten man," who would "sweat blood!" Watson’s inflammatory rhetoric illustrates the passion that this case stirred in the people of Georgia. Relatively few Jews lived in the South, and Georgians were probably no more anti-Semitic than other Americans. Nonetheless, Watson had a large following of rural southerners who seemed to love him for his many prejudices against Jews and other minorities, as well as for his Populist biases against big business. In the minds of Atlanta’s German-Jewish community, Leo Frank was a man of culture, a person who loved good music and an engineer who graduated from Cornell University. Born in Texas and reared in New York, he came south to serve as superintendent and part owner of his family’s pencil factory. In Atlanta he married into the socially prominent Selig family, became a member of the Temple, and joined the Standard Club, the city’s Jewish country club. Melissa Fay Greene describes how affluent, assimilation-minded Atlanta Jews felt isolated and marginalized by the conviction and ultimate murder of Leo Frank. She argues, "They were still ‘the other’ in the mind of white Christian Atlanta. They’d been, collectively, like a drowning man to whom no one had bothered to toss a line. Upper-crust white Christian Atlanta had looked the other way when mobs and demagogues went after the Jews. It was a civics lesson not easily forgotten.”

In Marietta a Vigilance Committee distributed handbills warning Jewish businessmen to close their establishments and threatening punishment if they did not. There is no evidence that Jewish merchants were harmed, but one of them, Philip Goldstein, chose to work in Marietta in the daytime and spend the nights in Atlanta until things cooled off. An eastern European Jew, Goldstein arrived in Marietta in 1912, selling his wares in the beginning from a pushcart. Within just a few years he rented store space, first on Church Street, then on the north side of the Square. By 1918 he was a homeowner in downtown Marietta and eventually purchased his store building as well. Despite Marietta’s role in the Frank lynching, merchants with names such as Fine, Kaplan, Sauls, Goldstein, and eventually Leiter, made up an important and respected part of the downtown business community in the first half of the century.

Anti-Semitism was only one raw emotion, and probably not the most significant, unleashed by the Frank case. The pencil factory superintendent also bore the burden of being a northern businessman, who allegedly had come south to exploit poor southern labor. Just a half-centu-
ry after the Civil War, Georgians still carried the sense of helplessness and vulnerability that defeat and submission to the Union had imposed upon them. Professor Nancy MacLean of Northwestern University brilliantly links the sexual ramifications of the Frank case to southern attitudes in the early twentieth-century toward women, the North, and industrialization. She points out that Mary Phagan’s minister, L. O. Bricker, had just launched a massive crusade against “white slavery,” which linked child prostitution in Atlanta to the low wages paid young women.

As the Frank trial unfolded, the public was shocked by the testimony of factory girls about unsanitary working conditions with unwashed floors and bloodstains from accidents everywhere. Even more disturbing was the testimony of at least twenty witnesses to what the young women regarded as sexual harassment. They testified that Frank touched them on the shoulders, called them by their first names, ordered them into private meetings behind closed doors, and even looked into their dressing room to make sure they were not loitering. MacLean demonstrates that these behaviors were subject to different interpretations. In his closing argument, defense attorney Reuben Arnold expressed astonishment at the “prudish” attitudes of the prosecutor and urged the jury to take a more modern approach to standard operating procedures in the nation’s factories. Nonetheless, the southern public was not sympathetic toward Arnold’s notions of “employer prerogatives” and was scandalized that white southern girls should have to endure an “unwanted familiarity that communicated inferior status and powerlessness.”

An even worse fear, according to MacLean, was that working women, by earning their own wages, achieved an independence and sexual freedom that ran contrary to conventional morality. She finds revealing the fact that Frank’s opponents referred constantly to Phagan’s dying “in defense of her virtue,” which perhaps exposed their anxiety that factory women were not as virtuous as they should be. The Northwestern scholar cites prominent labor historian Jacquelyn Hall that the prevalence of working women was indeed bringing profound change to gender relations in these years. MacLean argues that Frank’s accusers were battling against such changes. By creating a mythology of Mary dying nobly to defend her virtue, they not only criticized the modern social order but “harkened back to an ideology of gender relations developed in an agrarian household economy,” where the father was the undisputed family head and daughters remained modest and deferential.
In Marietta, several leading citizens took upon themselves the task of carrying out the verdict of the court. They no doubt believed that they were stopping the governor from subverting justice and that their action would be more an execution than a lynching. The organizers developed their tactics with the precision of a military campaign. In an age when automobiles were still a novelty, they managed to assemble a fleet of eight cars to drive over Georgia's dirt highways on the 150-mile journey to the state prison farm in Milledgeville. The passengers in these vehicles included an electrician, auto mechanics, a locksmith, a telephone technician, a medic, a hangman, and a lay minister.

When they reached the prison just before midnight on 16 August 1915, the electrician went to work cutting the prison phone lines. A team of men broke into the warden's house and another team into the superintendent's, forcing the latter to take them to the main office, where they overpowered a guard. Meanwhile, a third team disabled the prison vehicles, and the final group followed a diagram of the prison to Leo Frank's cell.

Frank had been in trouble since his arrival at the penitentiary. Already, a man in jail for murder had slit Frank's throat with a butcher knife, almost killing him. Frank was still recovering from that assault when the Marietta men broke through his cell door. With most of the guards sympathizing with their efforts, the lynch mob completed their work in eighteen minutes. There were only two hitches in their plan. As they sped away with their prisoner, they realized that they had left behind the men guarding the warden. So several cars returned to pick up these companions. Somehow, the electrician failed to cut the phone line to Augusta, allowing word of the raid to get out. Still, the mob managed to avoid apprehension on their seven-hour return trip to Marietta, probably because most of the sheriffs along the way did not try very hard to stop them.

Following back roads, the lynch party passed through Roswell, about ten miles east of Marietta, before dawn. They planned to hang Frank either on the Marietta Square or near Mary Phagan's grave in the city cemetery. But as the sun came up about 7 A.M. on 17 August, they stopped on Roswell Road at the farm of William J. Frey, an ex-sheriff who clearly was part of their conspiracy. There, they took the victim, still in his nightshirt, and hanged him from an oak tree. The mob then left for a fishing camp on the Etowah River just beyond Cobb County, where several
other conspirators were waiting to provide them with their alibi.35

Word of the lynching spread rapidly. Many people, in a festive mood, flocked to the site to have their picture taken with the still hanging body. At least two prominent men openly appeared at the Frey oak grove that morning. Judge Newt Morris of Marietta kept one man from grinding his shoe in the dead man’s face. Then he helped John Wood, a Canton attorney and future judge and congressman, carry the remains to a wagon provided by W. J. Black Funeral Home. They took the body to the gate of the Marietta National Cemetery, where they transferred it to Wood’s car. Wood then sped to a funeral home in Atlanta. Ultimately, Frank’s body was shipped north for burial in Mount Carmel Cemetery, near his parents’ Brooklyn home.

Before he died, Frank requested that his gold wedding ring be returned to his wife. The next evening the Marietta journalist O. B. Keeler, who covered the Frank trial for the Atlanta Georgian, received a knock at the front door of his Polk Street house. A stranger handed him the ring and a note requesting that he deliver it to Mrs. Frank. Keeler reluctantly did his duty, receiving a tongue-lashing from the grieving widow for his efforts.56

Mariettans were not unanimous in their support of lynch law. The following Sunday, Dr. Rembert G. Smith, pastor of Marietta’s First Methodist Church, denounced the lynching from the pulpit. According to the Atlanta-based Wesleyan Christian Advocate, the congregation endorsed the minister’s statement.17 However, none of the lynch mob was ever arrested. Neither a coroner’s jury nor a grand jury professed to know who carried out Frank’s murder. The county seemed to come together to cover up the crime.

Years later, in 1986, the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles used this fact as part of its reasoning in issuing a posthumous pardon. The board refused to base the pardon on an assumption of innocence, which no longer could be proved with certainty. Rather, the members based their action on the state’s failure to protect Frank or arrest his murderers and “as an effort to heal old wounds.”36 While giving a measure of closure, the action of the board has hardly made interest in the case disappear. Books, articles, dramas, and even a musical about the trial and lynching continue to appear with great regularity. Apparently, we will never reach consensus on what really happened on 26 April 1913. But the abundance of research on different aspects of the case continues to provide conflicting insights
into Marietta and Atlanta society in that tragic era.  

Frank clearly encountered prejudice because of his Jewish heritage, his northern upbringing, and his affluence and power. Georgians concluded too quickly that a person who allegedly exploited southern factory women was capable of committing an even greater sin against one of his employees. If Frank had been a white Protestant businessman, the jury and the lynch mob probably would have been more willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. It is not difficult to point out procedural shortcomings in the conduct of the trial. Nonetheless, Frank seemed to receive the same due process protections as other affluent, white defendants in that age, when courtroom procedures were quite different from what they are today. If the black janitor, Jim Conley, had been put on trial for Mary Phagan’s murder, the trial would not have lasted several weeks, the defense attorneys would not have been as competent, and there probably would have been no appeals. Moreover, had he been convicted and lynched, the case would probably have been forgotten as quickly as those of John Bailey and Sam Robinson. But it was news when a prominent, educated, white man was lynched, and a factory superintendent at that. The fact that the story involved an influential businessman and great issues of human rights and human relations accounts for its continued popularity. Cobb County has never quite lived down its role in the lynching. Though nobody could have predicted it at the time, the county would soon undergo dramatic changes and become a very different place. But the people had first to go through one more generation of hard times before their rural and small-town culture would begin to be transformed.
The Great War and the Prosperous Twenties

World War I

By fostering patriotism and focusing people's attention on global affairs, the First World War helped make Georgia and the South less provincial. Citizens of Cobb County enthusiastically supported the war against Germany. In 1917 American flags suddenly flew everywhere. For the first time that April two Marietta schoolgirls carried the Union as well as the Confederate flag in the annual Confederate Memorial Day processional to the Confederate cemetery. After the war Cobb courthouse officials compiled the names of almost twelve hundred men who served in the military during the Great War. That number included twenty-seven soldiers and sailors who did not return. For a small county with just a little over five thousand males in the 18-44-age category, Cobb seemed to do its part in winning the war. African-Americans bore a share of the burden that equaled that of whites. At a time when blacks made up 22 percent of all Cobb residents, they comprised 21 percent of the servicemen.
The local newspapers went to great lengths to express their wartime patriotism. Without embarrassment they labeled Germans as Huns, praised people who bought bonds or planted victory gardens, and strongly condemned any young men who were slackers. Front-page articles carried sad stories of young men killed in action and described the exploits of local heroes, especially those from prominent white families. For example, a 4 July 1918 issue of the Cobb County Times carried a letter written at sea from Lt. Charles M. Brown to his mother. The 31 October 1918 edition of the same paper tells of Lt. Jamie Corley's role in the battle for St. Mihiel in France.

Corley witnessed ground fighting from his observation plane and was wounded slightly in a dogfight with German aircraft. On the ground, he slept in a recently evacuated German dugout equipped with electric lights and running water. Hit on both sides of the head by sniper fire, he passed out and awoke half a day later in a field hospital. Although he received only flesh wounds, he created a sensation when x-rays at first seemed to reveal that a bullet had passed through his head.

Cobb County competed with other locations to bring a military base to the area. While the larger encampments went elsewhere, the area around Blackjack Mountain was selected as a training range for the 320th Field Artillery and later other artillery regiments. Mariettans welcomed the troops into their homes for Sunday dinners and went all out to honor them. Nonetheless, with thirty thousand residents scattered throughout the county, Cobb was a dangerous location for artillery training. An accident on 8 August 1917 cost the lives of four civilians. On that afternoon the army held artillery practice on Dallas Highway near Pleasant Grove Baptist Church just west of Burnt Hickory Road. Officers just beginning artillery training spent the day lofting three-inch shells about two-thirds of the way up Little Kennesaw Mountain. Unfortunately, the last shell of the afternoon either struck soft clay and bounced over the mountain or cleared the mountain on the fly. It exploded as it struck the base of a tree on Stilesboro Road at the David Cross farm.

Killed in the blast were three African-American farm laborers and one white woman. The men, identified as Charlie Martin, James Holleman, Sr., and James Holleman, Jr., had been standing around the tree at the end of the workday, talking and listening to the artillery shelling. The woman, Lillian Harris, lived near the Kennesaw Marble Company and was the wife of Seth J. Harris, a worker for the L. & N. Railroad. She
was visiting the Cross farm to try to hire a domestic servant, Nettie Thomas, to wash for her. Despite the foolishness of allowing untrained soldiers to fire heavy weapons in populated areas, the military escaped public censure. Caught up in wartime patriotism, the six-man coroner’s jury labeled the killings “purely accidental.” Refraining from criticism, the report concluded: “We find all parties deeply regretful over this sad affair, and we failed to find any criminal responsibility.”

Despite this avoidable tragedy, the people of Cobb County seemed to come through the Great War in good spirits. The armistice was declared only a year and a half after the American entry, and thus the casualty total for the United States was lighter than that of its European allies. The war brought unparalleled prosperity to Cobb County farmers. With European agriculture in disarray, American exports grew dramatically and the price of the leading crop, cotton, rose in 1919 to a record forty cents a pound. Thrown together with soldiers from all parts of the country and fighting on foreign soil, the veterans enlarged their horizons and brought home new perspectives. To be sure, the economic and cultural impact of World War I was minor compared to that of World War II. Yet it anticipated on a limited scale the great change that was about to take place in Cobb County.

Postwar Industry

After a brief bout with postwar inflation, the U.S. enjoyed a decade of rising profits and wages, as the technological advances of the early twentieth century made American industry more productive. Due to changing fashions and competition from synthetic fibers, however, cotton textile manufacturers saw their markets and profit margins shrink during the prosperous 1920s. To maintain an edge on rival manufacturers, companies increasingly looked to the South, where industrialization had long been delayed by a lack of local capital and rural domination of state governments. A land of cheap, unorganized labor, the old Confederacy seemed ideal to textile firms trying to cut costs. As northern corporations moved south, locally owned enterprises tended to be absorbed by their larger, better-financed northern rivals.

Cobb County provides three examples of these national trends. In 1927 the locally owned Marietta Knitting Company consolidated its stock...
with Champion Knitting Mills of Chattanooga. The new firm established its headquarters in Marietta under the presidency of a Champion executive, Clyde Wilkins. A former partner in the Marietta Knitting Company, Guy Northcutt, became secretary-treasurer. This arrangement continued for a decade until Champion in 1937 was absorbed into HOLEPROOF/Hosiery of Milwaukee.

Under Champion in the early 1930s the factory employed slightly fewer than four hundred workers, but by the time HOLEPROOF took over, the labor force was closer to a thousand. The Milwaukee owners believed that the plant needed a personnel director and hired Jennie Tate [Anderson] of Marietta as the first person to hold this position. Previously, Miss Tate had been director of public welfare in Cobb County. At HOLEPROOF, she was responsible for hiring and firing. Following techniques learned at the welfare office, she developed histories of all the employees, which gave her a greater insight into their behavior. She found it interesting that some workers were the second and third generation of their families to work at the mill. As she gathered Social Security information for the federal government, she placed a carbon under the forms and kept a copy for company records.

In 1927, the same year as the merger of Marietta Knitting Company and Champion, the town of Acworth acquired a second large cotton mill, when Fred J. Kienel moved his operation out of Philadelphia. Both a push and pull factor explain this relocation. Kienel admitted that he fled the north to get away from labor problems. Taking a train south on an inspection tour of possible relocation sites, he met a Georgia Power executive, who persuaded him to stop in Acworth. There, he was immediately won over when the town's board of trade (W.H. Nichols, president) offered him the old G.W. McLaing property for the sum of "one dollar and other considerations." Kienel's Unique Knitting Company operated for the next fifty-five years and employed about 140 people. Tragically, Fred's wife died of typhoid shortly after the move south, and their oldest son, Joe, barely survived.

Off Collins Avenue Kienel built a residential compound for various family members and associates. Fronting Collins Avenue, two cottages were designed from a plan book of Leila Ross Wilburn of Atlanta, one of the few female architects in the region. Kienel built his large home back in the woods, away from the road, perhaps to avoid any
ostentatious show of wealth and perhaps to segregate the family from a society that was very different. The eldest child Alma was fifteen at the time and miserable away from her friends back in Philadelphia. A product of Catholic schools in the North, she feared she might “burn in hell” when she had to attend public schools in Acworth and travel all the way into Marietta to attend Mass. There were few Catholics in the area, and the oldest Catholic parish, St. Joseph’s in Marietta, dated back only to 1906. The family was also different politically. Although he was a Democrat when he moved south, Fred Kienel joined the Republican Party in the 1930s after becoming angry over New Deal labor legislation. For years Fred and his son Bob were active in Georgia Republican Party politics, when few others would publicly associate with the GOP.

In the early days of the Great Depression the local economy received a huge boost when an even larger mill employing over seven hundred workers opened in 1931 in the southwest part of the county between Austell and Powder Springs along the Southern and Seaboard railroads. The Clark Thread Company of Newark, New Jersey, bought the site from area farmers and landowners. The largest thread manufac-
turer in the country, Clark spent about $1.5 million building a factory with forty thousand spindles and a mill village originally of fifty units. The attractive village on landscaped streets took the name Clarkdale. At the time of the announcement, the *Cobb County Times* editorialized that the new thread mill was a "welcome boost to our hopes and spirits," and encouraged people to hope that the worst of the depression was over.\(^{10}\)

### Hard Times on the Farm and the Great Migration

While local industries made progress during the 1920s, agriculture experienced falling prices and natural disasters. Wartime optimism disappeared by the fall harvest of 1920. In October Martin F. Amorous, the president of the Cobb County Farmers' Union, expressed alarm that the South would be impoverished if cotton prices dropped to twenty cents or lower. He feared that farmers would take down with them the merchants and bankers who extended them credit. Therefore, he proposed a solution much like that of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s. Amorous wanted the federal government to lend the farmer twenty-five cents for each pound of middling cotton he produced. Then he wanted the government to sell the crop for the farmer at no less than forty cents a pound (the 1919 average market price). In exchange for this service, the government would receive interest and a commission, and the farmer would agree to let the government limit his cotton acreage in 1921.\(^{11}\)

By late November merchants were offering cultivators only sixteen cents a pound, and Amorous observed that the average grower would make only one hundred dollars, while accumulating two hundred dollars of debts. He claimed that "the farmer will be bankrupted and the merchant in turn [won't be able to] pay all he owes." From his perspective, the only practical plan to improve conditions was government intervention. The *Times* editorialized that Amorous' Cobb County plan had been favorably received throughout Georgia and in Washington, D.C. Indeed, President Wilson's Secretary of the Treasury, D. F. Houston, called it the first real solution that had been proposed to benefit farmers in general. According to the *Times* a return to forty-cent
cotton would save the farmers and their creditors and "bring joy to the South and put the spindles in a thousand mills a-turning." The Amorous plan was adopted in December in a meeting of Cobb County farmers and merchants and introduced into Congress by Rep. Gordon Lee.

In the 1920s, however, the national mood shifted away from governmental activism toward local responsibility and self-reliance. Disillusioned with Wilson’s crusade “to make the world safe for democracy” and contented with growing prosperity in the cities, most Americans turned away from Progressive reforms. So Congress refused to implement Amorous' plan and others like it, and the good times of the 1920s bypassed rural America. Overproduction again undercut market prices, and cotton remained under twenty cents a pound throughout the decade. A boll weevil invasion did not seem as harmful in Cobb County as elsewhere, but it forced farmers to invest scarce dollars in insecticides, particularly calcium arsenate, which was typically dipped in molasses and applied to the cotton boll with a mop. Without government assistance farmers struggled through the so-called Prosperity Decade or Jazz Age of the 1920s. Yet the concept of federal crop controls and subsidies to farmers continued to be discussed.

When the Great Depression hit and farm prices dropped to record lows, Americans turned to the federal government for help; and a plan similar to that proposed after World War I in Cobb County would be implemented with FDR’s Agricultural Adjustment Act.

Cutting wheat, c. 1912 (Cobb-118, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
As helpful as government programs would be, however, the truth was that Cobb County farms, on the whole, were not very efficient. In 1879 the typical Cobb County farm achieved per acre yields of less than fourteen bushels of corn and between 0.4 and 0.5 bales of cotton. Fifty years later in 1929 per acre means were 13.7 bushels and 0.5 bales. These totals are extremely tiny, compared to the productivity of Georgia farms in more recent decades. Harvey and Bessie Durham provide some insight into the lack of productivity, recalling that agrarians used little fertilizer on their corn crops back then. The Mars Hill Road couple asserted, however, that their son Edward once grew 129 bushels per acre when he applied adequate fertilizer as a 4-H Club project. Ernest Wester came to Cobb County first as assistant agricultural extension agent in 1951 then head extension agent from 1959-1978. Growing up in nearby Polk County during the 1920s and 1930s, he understood even then that Georgia farmers did not use enough fertilizer. He claimed that his father always preferred to plant more land and buy less fertilizer, but his sons, who had to clear the extra land, favored the opposite. Unfortunately, even when planters used commercial fertilizer, the standard type was low in nutrients, often 4-8-6 or, at
Feeding chickens, Emma Lee Hadaway (Williams), Hadaway Rd., west Cobb, c. 1900 (Cobb-354, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
Cheatham Hill Dairy, owned by R. O. and Rufus Hardage, c. 1951 (Cobb-431, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
best, 8-8-8, much poorer mixes than farmers use today.\textsuperscript{16} To save a few dollars they usually applied it too sparingly, using perhaps two to three hundred pounds per acre then, in contrast to six to eight hundred pounds of a much higher analysis fertilizer in the late twentieth century.\textsuperscript{17}

After 1914 the Smith-Lever Act established the county extension service throughout the country to provide practical advice to farmers. While agents provided considerable help to farm owners, they largely ignored their tenants. This approach may have been shortsighted since the number of tenant farms was growing. At the turn of the century, some 56 percent of all Cobb County farm operators had rented their land. By 1930 tenants made up 62 percent of all local farm operators. At the latter date, some 59 percent of white and 79 percent of black farmers worked the fields of someone else. According to Wester, "There was so much farming going on that the county agent probably had very little time to deal with tenant farmers. I’m sure his services were available if they asked for it, but many times the tenant farmers didn’t realize that they needed the county agent. That’s one thing about farmers. They are an independent lot, and they weren’t always too keen on adopting new practices and calling on the county agent for help. Probably that is one of the reasons they were so slow in changing over, because they weren’t willing to admit they didn’t know; and consequently they kept on in their old practices of low fertilization and plowing that corn on up until it tasseled and cutting roots all the time they were plowing and just farming the land to death and not knowing they were doing an injustice."\textsuperscript{18}

Bad economic conditions, coupled with Jim Crow laws, uprooted many African-Americans from the southern countryside and sent them to the greater opportunities of the northern cities. Known to history as the Great Migration, this remarkable folk movement reduced the non-white population from 47 percent of all Georgians in 1900 to 35 percent by 1940 and 26 percent by 1970.\textsuperscript{19} The table on the next page illustrates how Cobb County’s experience paralleled that of the rest of the state. After 1900 the percentage of African-Americans dropped steadily by two to four percentage points each decade, declining from 30 percent at the turn of the century to 16 percent by the eve of World War II.\textsuperscript{20}

While they were exceptions to the rule, a number of black families continued to own Cobb County farms. Between the 1900 and 1930
The percentage of African-Americans in Cobb County’s population was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Black Population</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percentage Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>7,330</td>
<td>24,664</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>7,418</td>
<td>28,395</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>6,645</td>
<td>30,437</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>6,540</td>
<td>35,408</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>6,280</td>
<td>38,272</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

censuses the number of African-American farm owners rose modestly from 99 to 110. In the latter year the black-owned farms averaged 47.4 acres in size and were worth $35 per acre. A good example of a black family choosing to stay in the South was the Scandretts of Cobb County. The patriarch and matriarch were Willis M. and Lula Scandrett of Griffin, Georgia. After losing their Spalding County farm, they bought land in 1903 in rural Fulton County. For the most part they were left alone by their white neighbors, but on one occasion the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in their front yard. The Scandretts did not let the incident frighten them away, however. One of their sons, Willis Barton (or W. B.) Scandrett, married Retha Mae Grimmett and purchased from his father a lot where the young couple reared their family. While the children were growing up, W. B. held a variety of jobs in Atlanta and Retha took in laundry and ironing to supplement the family income. One day in 1944 Retha saw an advertisement in the newspaper for a farm sale in Cobb County. So the family rode out in their five-year-old Plymouth and found the land in rural west Cobb along Hadaway Road.

The seventy-acre estate, once owned by Simmie Stephens, consisted of a shack, a barn, and some pastureland. In the World War II era the Scandretts were able to buy the farm for the bargain price of ten dollars an acre. At first, W. B. and Retha continued to live and work in Fulton County during the winter, spending only the growing season in Cobb County. After a few years they moved permanently to Cobb, but retained title to their Fulton County property as well. They grew a wide variety of vegetables and kept the customary barnyard animals. The farm was so isolated that they had few neighbors. In the vicinity were a number of black sharecroppers, but only one other African-American family owned land. The white neighbors generally stayed to themselves. Occasionally, someone would shout a racial epithet or smash their mailbox, but otherwise the Scandretts encountered little trouble.
Scandrett farm, Hadaway Rd., west Cobb, 1947 (Janice Oliver collection)
Retha Mae Scandrett with sons Phillip and William Coleman Scandrett, 1947 (Janice Oliver collection)
Since the farm income was insufficient, W. B. took a job as a fireman with the Southern Railroad, while Retha Mae occasionally did domestic work. In time they built a two-story, block house to replace the original shack. Even later, they added modern utilities and telephone service. Of their three adult children, only Simeon remained in Cobb County. After service in the Korean War, he worked for the Atlanta Gas Light Company for forty-three years. Simeon and his wife Frances reared the third generation of Scandretts in Cobb County. Their children started to school in the late 1960s, just after the county integrated. In 1967 they were the first and only African-Americans at Due West Elementary School. Although the Scandretts eventually sold part of their farm, Simeon's grandchildren are currently the fourth generation of the family to live on Scandrett land on Hadaway Road. As Mr. Scandrett said in a 1996 interview, “Not many black folks can say that they have four generations of the same family living in the same place. It's just unheard of.... If Daddy and Mama didn't have the foresight to see that we had this place out here, who knows where we might be today.” He recalled his father telling him, “You have a gold mine here, if you don't know it. All you got to do is take care of the land and it will take care of you.”

Despite the challenges of twentieth-century agriculture, efficient agrarians, black and white, managed to survive. A number of farmers operated dairies, and the Cobb County Times took great pride in reporting that J. R. Humphrey of Acworth won a contest in 1920 for the top butter-producing cow in the United States in the 3.5 to 4 years old category. The story claims that Cobb County for some time had been home to some of the best Jersey cows in the nation.

The Chastains of Kennesaw were another successful farm family. Born in 1888, Cassie Wingo Chastain vividly remembered country life as a farm wife in the 1920s. At the “ripe old age of nineteen” she married William Dean (Bill) Chastain, and they rented land for a few years until they bought eighty acres for $1875 on Greer's Chapel Road (now Barrett Lakes Road). Moving to the new site on the first day of 1910, they spent over a decade in a cramped three-room cabin. Finally, in February 1921 they were prosperous enough to move their growing family into a new house on a hillside overlooking their cultivated fields, with a splendid view of Kennesaw Mountain in the distance. The Cobb County Times described it as one of the prettiest farm homes in the area.
The Times cited the Chastains as an example of what Cobb County farmers could do when they had “pluck, coupled with an unlimited supply of energy, industry and will power.” By the mid 1920s the farm had grown to 378 acres, with a little less than half in cultivation and the remainder in pasture. The Chastains’ increased prosperity resulted largely from their efficiently run dairy. They built two large silos, holding, respectively, 100 and 160 tons of silage. Except for some concentrates for milking cows, they produced on the farm all the feed they needed. Thirty acres of silage corn provided much of the feed for winter. During the 1920s they milked forty cows and had twenty-five or thirty more on the farm.24

Cassie Chastain remembered that it was “just about like being in a chain gang. You’ve got to work it Sunday just the same as any other day. If you’re in a chain gang, you’ve got a day off. That’s what I used to laugh and tell them.” Without milking machines, she used to milk fifteen cows a night (“as many as the hired hand did”) during the summer while Bill was working in the fields. During the 1920s their daughter Katherine helped out. She remembered getting up at 4:00 A.M. and heading to the cow barn “rain or shine, sleet or snow.” Then they went to the fields to work. At noon they heard the whistle blow at one of the marble mills in Marietta. That signaled time for dinner. Back in the fields they listened for the 4:00 P.M. train going by. Then they milked for the next two hours or so.25

Bill Chastain built a screened dairy house out of concrete. Nearby he placed a boiler room to steam clean the milk cans. Every other day he hauled several hundred pounds of ice from Marietta in a two-ton truck. As soon as they milked the cows, the Chastains strained the milk through a cloth into ten-gallon cans that were kept cool in barrels of ice water in the icehouse. Then they hitched a pony to the spring wagon and carried the milk to Kennesaw, where they sent it by train to a dairy in Atlanta. Prior to the creation of Cobb EMC, the Chastain family did well enough to purchase sixteen batteries for an electrical system located in the basement that pumped water from the well and illuminated the house and barn. Later, they replaced that system with carbide lights.

Like most Cobb County farmers, the Chastains also grew cotton, as well as wheat, oats, turnip greens, collards, and cabbage. Bill saved all the compost from the barnyard and spread it over his fields with a manure spreader. He also bought fertilizer from his brother Troy’s
Atlanta Chemical Company. Katherine remembered that her father's corn was "as tall as that corn in Oklahoma." Cassie remembered doing "a world of canning." Bill killed eight hogs every year and preserved the shoulders and hams in a smokehouse. Cassie raised chickens, turkeys, and guineas; and she delighted in making sweet potato custards and sliced sweet potato pie. The only store supplies the family had to purchase were sugar, matches, and coffee. They may have lacked modern comforts, but by pursuing a frugal existence they never worried about going hungry.26

**Law and Order**

In an era of low market prices, farmers were typically short of cash; nonetheless, families like the Chastains managed to produce abundant harvests for the dinner table. The typical farmer was proud and honest, completing bargains with a handshake and keeping his word as a matter of honor. Despite prohibition laws, however, a few attempted to supplement their income by turning corn into whiskey. Between the world wars the sheriff spent much of his time trying to find illegal stills in the woods or, sometimes, in people's basements. Thomas M. Sanders worked first as a deputy for Ed Swanson and then as sheriff from 1925-33 and from 1945 until his death a year later on 13 April 1946. His son Kermit helped his father for many years and served as sheriff himself from 1957-76. According to the younger Sanders: "Back in those days there were a lot of good people who fooled with whiskey.... People selling whiskey weren't violent people. They were just trying to make a living. Course, I have always said (and my daddy did too) that prohibition was a failure." The lawman recalled busting large stills on Hicks Road, on old Lower River Road (currently Six Flags Road), and all over the county. One of the largest was a still that produced 1,834 gallons on Spring Road in Smyrna.

In 1908 Kermit Sanders was born on a farm on Austell Road where Milford Elementary School is now located. From about age ten, he lived with his family in the front of the jail next to the courthouse, where his father worked at the time as a deputy and his mother Mable as cook for the prisoners. Even in downtown Marietta, they kept a cow and raised hogs. Kermit and his brother Ernest (later chief of police in
Marietta for twenty-eight years) loved to play with the gallows, tripping it to see it fall. Once, fourteen-year-old Ernest was milking the cow when he heard his mother scream. He ran in the house to pick up the shotgun (which was not loaded) and confronted an escaping prisoner. The man fortunately did not call his bluff and returned the keys to Mrs. Sanders.

Sanders remembered when he was sixteen years old (about 1925) he and his father and another deputy went out one evening on Johnson Ferry Road. Like almost all the county roads, it was unpaved at the time. Tom Sanders got out of the car, while Kermit drove a little farther down. When a vehicle came by carrying whiskey, Tom waved his flashlight as a signal, and Kermit drove the police car across the road to block the path. When the suspect jumped out of his car and ran, Tom came down, handed Kermit his flashlight and gun, and shouted, "Catch him, son." After chasing the man on foot for about a quarter mile, Kermit caught him and brought him in. Later, when he saw Kermit in the daylight, the prisoner exclaimed: "You mean to tell me I let that young kid catch me!" Sanders claimed that the incident set him "afire" with a desire to make a career of law enforcement.

He estimated that they seized many thousands of gallons of whiskey in the 1920s and 1930s. Frequently, they captured drivers for Al Capone running liquor through Cobb County on the route from Florida to Chicago. The deputies used to sit out front of the courthouse and watch cars drive through the Square. The vehicles carrying heavy loads of liquor had saddle springs. When the rumrunners drove over some bumps near the courthouse, the bounce of the car would give them away. Sanders recollected that Capone’s drivers gave up nonviolently when they were caught, but not all whiskey haulers were as cooperative. His scariest memory was a time when he and Deputy John Hood chased a man from the Square to the other side of Kennesaw. When they pulled him over, he brought out a shotgun and announced, "Yes, there is a load of red [expensive] whiskey; but you are not going to take it." Hood told him that they didn’t want to get shot over a load of liquor; and the suspect responded, "If you don’t want to get killed, driver, drive on." So they let the man leave, but followed at a distance into Acworth, where they stopped in a filling station to call ahead to Sheriff George Gaddis of Bartow County. The sheriff set up a roadblock and eventually the two teams from Cobb and Bartow cornered the driver off
old Allatoona Road. The man ran into the woods and tried to escape, but Sanders, who had gone back to Acworth to find some dogs, tracked the criminal eight miles across Allatoona Mountain to make an arrest.

In that era the income of the sheriff and the deputies was based on a fee system. When a drunk was brought in, he would be fined thirty dollars, and the arresting officer would receive eleven or twelve dollars as his fee. When a driver was stopped with a load of whiskey, he would have an opportunity to buy his car back, and most of the fine went to the lawmen. Tom Sanders and his deputies would occasionally catch three or four loads of red whiskey heading north in a day. Judge John Wood of the Blue Ridge Circuit lived in Canton. So Tom would call him and ask him how much to charge the whiskey haulers. After a while Wood got tired of being disturbed so often and told Tom to set the fee wherever he wanted. Kermit reflected: "I don't guess it was legal, but it worked all right. Several of the drivers from Chicago would ask my daddy, 'How did you know we had a load of liquor on there?' He said, 'Little bird told me.' One fellow said, 'I wish I could find that damn bird. I would kill it.'"

**Urban Progressivism and Road Improvement**

The 1920 census marked the first time when the majority of the American people lived in urban areas. Prosperous, progressive northern cities were magnets that attracted struggling country folk from around the world. Georgia's largest city, Atlanta, reached two hundred thousand in 1920. In contrast, predominantly rural Cobb barely exceeded thirty thousand. The only city that the census classified as urban was Marietta with 6,190 people. Acworth had a population of 1,117, but the other incorporated towns were little more than villages.

Marietta's business leaders were sensitive about their small size. They professed shock that the census registered an increase since 1910 of only 241 people. That figure ran contrary to their observation that housing was scarce, that a number of newcomers had arrived from other parts of the country, and that several Atlanta residents had recently decided to live in Marietta and commute to work in the big city.
business leaders suggested that the reasons for the short count were that many of the recent migrants had located just beyond the city limits and that the black population was declining due to the Great Migration of African-Americans to northern cities.29

In an editorial the Cobb County Times cited an unnamed “young and successful” businessman who lamented that the Gem City lost a chance to surpass ten thousand by failing to pave more main thoroughfares in 1917 when the Square and Atlanta Street were hard surfaced. He claimed that “the mudholes and dust of certain streets” cost merchants thousands in lost revenues. It was not long before citizens submitted petitions to the mayor, asking that the ten major residential streets be paved. The presentments of the March 1920 grand jury voiced similar complaints about virtually impassable dirt county roads.30

The coming of the automobile made a good transportation system imperative. Sarah Temple claims that cars were such novelties in the early years of the century that their purchase was noted in the newspaper; and when someone took a ride through the countryside, the journey was so perilous that the social columnists remarked when “they returned safely.” Vinings Hill was particularly notorious as a site of accidents. In the fall of 1910 the Atlanta Constitution promoted a tour of the state to dramatize the need for better roads. Local celebrity Regina Rambo [Benson] was the only woman to join the thousand-mile journey, winning a loving cup from the newspaper for her “perfect score.”

Gradually the roads improved. In April 1921 Marietta passed a bond referendum to pave the main arteries into town, and soon other city streets were paved as well. By that time a combination of federal, state, and county dollars permitted contractors to begin hard-surfacing the Dixie Highway, the main thoroughfare for tourists from the Midwest traveling to Florida. In 1920 the Atlanta Road segment of the Dixie Highway was paved from Marietta to Smyrna. Three years later a hard surface was added to the section from Smyrna to the Chattahoochee River. By 1929 the road was paved all the way through Georgia. In the southern part of the county federal and state funds helped the county complete the Bankhead Highway in 1930 from Austell to the Chattahoochee. Soon after, a connector road was paved from Austell to Powder Springs. The next year another federally funded paved road, the Canton Highway, was completed. In the decade between 1924-34 Cobb spent almost a million dollars on maintaining
its rural roads and bridges, keeping the dirt roads passable and occasion­
ally creating a base of rock and gravel.

L. D. (Buddy) Cheeks moved in 1935 to his grandparents’ home
behind the Lost Mountain Store on Dallas Highway at Mars Hill Road.
His grandfather ran the store, which served as a community-gathering
place for the Lost Mountain area. Two or three times a week Buddy
traveled into Marietta, less than ten miles away, in a Model-T truck
driven by his uncle, Newt Sanford. Often they would not meet a single
car. The journey took an hour or more, because there were so many hills
and the road was in bad condition. About once a year a county crew
came down the road in a Caterpillar tractor, pulling scrapes that rolled
the dirt and smoothed out the ruts. Unfortunately, the workers never
trimmed the weeds and bushes growing on the shoulders. Buddy’s grand­
father installed Sinclair gas pumps outside the store and sold around
twenty-five gallons a week to the handful of people who had automo­
biles in those days. He also sold flour, cigarettes, coffee, and beans to the
farmers in the neighborhood. The flour came from Iowa in forty-eight
pound sacks, while coffee and pinto beans came in one hundred-pound-
sacks, from which smaller amounts would be dipped out in a cup for
individual customers. Buddy, his mother Effie Cheeks, and other rela­
tives sharecropped the land around the store to supplement the family
income. Both his grandfather and uncle had considerable political
influence, and all the county politicians put in visits to the store during
their campaigns for election. Buddy remembered playing horseshoes
outside the building with Kermit Sanders, who drove his father, Sheriff
Tom Sanders, to the store to “politick.”

Consolidation of Cobb County Schools

Progressive-minded Cobb residents were as interested in improving pub­
lic education as they were in building better roads. In fact, the two
reforms were intimately related. In 1920 the county school system outside
Marietta operated on slightly above fifty-six thousand dollars, with about
twenty thousand dollars coming from county taxes and the rest from the
state. This small sum supported fifty schools for whites and twenty for
blacks, many one or two room frame structures. Needless to say, such
facilities could not support libraries or laboratories, and teachers were
hard pressed to educate children of a variety of educational levels.

During the post-World War I decade, Cobb citizens replaced many of the one-room schoolhouses with more modern consolidated schools. In 1920 a Georgia constitutional amendment permitted local school districts to hold bond referenda. As roads improved and the automobile became more universal, the school bus permitted students to travel longer distances from home than in the past. So voters in Locust Grove and Smyrna approved bonds in 1922 for modern brick school buildings. Powder Springs did the same two years later, followed by Blackwell in 1926 and Mountain View and Olive Springs in 1928. The ten-room Blackwell School along Canton Highway was the first in the county to be served by school buses. By the end of the decade fourteen buses crossed the county, carrying almost a thousand children to their classrooms. Communities such as Elizabeth and Vinings joined the consolidation movement by the end of the decade, allowing a majority of white students to attend modern facilities. The larger structures offered grades one through nine, unlike the one-room schoolhouses that stopped with grade seven. Under the direction of Principal Robert L. Osborne, the new Olive Springs School employed twelve teachers for 435 students and had electric lights and its own sewerage system, both novelties in rural areas.

In this age of segregated education black schools were slower than white to consolidate. Born in 1911, Jessie Mae Spears Taylor grew up on sharecrop farms near Kennesaw and went to local schools through the sixth grade. The first school she attended was a one-room structure with two teachers. One taught the three lower grades in one end of the building. The other taught grades four through seven, but most black children dropped out before then. Since Cobb County never created a high school for black children, Taylor had to go into Atlanta to complete her education. After graduating from Booker T. Washington High School, she earned a two-year certificate from the normal (teacher preparation) school at Clark College.

When she returned to the Kennesaw area, her first job in 1933 was teaching for fifty-nine dollars a month in a little school building connected to Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church. The school lacked a lunchroom, so the pupils had to bring their noon meal from home. Unfortunately, some families were too poor to do so. Consequently, a few children went hungry, unless other pupils were willing to share. The
same was true for school materials such as paper and pencils. One of the challenges of teaching was that the children without supplies had to wait while those who were well equipped completed their assignments. Then the poorer students borrowed their pencils and paper. Ms. Taylor remembered buying boxes of pencils for the needy students, but noted, "It was a struggle during the early days." After two years the county closed that school and sent the children to Kennesaw.

In 1937 Georgia began paying for free textbooks for school children. However, the nearly universal policy in Cobb County and throughout the state was to provide new books only to the white schools. As the volumes became worn or out-of-date, they went to the black schools, while the whites received new texts. In the early 1950s the county provided buses to send black pupils to a more modern school in Acworth. Jessie Mae Taylor remembered how grateful she was on the first cold morning at the new school when she opened the door and felt a blast of heat in her face. This was her first school with central heating, in contrast to the old wood-burning, potbellied stoves in the center of her previous classrooms.

Georgia Mae Adams had similar experiences at a school in the African-American community of Jonesville, south of Marietta on land that in the 1940s would be absorbed by the Army Air Force base and the huge Bell aircraft plant. In February 1930 the county Jeanes supervisor, Mattie Durham, asked Adams to finish the school term of a teacher who became ill. She walked approximately two miles to school each morning from her Wright Street home in Marietta. In those days it was not uncommon for students and teachers alike to walk to school. Rosalie Andrews perhaps set the record for distance covered a decade earlier when she lived in Marietta but walked thirteen miles each day to her job at the Macedonia School in the southwest part of the county near Powder Springs.

The Jonesville school building was one of several in Cobb County constructed in part with a contribution from the Rosenwald Fund. Julius Rosenwald was a chief executive officer of Sears and Roebuck. In 1912 the distinguished African-American educator, Booker T. Washington, persuaded Rosenwald to start a foundation dedicated to the construction of more and better black school buildings. In the age of segregation white school boards were much more likely to devote tax money to white schools than black. Consequently, African-American
classes frequently were held in churches or abandoned buildings donated by members of the black community. Rosenwald attempted to reverse this trend by offering up to a third of the cost of construction if the local community would provide the rest. Usually, the local contribution came through in-kind labor of blacks, local fund raisings, and a minimum of contributions from the local school board.17

Jonesville School had a kitchen and small dining room. Ms. Adams remembered the students having shared meals on Fridays, when different pupils would bring meat or beans to go into a soup pot cooked on a big stove. Pupils were encouraged to bring tableware from home; and children from throughout the community showed up, even some too young to attend school. The entire Jonesville community cooperated, and the Friday lunches seemed to be enjoyed by all. The black community also supported the school by operating a nearby garden, selling the harvest to provide revenues for fuel and various school supplies.38

Perhaps the most interesting white institution was the Seventh District Agricultural and Mechanical Arts School, located in the Macland community near Powder Springs. Prior to 1912, the Georgia constitution prohibited the state from spending tax money on secondary schools. Apparently, many landlords considered public high schools to be frills, unneeded by simple farmers. To bypass the constitution, Governor Joseph M. Terrell proposed creating in each congressional district a self-supporting agricultural high school, connected to an experimental station and a farmers' institute. The legislature implemented the plan in 1906. The governor selected a board of trustees, consisting of a representative from each county in the seventh district. The trustees selected a Macland site the next year, when Cobb County native John N. McEachern, founder of Life of Georgia Insurance Company, donated two hundred forty acres of land. With other local philanthropists, he provided fifteen thousand dollars to build the campus. The first principal, Prof. Henry Robert Hunt, supervised the construction of the original academic building from bricks made at the site. The school opened 8 February 1908, with a boys’ dormitory and a dining hall added later in the year and a girls’ dormitory in 1912. As the student body grew, other buildings followed, with enrollment peaking in 1920-21 at 292 students. Originally, all boarding students worked on campus thirty-six hours a week, while commuting students labored thirty. Boys helped with construction projects, crop cultivation, and main-
tenance of buildings and grounds, and girls worked in the kitchen and dining hall. Through this employment students paid most of their campus expenses. Teachers resided in the dormitories where they could exercise a moral influence over the students. To ensure social equality all girls were required to wear uniforms. Since the boys labored in the fields, they did not have a specific uniform, although they were expected to wear work shoes and overalls or work clothes. Faculty members engaged in much community service. The agriculture instructors gave advice to area farmers and experts were brought in periodically to conduct farmer institutes.

A 1928 graduate, Virginia Tapp remembered that the teachers of academic subjects were very good, but she did not like the heavy emphasis on home economics for girls. For graduation she was required to make her own dress, but she kept ruining the material. Finally, the teacher, Lula Eubanks, asked her if she had a seamstress in Powder Springs. When Virginia answered in the affirmative, her compassionate instructor said, “I’m going to leave this cabinet unlocked.... You’ll never get your diploma if you have to make this dress. It won’t stay on you until you graduate.” With the teacher swearing her to secrecy, Virginia took her best cloth to the seamstress, while she worked in the classroom with some old material, acting as though she was sewing the dress. When the seamstress finished, Tapp carried it to school and placed it in the box where it was supposed to be. That way, she said, “I had a dress that stayed on me until I graduated.”

The A & M School performed a valuable function in an age when high schools were few in number and operated solely with local funds. After 1912, however, Georgia began to fund secondary schools, making the old A & M schools less essential. In 1931, when the legislature consolidated the state’s colleges into one university system, it abolished some of the A & M high schools and converted others into junior colleges. Since the institution in Carrollton, only forty miles away, became a junior college, the Board of Regents saw no need for a competing institution in Macland. So the facility for the seventh district closed down, with its library books and some of its faculty going to West Georgia Junior College. In 1933 the Board of Regents leased the property to Cobb County to become a consolidated school. Two years later the title to the property was transferred to the Cobb board of education, and thus the Macland facility, later called McEachern High School, replaced the erstwhile A & M institution. Still McEachern remained a unique place, with a campus resembling a small college more than a high school.
Black and White Marietta Schools

In an age when the average income in Georgia lagged considerably behind the national average, the state found it impossible to put as many dollars into public schools as more affluent states did. The towns and cities, however, were much better off economically than the countryside. By the turn of the last century, urban leaders concluded that they could maintain better funded city schools, if they were not dragged down by the need to provide equal facilities for children out in the county. Throughout Georgia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the townspeople established independent school districts, then taxed themselves to build modern buildings and pay decent teachers' salaries.

In 1892 Marietta created an independent school district and sold bonds to build two new school buildings, a brick structure for white students on Waterman Street and a wood frame facility for blacks on Lemon Street. Both were designed to house about five hundred students.
In the early twentieth century the city added two new structures for white pupils: the Haynes Street School (later called Keith School) in 1913 and Marietta High School on Winn Street in 1924. The latter occupied land purchased from former governor Joseph M. Brown known as "Brown's Woods." Because the consolidated county schools stopped with the ninth grade, about a third of MHS's enrollment consisted of rural children who commuted into town. A little less than two-thirds of the budget came from city property taxes, with the rest divided about equally between state appropriations and tuition fees. Marietta residents paid three to five dollars a month and non-residents paid five to six dollars. At the end of the 1920s some eighteen hundred pupils attended Marietta schools daily."
Lemon Street School, 7th grade class of 1918 (Cobb-463, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
In 1928 Shuler Antley came to Marietta to assume the post of principal of Marietta High School. At the time compulsory attendance laws did not extend to the high school years, and most students dropped out before they reached the tenth grade. MHS had twelve teachers with Mr. Antley becoming the thirteenth. Despite the fact that the campus was almost new, the school lacked a library and lunchroom. The school board had a working relationship with the city library, so that students could use the Clarke Library for their research projects. For several years Mrs. Bertie A. Ward, mother of student Judson C. (Jake) Ward, turned a dressing room next to the stage into a lunchroom, where she sold five-cent cups of soup. That was the beginning of the lunchroom system. Before the state began providing free textbooks, Antley initiated a system where the school bought books and rented them to interested students.

In the early years the auditorium had overhead lamps, but the classrooms relied on five to six big windows each to attract sufficient sunlight for the students to read. Despite such limitations, the school's teachers always impressed Antley with their proficiency and their desire to be of service. He claimed he was compensated with much more than money by the many appreciative students who returned in later years to thank him for preparing them well to pursue distinguished careers. Jake Ward, for instance, achieved a Ph.D. in history and became executive vice president of Emory University. In an interview over six decades after his high school graduation, he fondly recalled his teachers’ names and argued that they prepared him to compete in any academic circles. At MHS he took four years of Latin, mathematics, and English; three of science; two of French; and several history courses. Ward attributed the soundness of the academic program to the leadership of prominent white families who “wanted good schools for their children and the community.”

Ward expressed sadness, however, that he had “no idea what kind of schools were provided for the blacks.” He expressed embarrassment in not knowing where the black schools were located or any of the black principals or teachers. Despite the fact that his father’s grocery store had many black customers, the future Emory administrator claimed not to know any educated blacks and remembered only those who held menial jobs. He added, “In a sense that ... people today can hardly understand—they were almost invisible people.”

The educational center of the African-American community was just northeast of the Square on Lemon Street. In the early twentieth cen-
tury the elementary school offered seven years of education. The first principal was A. Tolliver, followed by Luke B. Norris and Professor C. W. Maxey. Mrs. Louella Patterson completed the sixth grade at Lemon Street School, and then received high school and college degrees at Clark College in Atlanta. For many years she was a revered instructor at her old elementary school. The movement to create a black high school was spearheaded by Spelman College graduate Ursula Jenkins, who went before the all-white school board to plead for the institution. She found an abandoned church on Harold Street that the board of education agreed to rent and restore. Consequently, the two-room school opened in 1925 for about twenty students in the seventh- and eighth-grades. The first two teachers, Ursula Jenkins and Catherine Crittenden, taught a curriculum that included algebra, chemistry, English, history, and home economics. At the end of the year Marietta schools superintendent Claude A. Keith
reported that the experiment had gone well and that a ninth grade would be added in the fall. He called upon the school board to provide a better building whenever funds were available.46

In 1929 Professor M. J. Woods arrived to serve as principal of the elementary and high school, now containing the full complement of grades. A graduate of Georgia State College in Savannah (now called Savannah State University), Mr. Woods joined Ursula Jenkins at Harold Street High School, while Catherine Crittenden went to the elementary school. With only two high school teachers, one of the three grades would have to listen quietly while the others were being instructed. As inadequate and inefficient as this system was, it had the positive result of reinforcing for the juniors what they had overheard as sophomores. Fortunately, the Rosenwald Fund helped with the construction of a brick four-room high school building in the 1930-31 school year. Originally called the Marietta Industrial High School, the name later changed to Perkinson and, after 1947, Lemon Street High School.

In 1931 Woods coached the first football team to a record of seven wins and one tie. Under his leadership, the school soon included a band and an active PTA. Gradually, the programs and curriculum expanded. By the time Woods left the school in 1962 Lemon Street High was fully accredited. Coach Kenneth Carter, a Lemon Street alumnus and, in his own right, a legendary teacher and coach, has remarked that he held the principal in such high esteem it was impossible to think of him without the honorary title “Professor Woods.” Meanwhile Woods’ wife Kathryn maintained a lifelong commitment to children, education, and civil rights. Since their deaths, the Friends of Kathryn and M. J. Woods, a YWCA-affiliated organization, has attempted to keep alive their memory and their works. Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium the community has gathered each August for a well-attended banquet fundraiser to support scholarships for needy students and recognize community leaders.47
Cobb County Militia Districts (based on the Official 1930 Highway Map, Office of the Surveyor General, Atlanta, Georgia. Boundaries of most western districts are considerably different today).
he modest economic and educational progress of the 1920s came to an end in the next decade, as Cobb County and the rest of the nation felt the impact of the worst depression in American history. Following the stock market collapse of 1929, consumer spending declined and unemployment rose nationally to 25 percent by the early 1930s. At the same time agricultural prices plunged in Georgia by 60 percent, reaching the lowest levels since the 1890s. White church-women in Marietta came together in the winter of 1931-32 to operate a Parish House soup kitchen at St. James Episcopal Church. Directed by Mrs. Herbert E. Hague, they served some ten thousand meals in three months to unemployed adults and hungry children. At the peak the kitchen provided as many as 257 meals a day. The two high school principals had vivid memories of the soup lines. When Shuler Antley walked by St. James on his way to Marietta High School, he saw the church volunteers serving free breakfasts to hungry people lined up to receive a bowl of soup. Marietta Industrial High School principal M. J.
Woods recalled his concern that "the children were more interested in getting out of school and getting to the soup line than they were in what was going on in the classroom." For many black students that bowl after school was their only meal of the day.1

Joe Mack Wilson, a 1936 Marietta High School graduate, witnessed his father's struggles to keep his jewelry business open during hard times. The downtown businessmen generally had their greatest sales on Christmas Eve. One year his father spent about one hundred dollars on merchandise and gift boxes in preparation for the season. But "that Christmas Eve, at the height of the Depression, he took in 75 cents. Not enough to have a Christmas dinner. That Christmas I got an apple and an orange; and, as my personal gift, he gave me a used pocketknife that I remember had one blade broken out of it.... That's all he could afford. We couldn't afford shoes."2

Leon M. (Rip) Blair, who served as mayor from 1938 to 1947, claimed things were so bad in Marietta that "even those who had been substantial business men reached the point of preaching the overthrow of the government. The despair of these men led them to see no future for themselves, their business, or their children."3 Blair took a less radical, but still liberal, approach by becoming an early backer of New York governor Franklin Roosevelt's presidential candidacy. Others joining him in the local Roosevelt-For-President Club included such prominent Mariettans as former mayor E. P. Dobbs, Cobb County Times publisher Otis Brumby, attorney Charles M. Brown, physician W. H. Perkinson, and historian Sarah G. Temple.4

Merchants who extended credit to farmers often found themselves in worse financial shape than their debtors. For example, McMillan Brothers in downtown Acworth knew that market prices were dropping in 1929 and 1930, but the storeowners could not bring themselves to deny credit to farmers, knowing that their children needed shoes and clothes. In the fall the McMillans bought the farmers' cotton crop for the extremely low price of five cents a bale, but they could not sell it to the textile mills at any price. Unsold bales lined Main Street in front of the store for some time. Owing money to banks in New York and Cincinnati, the proprietors were forced to close their doors. A future sheriff and county commissioner, George H. McMillan, took a job as deputy sheriff for Ed Legg, after the latter defeated Tom Sanders in the 1932 election. McMillan lost his house, but refused to declare bankrupt-
New Deal Programs for Rural Areas

As an alarmed public demanded action, the Herbert Hoover administration began providing limited government assistance. Its Reconstruction Finance Corporation, for instance, lent money to struggling banks and businesses and helped the states start public works programs. After the election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, federal involvement vastly increased. The basic New Deal agency for troubled farmers was the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). This bureaucracy addressed the problem of overproduction by encouraging farmers to cut back on the number of acres they planted. Following the law of supply and demand, prices rose when production fell. To reward those who grew less, the AAA paid subsidies that allowed cultivators to improve the land lying fallow.

Government planners set the total size of the nation's crop and determined allotments by county, but locally elected committees determined the impact of the agricultural programs on individual farmers. According to Walter H. Cantrell, a landowner from the Macland area who served for years on the Cobb County committee, "A certain amount of [federal] money goes to Cobb County. The committee has got to stay within that budget.... [Under the] soil building programs...if you were depleting your soil, they'd pay for lime and fertilizer and stuff to keep the erosion down." The system was democratic in principle, and black farmers participated as well as whites. By law, any landowner or tenant was eligible to vote after agreeing in writing to accept whatever crop restrictions the committee imposed.

Beginning in the 1930s, farmers gathered annually in five different parts of the county (Marietta, Acworth, Macland, Mountain View, and Smyrna) to elect three-member community committees and choose delegates to the county convention. After nominations were made from the floor, the participants voted by secret ballot. The local committees served as advisory bodies, offering the countywide committee specific recommendations about allotments and subsidies for
every farmer in their area. At the annual county convention, the delegates chose a three-person committee that exercised the ultimate control over who got what. In 1939 R. H. Cobb of Smyrna was elected for the third consecutive time as chairman of the Cobb County agricultural committee. The other members were D. D. Bullard of Macland in west Cobb and Horace C. Gantt of Mt. Bethel in east Cobb. Two alternates were also elected, J. J. Thomas of Marietta and Harvey Durham of the Acworth area.

A farmer in the Mars Hill community, Harvey Durham supplemented his income during the Depression by working for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, measuring cotton crops to make sure that cultivators grew no more than their allotment. He went to a special school for three weeks to learn how to do the job. Following orders to look for cotton growing in unusual places, he decided one day to take a road leading out into the woods. Durham remembered: "I don't know what made me do it, but I said, 'I just believe I'll see where that road goes to.' I walked back [one hundred yards], and there's where a man had cleared up a four-acre field and planted it in cotton."

The farmer became angry when his deception was exposed, and he was not alone in resenting government agents who had the power to come onto private property without search warrants. Honest cultivators whose word was their bond felt insulted when AAA employees measured their fields rather than taking their word for how many acres they planted. Durham told the story of a young AAA agent named Kemp who encountered an irate landowner. The elderly farmer pulled out a shotgun and warned Kemp not to come back. Durham's supervisor promised him a full day's pay if he could measure the man's six acres of cotton.

So Durham drove out the next morning and met the unhappy agrarian on his way to the fields behind a pair of fine mules. A veteran farmer, Durham appreciated good mules, so he struck up a conversation, complimenting the old man on the quality of his animals. After they talked for about an hour, he finally said, "Mr. Jed, they tell me you and Kemp had a little trouble about measuring your cotton." The man replied that he resented having a stranger telling him what he was going to do, so he "took [his] gun to him" and "he got it on." Harvey told him that he had the papers in the car and asked what he planned to do to him. Since Durham had shown him some respect, the landowner...
responded: "You want to measure it? Let's go." So they went out in the field and measured the crop. According to Durham, "I went right on and didn't have a bit of trouble with the man. He didn't like the program. And I didn't like all of it myself. I'd tell them I didn't, [but] there wasn't no slipping around."

Without doubt, the most popular New Deal initiative for residents of the countryside was the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). Prior to the 1930s only 3 percent of Georgia farms had electric lights, because private power companies saw huge expenses and minimal profits in running power lines out to isolated homesteads. The REA lent federal funds to local cooperatives, such as the Cobb County Rural Electric Membership Corporation (known today as Cobb EMC), making it possible for the co-ops to accomplish what the profit-making firms refused to do. County extension agent L. R. Langley played a central role in bringing the project to fruition. On 17 December 1938 U.S. Senator Richard Russell arrived in Marietta to throw the switch sending electrical currents down 170.2 miles of power lines to the first six hundred Cobb farms. At the opening ceremony, Georgia's junior senator praised REA for increasing "equality of opportunity" for rural residents. Marietta's mayor, Rip Blair, echoed Russell's sentiments, adding that REA would "bring the people of Marietta and Cobb County closer together." All the customers were members of the co-op with power to elect a governing board. The first project superintendent was Carl E. Hamby and the initial president was Laurence Steinhauer. Aiding them were vice president J. M. Davenport, secretary-treasurer Clyde H. Kemp, and directors Charles H. Petree (Powder Springs), Hayden Kemp (Lost Mountain), W. D. McClure (Kennesaw), and Horace C. Gantt (Mount Bethel).

Mary Ellen Simpson Allgood, who grew up on Sewell Mill Road near the Marietta Methodist Campground, witnessed the radical change in rural life styles brought about by REA. Her family and friends had always been poor by modern standards, lacking such conveniences as screens on windows or more than one pair of shoes a year. Yet they grew their own food, always had plenty to eat, and had trouble distinguishing between normal poverty and that induced by the Great Depression. "It was really a wonderful time," she recalled, "when the lights were all turned on.... It was just a happy day; we could throw our [kerosene] lamps away. We had no radio at the time, not even a battery
radio. We used to go down to our neighbor's house and listen to the news on the radio. She had a battery radio. For that Christmas, I was already dating; and my boyfriend, who was Verne, whom I later married, gave me a radio—the first radio I ever had—in 1938."¹⁰

Paul and Louise Lovinggood of the Lost Mountain community had a similar experience. They bought a refrigerator so they would not have to rely on a cold cellar to preserve milk. Mr. Lovinggood believed that "everybody had more time after we got electricity, because we got a washing machine and an iron and a refrigerator."¹¹ Electricity brought dramatic changes in communal as well as farm life. Hoyt and Frances Price began attending Noonday Baptist Church in 1935, when the congregation held only daytime services because of the lack of electric lighting. After the arrival of REA in 1938, Noonday added a Wednesday evening prayer service.¹² Farmers no longer were as isolated as they had been. With more things to do at home and in the community, rural residents could live in the countryside without feeling that they had abandoned the conveniences of urban life.

At the same time, government controls and subsidies became permanent parts of the nation's farm program, making farmers dependent on the government and creating a new form of paternalism. Roy Nathaniel Dodgen, a prosperous farmer at the intersection of Post Oak Tritt and Holly Springs Road, served on the Mountain View committee that advised on AAA programs. Nonetheless, he became a staunch opponent of the New Deal. A political power broker in east Cobb, Dodgen feared the massive growth of federal power during the Roosevelt era. His daughter, Carolyn Dodgen [Meadows], currently a Republican national committeewoman, absorbed her father's opinions and became so anti-Roosevelt that she got into trouble with her eighth-grade teacher at Mountain View School in the early 1950s. Not dreaming that the children would find her assignment offensive, the teacher required the class to write essays praising FDR. Carolyn recalled, "I refused to write it. As a matter of fact, I gave a list of the people that I would write about. Finally, we compromised that we would debate on Franklin Roosevelt. Dorsey [her older brother] had to really drill me, because all I knew was what was going to come out of the encyclopedia. It was not going to be what my father had said."

Like all the other rural schools, Mountain View at the time had its own board of trustees that handled personnel matters and dispensed
Depression Decade

tax money as it saw fit. Dorsey Dodgen recalled that this system of local control was the type of government his father preferred. "He didn't want Washington selecting the courses. He didn't want President Roosevelt or anybody else to have a hand in it. He felt like people could do that very well." The son believed that white Georgians of the era supported Roosevelt because they had always voted for Democrats. But by turning the party of Jefferson and Jackson into the party of big government, FDR in the long run provoked a backlash that made possible the growth of a strong Republican alternative in Cobb County and throughout the South.¹³

**New Deal Programs for Urban Areas**

The New Deal increased government control over industry as well as agriculture. In 1933 Congress created the National Recovery Administration (NRA) on the assumption that the economy would bounce back faster if competitors worked together. Ignoring anti-trust laws, the agency worked with corporate leaders to adopt industrial codes with the force of law. The textile manufacturers were the first in the nation to complete their industrial code. They identified their central problem as overproduction, caused by a decline in the purchasing power of the American consumer. The NRA allowed mill owners to control competition by limiting factories to eighty hours of operation a week. Just as crop allotments increased farm prices, limits on cloth production forced up textile prices. While manufacturers liked this part of the program, they were less enthusiastic about the NRA's insistence upon a safety net for workers. Under government prodding, the cotton textile code required companies to pay their southern operatives a minimum wage of thirty cents an hour for a maximum workweek of forty hours (or twelve dollars a week). Since the cost of living was supposedly higher above the Mason-Dixon line, northern mill workers received a minimum of thirteen dollars for a forty-hour week.

Local textile executive Guy Northcutt claimed that the Marietta Knitting Company and its successor, Champion, were embarrassed that wages before the NRA were only ten cents an hour. Their hands were
tied, however, by the competitive nature of the industry. If the Marietta plant had unilaterally raised wages, it would have put itself out of business. According to Northcutt, "[When] FDR came in and slapped the thirty-cent minimum wage [on the industry], some of the old codgers thought we were ruined and couldn't survive. Well, what's the minimum wage today...?" In fact, the industry adjusted to the minimum wage, because everyone increased costs at the same time, so no one had a competitive advantage. Coupled with rising market prices, induced by the industrial code, the textile industry came out quite well. Even after the Supreme Court two years later declared the NRA unconstitutional, the companies maintained the new labor standards.14

Amos Durr had similar memories of the implementation of minimum wages from the perspective of an African-American worker. Durr left his south Alabama home at the age of fourteen and moved by himself to Acworth, where he performed odd jobs until he reached age sixteen. Then he went to work in the Acworth planing mill owned by Frank Mills. He was attracted to the north Cobb town, because both whites and blacks were friendly and helpful, but the cotton and hosiery factories "were off the record to my race" unless one wanted to do janitorial work. The planing mill was different. There he became a machinist and performed such valuable labor that he was deferred from military service in World War II. His pay before the New Deal was only seven and a half cents an hour for sixty hours a week (a total of 75 cents a day or $4.50 a week). When the NRA came in, the minimum wage in the planing establishments rose to twenty-four cents, while forty hours became the maximum workweek. The increase made quite a difference to a man trying to support a family. Conservative economists objected that minimum wage legislation increased unemployment, since many entry-level, inexperienced workers were not worth twenty-four or thirty cents an hour. But in the peculiar circumstances of the Great Depression, the minimum wage helped low-income laborers. By giving poor people more money to spend, the minimum wage improved the overall economy.15

While programs such as the NRA were designed to bring about basic reforms, other agencies were created to bring immediate relief to desperate, unemployed people. Referring to the "urgent necessity" of public assistance, southern historian George B. Tindall argues that the New Deal provided "first-aid to the destitute." In the process, FDR
won the undying gratitude of ordinary people, but the unending animosity of landlords and factory owners. Georgia governor Gene Talmadge complained that no one would plow a field all day for fifty cents, when he could receive two and a half times that much “for pretending to dig a ditch.”

The New Deal created such public works agencies as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Public Works Administration (PWA). Their purpose was to give the unemployed jobs, doing everything from building dams to conducting oral histories with former slaves. These organizations helped Marietta expand the black high school and build the Brumby Recreation Center and Northcutt Stadium. The city footed a large share of the construction costs when voters on 15 September 1938 approved a one hundred thousand dollar bond referendum for public improvements. Leon M. (Rip) Blair took office at the same time, and the new mayor dedicated his administration to a vigorous infrastructure improvement program, designed to improve the quality of life in Marietta and to pump revenues into a stagnant economy.

The city and the PWA worked together to renovate the small four-classroom school on Lemon Street, constructed at the beginning of the decade with assistance from the Rosenwald fund. Built around an interior courtyard, the new brick structure included an auditorium/gymnasium, four additional classrooms, and domestic science and manual training facilities. Under the direction of local architect W. Montgomery Anderson, the old auditorium was converted into a library, laboratory, and study hall. The facility was also given modern plumbing, lighting, and steam heating. Completed in 1939, the school was renamed at that time from Marietta Industrial to Perkinson High School to honor the chairman of the school board, Dr. W. H. Perkinson. Despite their acceptance of white supremacy, local officials seemed proud of what they described as “one of the most modern Negro school buildings in Georgia.”

Even before the bond referendum, the PWA appropriated $28,294 to build the Brumby Recreation Center. Adjacent to Marietta High School, the center was named for former mayor Thomas M. Brumby, Jr., who died in office in 1938. The one hundred thousand dollar facility included a fifteen hundred-seat auditorium/gymnasium, a swimming pool, and a park, playground, and football field. Another
local project designed by Montgomery Anderson, the Brumby center was dedicated on 16 June 1939.¹⁹

Marietta High School's new football stadium, named for Guy Northcutt, was dedicated in October 1940. It completed the major projects stemming from the 1938 bond issue. The site consisted of thick woods in the 1930s. Principal Shuler Antley went down with the coach
and took measurements, then went to the school board with a proposal. The school board, Mayor Blair, the city council, and county commissioner Charles M. Head all enthusiastically supported the plan, with the county grading the lot for free.

A member of the school board, Guy Northcutt recalled: "The city could get all the WPA labor it wanted. We conceived of the idea of build-
ing a rock wall around our athletic field. I got one good man. He was on WPA too—Mr. Ed Runyan—and all the labor we could get. Then I went out all over the county mooching rock, fieldstone. Anywhere I heard of a farmer with some fieldstone, I went out and begged him for them.” The WPA provided nine dollars worth of cement and supplies for each one hundred hours worked by WPA employees. Occasionally, Northcutt had to go out and say, “Mr. Ed, you’re going to have to slow those boys down. They’re working too fast and money’s giving out.”

The multi-billion dollar WPA program was controversial. Referring to the alleged laziness of public employees, critics said that WPA stood for “We Piddle Around.” Republicans complained that pro-New Deal Democrats announced a disproportionate number of new projects just before an election day. Joe Mack Wilson, who later served over a quarter century in the Georgia legislature and became a master of patronage politics, argued that in 1936, just out of high school, he “wasn’t inside the clique” and could not find a WPA job in Marietta. So he went to South Carolina and found a job digging ditches. Walter Cantrell blamed the public works programs for the disappearance of farm labor, forcing him to convert from row crops to raising cattle. Northcutt, however, was an ardent supporter of the program, arguing that it gave people worthwhile tasks to perform “that will last for generations.” Rip Blair also believed that the WPA helped Marietta. He argued that Mayor Tom Brumby “did a splendid job” of building sewers and paving roads. A local businessman, Dempsey Medford, Sr., headed the WPA ditch-digging crew. After Brumby died, Blair continued Brumby’s initiatives. By the end of the WPA, the Marietta government had paved the vast majority of city streets.

Brumby and Blair also sought federal dollars to build public housing in Marietta. Blair became a great advocate of slum clearance and public housing, telling his fellow Rotarians that such facilities had worked well in the Scandinavian countries for some thirty-five years. Advocating slum clearance as a public responsibility, he argued that civic leaders had a duty to pressure slumlords to add indoor-plumbing and electricity. The Cobb County Times also advocated change, running a series of articles in 1940 on inadequate housing in Marietta.

A federal report claimed that some 1,286 of Marietta’s 2,278 families lived in unsafe, unsanitary housing. Under Blair’s leadership, the city council in April 1940 passed an ordinance requiring all future homes in Marietta to have indoor plumbing. The following October, a number of
federal officials traveled to Marietta to open with great fanfare two public housing projects, Clay Homes (named for former senator Alexander S. Clay) for whites and Fort Hill Homes for blacks. While urban renewal displaced homeowners as well as renters and disrupted black neighborhoods, it also eliminated half of Marietta's slums and provided better housing. 22
Original kitchen, Clay Homes (Dedication brochure, 17 October 1941, Blair papers, Kennesaw State University)
Initially under the auspices of the WPA, the National Youth Administration played an important role in Cobb County in the late 1930s. One of its major functions was to provide work-study assistance to needy students from grammar through graduate school. NYA students in Cobb engaged in needed community service from digging ditches and doing repair work to guiding tourists around Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park. The NYA's main contribution to the county was to prepare young men and women for worthwhile work through its training schools. Operating out of several one-story buildings spread around Marietta, Clyde Maxwell supervised shops where young people learned such skills as cabinetmaking, welding, and radio. Cobb schools superintendent F. T. Wills supplied the shops with all the material they needed. In exchange, the students made such useful things as new desks for the white schools and repaired desks for the black schools. Renamed the Rickenbacker School
during World War II, this NYA project supported the war effort by teaching riveting and other skills needed at the new Bell Bomber plant.

Before the war, Mrs. William Dean directed a homemaking school in Marietta. The students tended to be poorly educated farm girls, who received minimal wages for making children's clothes. At the same time they received lessons in basic hygiene, nutrition, and manners. After 1937 Luda Mangum [Thomas] supervised the NYA District # 7, including Cobb and seven adjacent counties. Establishing her office over a store in downtown Marietta, she worked closely with Superintendent Wills and later with Superintendent Paul Sprayberry.39

The most controversial NYA-sponsored activity in Cobb County was a camp for unemployed white women along Nickajack Creek near Smyrna. In the latter half of 1935 the NYA leased Camp Highland, an Atlanta YWCA facility, which was popular as a weekend retreat for the big city's businesswomen. The site included a large lodge, recreation hall, dining room, outdoor swimming pool, and electricity. The NYA was
responsible for a number of educational camps for unemployed women around the country. Mrs. Mercer B. Evans came down from the nation's capital to direct the Camp Highland program. The goal was to bring young women together for one to four months to teach them leadership skills in such areas as self-government and "problems of interest to women workers in industry."

Whatever value the program may have had in big cities, the curriculum had little relevance to the problems of unemployed country girls. Shortly after the 1935 session ended, the Smyrna camp came under attack in the Atlanta Georgian and other Hearst newspapers after a disillusioned music teacher, Pearle Hutson, complained that the school was "communistic." She alleged that she was only allowed to teach the girls labor songs. When she tried to lead them in singing "America," Mrs. Evans chastised her, asking, "Don't you know America isn't the land of the free." Supposedly, Mrs. Evans hid charts documenting worker exploitation when the state school superintendent made an inspection tour.

Shortly after the Georgian article was published, a third of the camp was destroyed in a mysterious fire. The NYA quickly terminated the unemployed women's program in Cobb County, and two years later used budget cutbacks as the excuse to eliminate the program everywhere. Even in the more liberal North no one organized an effort to continue the unpopular concept. Nonetheless, the overall impact of the NYA was positive. Historian Florence Corley argues that the agency had an admirable record in including blacks and women to a far greater degree than was customary in the South of that era. The work-study funds helped students stay in school and, in the process, enabled a number of colleges to remain open. The vocational training programs sent numerous young people into meaningful employment. In a time of hardship, pessimism, and despair, the NYA played a central role in saving a generation at risk.24

A final federal project with a lasting impact on Cobb County was the expansion of Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, where Union troops under General William T. Sherman attacked the Confederate forces of General Joseph E. Johnston in the summer of 1864. Efforts to preserve the Civil War battlefield began when the Colonel Dan McCook Brigade Association purchased sixty acres where McCook died leading a Union charge up the steep incline of Cheatham
Hill. On the fiftieth anniversary of the battle in June 1914 association members gathered at the site to dedicate the Illinois monument. Having insufficient funds to restore the battlefield properly, the group soon offered their property to the federal government. After much delay while title disputes were resolved, the War Department assumed ownership in 1926. At about the same time a federal commission identified Kennesaw Mountain as the most suitable site to interpret the Atlanta campaign and called for the creation of a military park.

A local organization had already begun to purchase land at Big and Little Kennesaw mountains. Headed by William Tate Holland, the Kennesaw Mountain Battlefield Association gained title to some 450 acres, including the most important battlefield sites. The group sold bonds, made a few improvements, and developed plans for a toll road through the park. However, little came of its efforts. When Franklin Roosevelt became president, he shifted the Cheatham Hill site from the War Department to the National Park Service. Seventh district congressman Malcolm Tarver and Senator Richard Russell spearheaded a successful legislative effort in 1935 to change Kennesaw Mountain's title from national battlefield site to national battlefield park. Accompanying the new designation was an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars to buy as much of the battlefield as possible. Suffering the consequences of the Great Depression, Holland's association had fallen on hard times and was currently in receivership, its bondholders pleading for relief. After the association and the federal government failed to agree upon a fair price, the park service gained title through condemnation proceedings.

The most important person in developing the park was B. C. Yates, a University of Georgia graduate, who joined the Emergency Conservation Work program (ECW) in 1934. Under the direction of the superintendent of the military park at Chickamauga and Chattanooga, Yates established his headquarters in the shadow of Kennesaw Mountain. With great enthusiasm and competence, he undertook his first task of documenting the history of the 1864 battle. Yates was fortunate to find actual eyewitnesses, particularly Lucinda Hardage, a sixteen-year-old when Confederate general Leonidas Polk established his headquarters at the Hardage farm. She described for Yates the scene at the house when the general's body was returned from Pine Mountain where he was killed by Yankee artillery. Yates took
extensive field notes of his interviews and visits to battlefield sites. Within a year of his appointment he established ties to the federal public works agencies, using the unemployed to grade roads and trails, clean up the grounds, preserve fortifications, and start a temporary museum.

After a brief absence, Yates returned in March 1937 with the title of junior park historian. A month later the position was upgraded to acting superintendent. In 1938 he directed a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp established at the northeast corner of the park. Named Camp T. M. Brumby, after the late Marietta mayor, the CCC camp proved a major help to Yates in improving the park. In 1939 Yates was promoted to permanent superintendent. By this time the park had expanded to nineteen hundred acres. After five years of active duty in World War II, Yates came home in 1946 to his beloved park. He made himself a part of the community, participating in civic and church activities and involving local people in the affairs of the park service.

On occasion this community spirit seemed at cross-purposes with the plans of his superiors. For instance, Yates seemed as interested in interpreting how the war affected civilians as in explaining troop movements and strategies. In 1939 he argued that the Kolb farmhouse on the battlefield grounds should be historically restored and used to interpret how civilians lived at the time. The National Park Service regional director preferred at first to tear the house down, arguing that the “main object of the Kennesaw Mountain area is to commemorate a military engagement,” not to describe southern social conditions. Ultimately, they compromised on a plan to restore the exterior of the Kolb house, while modernizing the interior as a residence for a park employee. Yates continued to serve as superintendent until 1963. After acquiring a master’s degree, the distinguished historian taught at Reinhardt College and continued to speak and write on local history.25

Intolerance in the 1930s

In the Depression decade, several incidents of violence and bigotry divided the Cobb County community and added to the gloom of a somber era. Two of the events involved Klan harassment of minority business owners. The Ku Klux Klan reached the peak of its strength in the Prosperity Decade of the 1920s. The organization was so powerful
in Georgia that almost no successful politician dared speak against it. The secret brotherhood played a key role, for instance, in preventing the reelection of Governor Thomas W. Hardwick in 1922 after the governor denounced the group’s terrorist tactics. During the 1920s the Klan also had considerable strength in the North, dominating Indiana politics for a while and managing to stage massive rallies as far north as Long Island, New York, where perhaps an eighth of the white residents were Klan members.26

Early in the century Marietta was home to a number of Syrian mercantile families. The Najjars, a family of Byzantine Catholics, operated a department store in the two buildings on the northeast corner of Glover Park where the Strand Theater would later be located. Resenting their presence, the Ku Klux Klan threatened them with miniature coffins. Some of Marietta’s civic leaders were outraged by the Klan tactics and called a public meeting, in which judges Samuel H. Sibley and Daniel Webster Blair condemned the terrorists. Judge Blair’s son Rip loaned his gun to one of the Syrians, who engaged in target practice on his front lawn. After that, the KKK left him alone. Before long, however, all the Syrians except the Najjar family moved to such Georgia towns as LaGrange, Newnan, and Albany, where they became valued members of society.

Even the Najjars were forced to close in 1930 when they were victimized by a disastrous fire. In the early morning hours of Halloween day, 31 October 1930, a gale began to blow from the northwest and temperatures fell below freezing for the first time that season. Although the cause of the blaze was never determined, one can speculate that a faulty heating system, unused since the previous season, may have been to blame. About 1:30 A.M. someone spotted smoke coming from Najjar’s men’s clothing department. The city was unable to determine what caused the fire and whether it began on the first or second floor. The blaze swept northward down Cherokee Street to Dunn’s feed and grocery, just behind Najjar’s. Fortunately, fire doors and automatic sprinklers saved a large cotton warehouse, full of the farmers’ harvest, in the adjacent building. The fire also spread westward along the stores fronting on Glover Park, damaging Florence’s department store, Schilling’s hardware, and Fine’s department store. In the block between Root and Cherokee Street only Hodges’ drugstore on the far corner escaped untouched.27
Marietta Square, north side, Florence Store with Najjar's to the right, prior to 1930 fire (Cobb-581, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
At the time Marietta had only a volunteer fire department. Their two pumpers proving inadequate to the emergency, Mayor Tom Brumby called on the Atlanta fire department for help. Some of the Marietta firemen lacked smoke masks, rubber coats or boots. Yet they worked through the night, drenched to the skin. Several suffered near serious accidents. Mayes Ward, for instance, fell into a burning pit when the floor he was standing on collapsed. An African-American volunteer, Jim Palmer, risked his own safety, jumping in and pulling Ward out. Just before dawn, the Atlanta and Marietta firemen brought the blaze under control. In five hours the fire destroyed property worth about a quarter million dollars. The Najjars alone lost sixty thousand dollars of stock, only one-twelfth of which was covered by insurance. The family rented the two buildings that housed the dry goods business, with one owned by Col. John E. Mozley and the other by the mother-in-law of Charles M. Brown. Those buildings were damaged beyond repair. The lots remained vacant for almost five years until the Strand Theater was constructed. Refusing to be run out of town by accidents or terrorists, the Najjar family continued to live on Cherokee Street for some time after the Halloween blaze.28

The Klan had an indirect role in a sensational 1931 murder. The perpetrator, Marietta businessman George Goumas, was a native of Greece, a naturalized American citizen, and a war hero. Before World War I he opened a meat market in Marietta. Sent to the western front as part of the Signal Corps, he was laying communication wires in front of American trenches, when he was almost killed by a German shell that landed nearby. Observing that two fellow soldiers were wounded, Goumas picked them up, one at a time, and braved enemy fire while he carried them back to the trenches. For his heroism, he received the Distinguished Service Cross and the Croix de Guerre.

Goumas’s wartime experience seems to have unsettled him mentally, causing occasional blackouts and bouts of insanity. Nonetheless, the handsome war hero returned to his Central meat market on Washington Avenue and married a local girl, Emma Stell. Goumas seemed to have readjusted to civilian life until the KKK organized a boycott of his business in protest of his marriage to an Anglo-Saxon. As Klan harassment continued, he started drinking heavily and, according to his attorney, developed a “persecution complex.”

The murder victim was a popular, forty-two year old businessman,
Doyle P. Butler. A Cobb County native, he started the first Ford dealership in Marietta as a young man in 1910. After seventeen years he sold that business and joined with the Andersons (James T., Sr. and Jr.) in forming Anderson-Butler Chevrolet on Powder Springs Street. In April 1931 the partnership dissolved, and Butler moved several blocks away to Atlanta Street, where he became the general manager of Forrester Ford Motor Company. Five weeks after he started working at the Ford dealership, a car disappeared from Forrester's used car lot. When Sheriff Tom Sanders saw Goumas driving a vehicle that fit the description, he pulled him over. The Greek immigrant claimed he was driving a friend's car, so Sanders took his word for it, but warned him to see Forrester the next day and make things right. Two days later, Goumas talked to Forrester, and presumably the matter was closed. But Goumas continued brooding about what he perceived as a false accusation. The next day he returned to the Ford dealership four times. On the last visit he carried a gun. Finding Butler, he shot the unarmed man twice without warning. Butler staggered out the door and reached a neighboring business. He was rushed to a hospital but died after a few hours. Goumas walked home, but was arrested at his front door by Sheriff Sanders and two deputies.

Realizing that angry men were advocating instant justice, the lawmen rushed their suspect to the Fulton County Tower for safekeeping. There, Goumas remained until his trial five months later. From the start Atlanta attorney Augustus Lee served as his defense lawyer. Knowing that Marietta juries sometimes resented outside counsel, Judge Harold Hawkins a week before the trial appointed Marietta attorneys Rip Blair and Sam Welsch to help with the defense. Hawkins warned them that community hostility toward Goumas might damage their legal careers, but the local attorneys took the case anyway.

One of the prosecutors was Congressman John S. Wood, who had participated in the Leo Frank lynching some sixteen years earlier. The state had no trouble proving that Goumas killed Butler. The defense hoped merely to get their client off with life in prison. Their tactic was to appeal to the jury by "laying out [Goumas's] medals" for them to see. Goumas was allowed to make an unsworn statement, in which he expressed sorrow for the crime, but claimed to have no memory of it. Arguing that he was shell-shocked during the war, the unbalanced defendant lamented that he would never have killed a friend if he had
been “in [his] right mind.” In his closing argument prosecutor Wood asserted that there was no evidence that Goumas suffered from a mental condition, since he had never gone to a government hospital to seek treatment. But the jury, after deliberating four and a half hours, chose to be merciful and gave Goumas life in prison.10

The Goumas case provides evidence that public opinion was not universally biased against foreigners. Whatever prejudices they may have had, local residents seemed willing to set them aside in the case of a military hero who had established himself in the community. Mariettans seemed satisfied that justice was done, despite the jury’s vote for less than the death penalty. Blair claimed that this was one of the most difficult cases he undertook, because he was close to the murdered man and his family. But, judging by his later political and economic success, he did not hurt his career by taking on Goumas’s defense. By 1931 the citizens of Cobb County were perhaps too absorbed with their individual and collective economic plight to worry much about other matters. Nonetheless, an event in Smyrna in the late 1930s revealed how easy it was to whip up mob hysteria when a black man was accused of a crime.

The Smyrna Riot

By the 1930s lynch law had become less commonplace in Georgia, and most daily newspapers took a stand against any group that took the law into its own hands. A variety of African-American, Christian, and Jewish women’s organizations had developed educational programs designed to prevent lynching.11 Nonetheless, the South continued to be plagued by racial violence. A 1938 murder and the ensuing Smyrna riot provide a local example of the lengths to which the Caucasian majority would go to maintain white supremacy. The riot followed a double murder on Cooper Lake Road around midnight on an October weekend.

The case began when an African-American construction worker, Willie Drew Russell, dropped by the George Washington Camp farm, three miles southwest of Smyrna. The sixty-six-year-old farmer, his married daughter, and his nine-year-old grandson had gone to bed. Camp recognized the visitor as a former employee and went out in the yard to talk to him. Russell, who had been drinking, hoped Camp would give him some money. Cecil Pauls later testified that his grandfather came
back in the house, found a quarter, and took it out to Russell. The black construction worker remembered things differently. He claimed that the elderly white man made threats and swung at him with a cane. Whatever the circumstances, the intoxicated laborer struck his former employer with an axe-handle and killed him. Then he entered the modest two-room farmhouse and murdered the daughter, Mrs. Christine Camp Pauls. He struck Cecil several times, but the boy somehow survived the attack. After remaining unconscious or semi-conscious for over twenty-four hours, he gathered enough strength by Monday morning to stagger to a neighbor's house. Later that day Cobb policemen arrested the suspect, wearing a pair of bloody shoes, at a construction site in a nearby county. They took him to the Fulton County Tower for safekeeping.

When word spread, the white community was outraged. By seven o'clock on Monday night some five hundred men and a few women marched through Smyrna, attacking any African-American they could find and burning Bethel Elementary School, a new black institution. The mob stopped automobiles and pulled blacks out into the road. The rioters also stood on the streetcar tracks to stop trolleys. Going aboard, they ran down the aisles, beating black passengers and forcing them to flee into the night. Unable to handle the large crowd, the Smyrna police force called on state and county back-ups. Eventually, some thirty-five officers, led by Thurmond White, the Smyrna night police chief, cordoned the town, separating black and white neighborhoods.32

The violence, however, had only been postponed. The next night about seven hundred people, mainly farmers and mill hands, reassembled. Again, the angry men attacked innocent bystanders and passing motorists. Driving north, a family of tourists found themselves under attack after someone in the crowd noticed the black chauffeur. Troublemakers threw rocks and tried to grab the driver until the vehicle escaped up the Dixie Highway toward Marietta. Meanwhile, Judge Harold Hawkins phoned the governor, E. D. Rivers, pleading for assistance. Rivers sent out adjutant general Jack Stoddard, who eventually subdues the demonstrators with a tear-gas attack. In their retreat the mob tramped through a black neighborhood east of town, wrecking about twenty-five houses and driving the occupants into the woods. Not even Sherman's army destroyed that many homes in the Smyrna area. As far away as Jonesville, several miles to the north, blacks were
so afraid that they hid in the woods all night. Reacting to threats of a
march on the Fulton County Tower, Governor Rivers had Russell
removed to the state prison in Reidsville.\textsuperscript{19}

The police arrested twenty of the ringleaders and carted them off
to the jail in Marietta. The following day a \textit{Cobb County Times} reporter
interviewed them. They ranged in age from seventeen to thirty, and
most came from the Smyrna, Oakdale, and Fair Oaks areas in the southern
part of the county. All claimed to be innocent. George McMillan,
a deputy sheriff at the time, said warrants had been issued for another
seventy men. The suspects were charged with “malicious mischief” and
bond was set at twenty-five hundred dollars. A newspaper photograph
shows the inmates posing defiantly and seemingly proud of themselves.

The Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches in Smyrna felt
compelled to denounce the rioters. In a joint resolution they con-
demned the mob spirit as “unchristianlike, unlawful, and [in violation
of] all laws of fairness, justice and reason.” The \textit{Cobb County Times} was
also outraged by the violence. In a front-page column, editor Chess
Abernathy accused “a gang of young hoodlums” of violating “about
every fundamental right that American citizens have.” The paper
pointed out that the riot did more economic harm to whites than
blacks. All the taxpayers would have to pay to rebuild the Bethel
school, and a white landlord owned eleven of the tenant houses that
were damaged. Calling the criminals “yellow rats,” Abernathy argued
that the reputation of all Cobb’s citizens had been damaged as news of
the riot spread throughout the nation. He concluded by calling for the
punishment of all guilty parties. \textit{Times} publisher Otis Brumby was in the
hospital at the time of the riot, but he was well enough to write his
“Jambalaya” column the following week. While defending the reputa-
tion of Smyrna’s law-abiding majority, he lashed out at “the small hand-
ful of rowdies” that damaged the town’s reputation. Brumby noted that
hundreds of people had contacted the \textit{Times} in support of its position,
but a few troublemakers had threatened the editorial staff with bodily
harm. The veteran journalist advised that the editorial policy was “sole-
ly at my direction,” and told angry readers to direct their wrath his way.\textsuperscript{14}

Abernathy and Brumby, no doubt, reflected the embarrassment
felt by many members of Cobb’s elite. Yet justice moved slower for the
white rioters than it did for the black defendant. Ultimately, the police
arrested twenty-seven riot suspects. Within a week the court reduced
their bonds to a thousand dollars, and all but one went home to await trial. Meeting in November, the grand jury indicted Willie Russell for murder and nineteen of the young men for malicious mischief. The charges were dropped against the other rioters. On 14 November the black suspect went on trial. Solicitor H. G. Vandiviere presented nine-year-old Cecil Pauls as his chief witness. The boy related the story of the grizzly murders. The defendant made an unsworn statement in which he admitted to being drunk, but denied any memory of the crime. He argued logically, "If I had known I had done it, I wouldn't have gone back to my job, but would have tried to get away." He ended by asking the court for mercy. Court-appointed attorneys Guy Roberts and Gordon Combs represented Russell. They did not seem to try hard to protect their client. They accepted the first twelve names called for jury duty. Rather than offering a spirited closing argument, they told the jury they believed Cecil's testimony and seemed to apologize for being there, asserting they were merely doing their duty.

The jury, headed by druggist L. H. Atherton, deliberated less than an hour before bringing in a guilty verdict. Judge Hawkins immediately set the date of execution for 9 December. There were no appeals. Just fifty-four days after the commission of the crime, the condemned man died in the electric chair at Reidsville. On the same day the state carried out five more executions of convicted African-American felons, the largest mass execution in the history of the Reidsville penitentiary. On 18 November, four days after the Russell verdict, the trials of the rioters were supposed to occur. Nonetheless, all but one failed to appear. The court found twenty-three year old Buck Miller guilty of chasing a black man with something resembling a butcher knife. Judge Hawkins sentenced him to a year at the state farm. The judge allowed the rest to pay a modest fine of $8.50 each and renew their bonds until the January court session. On 25 January 1939 three of the defendants were tried and quickly acquitted. The grand jury failed to indict two others after their attorneys, John Dorsey and Gordon Gann, filed demurrers, which were sustained by Judge Hawkins. When one of the remaining suspects contracted a case of influenza, the rest of the trials were postponed. Apparently, they were never tried. Only one rioter served time for the considerable damage to persons and property in the aftermath of the Smyrna murders.

The Najjar and Goumas incidents and the Smyrna riot illustrate
Cobb at its worst in the early years of the twentieth-century. While religious and civic leaders deplored intolerance, a handful of narrow-minded people seemed determined to marginalize those who were not white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. Even the best people supported white supremacy and appeared more interested in social order than in justice and opportunity for all. The depressed economy of the 1930s offered little hope for Cobb’s farmers and workers. As the people struggled through those dark days, they saw little evidence of the massive transformation that was about to occur. Yet the seeds of change were already planted as New Deal dollars and programs began the process of modernization that ultimately moved the region into the national mainstream. This federal pump priming began an infusion of resources that reached major proportions during World War II. As the nation prepared for war, Cobb County found itself on the verge of its most dramatic turning point since the Civil War. This time the federal intervention came not from invading armies but from an eagerly sought military base and aircraft plant, as Cobb played a central role in winning the fight against totalitarian tyranny.
Cobb County's phenomenal growth in the second half of the twentieth century began during World War II with the opening of the Bell Bomber plant. Headquartered in Buffalo, New York, the Bell Aircraft Corporation had only about a thousand employees prior to Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Its main contract was for a single-engine pursuit plane, the P-39 Airacobra. As Bell played a crucial role in the country's defense, the work force grew fifty times larger and the company expanded into new facilities at Niagara Falls, Marietta, and Burlington, Vermont.

The military's insatiable demand for planes brought the young aircraft industry to maturity. Dating back to the Wright brothers in 1903, airplane manufacturing was only in its fourth decade. With the aid of government contracts, the various companies built far more planes in the early 1940s than in all their previous history. Because aircraft were needed in a hurry, the War Department required competitors to work together and share secrets. Sometimes the government let one company design a new
plane and its competitors help mass-produce it. The B-29 is an example of this type of cooperation. When the war began, the Boeing Corporation already had a contract to design this large, four-engine bomber. It would be bigger and fly farther without refueling than any other plane in the American arsenal. To hasten its production, the military asked three companies (Boeing, Bell, and Martin) to assemble it.

In 1941 the Roosevelt administration expressed concern that too many American aircraft plants were located on the West Coast or in the northeast, where they were vulnerable to attack. Manufacturers were encouraged to construct branches in the interior of the nation. Atlanta became a likely location because of its excellent network of railroads and busy airport, Candler Field. Two weeks after Pearl Harbor, company founder Lawrence D. Bell learned that the government had selected Bell Aircraft to build B-29s somewhere in the Atlanta area. The other B-29 assembly plants were far inland with Boeing operating out of Wichita, Kansas, and Glenn Martin in Omaha, Nebraska.

On the surface, Marietta seemed an unlikely location for one of America’s largest assembly plants. Located in a relatively small county, the city had never housed an industry that employed over a few hundred workers. The decision to build a bomber plant in rural Cobb County was the result of fortuitous circumstances and the hard work of visionary local statesmen determined to lead the area out of the Great Depression. This chapter attempts to detail the process by which they brought the aircraft industry to Marietta.

Of the many people who played a role in winning the Bell branch, none were more important than Cobb natives Lucius D. Clay, Leon M. (Rip) Blair, James V. Carmichael, and George H. McMillan. Seldom do statesmen from small towns have the opportunity to institute such significant change. The local leaders came from distinguished families, active in law, politics, and trade, but with little prior industrial experience. In common with other New South advocates, they were ardent champions of industrial growth and saw a positive role for government in improving education, building a modern infrastructure, and actively recruiting needed factories.

On a national level they supported the New Deal and did their best to bring federal dollars to Cobb County. In statewide politics they championed the liberal administration of Governor Ellis Arnall (1943-47) and opposed the anti-urban Gene Talmadge faction. Their liberalism was lim-
ited by their acceptance of racial segregation and lack of enthusiasm for labor unions. Nonetheless, Clay, Blair, Carmichael, and McMillan seemed delighted that their achievements created greater opportunities for all people. With the help of many others, they pumped new energy into Cobb County's sluggish economy and prepared the way for a more enlightened, more affluent future.¹

Cobb was not alone in building a more diverse economy. The 1940s were watershed years for the urban South as the modern Sunbelt emerged. As late as 1938 a government report described the South as the nation's "number one economic problem." In 1940 per capita income in Georgia was just 57 percent of the national average. During World War II, however, powerful statesmen such as Representative Carl Vinson and Senator Richard Russell succeeded in bringing Georgia more military bases than any state other than Texas. Adjacent to Columbus, Fort Benning became the biggest infantry training school anywhere. Every sizable Georgia town had some type of military facility. These installations employed numerous civilians, and soldiers on leave spent some of their paychecks in nearby communities.

Shipyards created numerous jobs in coastal cities, and ordnance plants sprang up in the interior. As workers received training for these jobs, the skill level of the Georgia labor force rose significantly. After the war consumer-oriented industries took note of the rise in southern purchasing power. Choosing to be closer to their customers, corporations looked to New South cities such as Atlanta to build up-to-date factories and establish regional headquarters. In a time when the whole country had thrown off the Depression and moved forward, Georgia outpaced the rest of the nation. Between 1940 and 1950 per capita income rose thirteen percentage points to 70 percent of the national average. By far, the largest new industry to come to the Deep South in the 1940s was the Bell Aircraft plant in Marietta. The Cobb County experience provides a case study of how World War II revolutionized Georgia, economically and socially.²

General Lucius D. Clay

The key figure in sending the Bell plant to Cobb County was a man who moved away after his high school graduation, but continued to maintain a fondness for his old hometown. Lucius D. Clay was born in Marietta on 23
Senator Alexander Stephens Clay (Cobb-143, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
April 1898 to U.S. Senator Alexander Stephens Clay and Sarah Frances White Clay. Senator Clay served in Washington from 1897 until his death in 1910. For a while Lucius served as a senate messenger boy. Like many southern Democrats, Senator Clay opposed American imperialism following the Spanish-American War (1898), when the Republican administration of President William McKinley tried to annex the Philippines as part of the peace treaty with Spain. The senator's objections were both democratic and racist. He joined with other southerners and many northerners in fearing that "Spaniards, half-castes, Chinese, Malays, and Japanese" could never be assimilated into the United States. But his primary reservation was that American imperialism ran contrary to the American tradition of self-government. Accurately predicting Filipino resistance, he pointed out "what a serious and difficult task it is to rule and govern eight or nine millions of people against their will, when this people were ready to sacrifice their fortunes and their lives for independence and self-government" and when they were thousands of miles away from the United States. He predicted that any attempt by Americans to deny freedom to the Filipinos "ultimately would destroy free institutions among the conquerors as well as the conquered."  

Despite his opposition to Republican foreign policy, Senator Clay championed much of the progressive program of Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican president from 1901-09. Lucius Clay recalled that his father was "regarded as quite a liberal in those days" because of his support for T.R.'s "trust-busting" activities. While Roosevelt enforced the anti-trust laws sparingly, he showed courage in taking on America's most powerful tycoons when he thought they were operating contrary to public interest. In Georgia politics Clay sided with Governor Hoke Smith (1907-09 and 1911), a "trust-buster" and progressive Democrat on economic and educational issues, but sponsor of a constitutional amendment that disfranchised most black voters. A liberal by Georgia standards, Senator Clay was quite conservative on many issues involving federal power. As a general rule he favored states' rights, segregation, and limited government. However, he opposed Hoke Smith's successor, Governor Joseph M. Brown of Marietta, whose advocacy of railroad interests branded him a conservative.  

After the senator died, Republican President William Howard Taft extended a courtesy to Sarah Clay, ignoring normal patronage practices by appointing the Democrat's widow to the job of Marietta post-
Marietta High School, 1914 graduating class, Lucius Clay, 2nd from right, back row
(Cobb-167, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
master. Mrs. Clay served in that capacity for the next twenty-one years. Mariettans who knew both Lucius and his mother claimed that the general resembled her in appearance and personality. Her strong character is revealed in a story about her devotion to duty. Falling one morning, she broke several fingers, but bandaged and placed a splint on them herself, so that she would not be late for work at the post office. Born near Lithia Springs, Momma Clay was just a child when her father died during the Civil War in a Union prisoner-of-war camp. She never forgave the North, and one of her grandchildren remembered that she “didn’t like Yankees.” She was old-fashioned in other ways, continuing to wear skirts that extended to the floor even after styles changed. She survived her husband by over three decades, dying in 1942 at age seventy-nine.

Growing up in the large Victorian house his parents built on Atlanta Street, Lucius graduated from Marietta High School in 1914. After a year at Millard’s Army-Navy Preparatory School in Washington, D.C., he enrolled at West Point in 1915 and graduated three years later. Clay’s class completed their education one year early, so that they could serve as quickly as possible in the world war raging in Europe. The young cadet was fortunate that the War Department made this decision; otherwise he might not have graduated at all. Though barely twenty years old, Clay had supreme confidence in his own judgment and was stereotypically southern in his refusal to put up with silly orders. By the end of his junior year, he had accumulated so many demerits that he was on the verge of expulsion. Nonetheless, he had good grades and left West Point in the top fourth of his class.

Because he had done so well academically, he never made it to the western front. The army decided to turn the top fourth of the class into engineers, so Clay was stationed in America where he could receive further training. He also got married in 1918 to a beautiful young lady, Marjorie McKeown, whom he met just before graduation, when she arrived at West Point by bus to attend a prom with another cadet. Stepping from the bus, she tripped, and literally fell into Clay’s arms. She soon learned that the young man she came to visit was ill and could not go to the dance, but Clay was attentive, and a romance began. The marriage was not universally popular back home. Not only was Marjorie a Yankee from New Jersey, she was also a Roman Catholic. Nonetheless, the marriage lasted a lifetime.
Lucius and Marjorie Clay, 1949 (Blair papers, Kennesaw State University)
After the war, Congress drastically cut military spending, and Clay remained a first lieutenant for the next seventeen years. Frequently, he was tempted to leave the military for civilian pursuits that promised greater financial rewards. His father-in-law, the president of the New England Button Company of Newark, wanted Lucius to join the firm. Nevertheless, the young officer stuck with his military career and became increasingly contented after the Corps of Engineers became involved in depression-era public works programs. With his political background, Clay seemed particularly suited to the public relations aspects of Corps assignments. After Franklin Roosevelt became president, Clay worked closely with key New Dealers in coordinating projects between the Corps and public works agencies. He quickly gained the respect of men such as Harry Hopkins and Representative Sam Rayburn of Texas who had the ear of the president.

After a tour in the Philippines, Clay came home in 1939 to build the huge Denison Dam in Rayburn's district. The following September Roosevelt summoned him to Washington to start up an emergency airport construction program, to prepare the nation for war. Promoted to major, Clay nonetheless dressed in civilian clothes for his new job, which was officially under the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA). Public opinion polls showed that the American people wanted to stay out of another world war, and Clay asserted, "It was to our disadvantage to talk too much about what we were doing to get ready for war." The Roosevelt administration emphasized the peacetime value of airport construction, not its military significance.

Officially, Clay was secretary to the approval board for airport construction and assistant to the administrator of the CAA, Colonel Donald H. Connolly. Consisting of the secretaries of Commerce, War, and Navy, the approval board never met. For a few months Clay reported to commerce secretary Jesse Jones. Then Jones told him to run the program by himself. In the last fifteen months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the American entry into World War II, Clay started the construction of 450 airports, including a new airstrip in Marietta.

Leon M. (Rip) Blair

In 1940-41 Marietta mayor Rip Blair worked closely with Clay in bringing an airport to Marietta. Clay and Blair had known each other all their
lives. Their ancestors came from the same part of Douglas County, just south of Cobb. While practicing law in Marietta, Alexander Stephens Clay made Rip's father, Daniel Webster Blair, a partner. In the early 1920s D.W. Blair became judge of the Blue Ridge Circuit. General Clay recalled that while his father was considerably older than Judge Blair, they were very close friends.10

As an unruly teenager Rip belonged to a gang called the "dirty dozen," headed by a future president of NBC, Niles Trammell. For two or three years their favorite antic was to joy ride in an automobile they stole on a regular basis from the barn of Moultrie Sessions. A prominent Mariettan, Sessions lived in a Greek Revival mansion on Kennesaw Avenue. After disconnecting the speedometer and pushing the car down the driveway, the boys cranked it up and drove it into Atlanta, returning it each evening under cover of the noise created by the 2:15 train.11

Two years ahead of Lucius Clay, Blair graduated from Marietta High School in 1912. After serving in the army, he came home from World War I to establish a successful law practice. Following the death of his friend Tom Brumby, Rip was elected unanimously in September 1938 to take his place as mayor. As impulsive as ever, Blair produced devoted friends and bitter enemies. He offended some landlords by continuing Brumby's vigorous advocacy of slum clearance and public housing. According to Blair, the strongest outcry came from slumlords that rented substandard houses to blacks.

In the 1930s Blair received considerable support from Tom Brumby's brother Otis, the publisher of the Cobb County Times. For a while he served on the board of directors of the family's Brumby Chair Company. Those close ties came to an abrupt halt, when Blair got into a fight during a city council meeting in early 1941 with Robert E. Brumby, brother Tom's successor as president of the chair factory. The influential businessman asked the city council to close part of Brumby Street near the factory and to create another street a short distance to the north. He claimed that the closing would allow the company to build a fence around all its property, providing greater protection. Blair saw the move as self-serving. Perceiving a conflict of interest, the mayor resigned from the Brumby company board while the proposal was before the council. Before the issue was resolved, Blair called Brumby a liar, the latter took a swing at the mayor, and Blair flung an inkwell that the factory president managed to duck. Ultimately, Brumby departed and
the council voted to table the matter.12

The mayor was on his best behavior a half year earlier, in the autumn of 1940, when he received a call from the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, asking him to attend a meeting to consider building a Cobb County airport. When he and a large local delegation arrived, the Chamber officials told them about the emergency airport program and encouraged them to seek federal funds for Marietta.13 Atlanta had developed Candler Field, south of town, as a major commercial airport, but the town fathers desired a series of complementary airfields, encircling the city. They thought that these facilities could handle secondary functions, such as providing alternative landing strips when Candler was closed by bad weather. Blair had a track record of bringing federal dollars to Marietta, and he jumped at the chance to win an air-
port. So he immediately headed an official party to Washington. When he reached the Civil Aeronautics Administration, he was still unaware that his old friend was in charge of the emergency program. He remembered wandering the halls of the CAA, unexpectedly seeing Clay's name on a door, and rushing in like "Brer Rabbit heading for the briar patch."14

Clay promised to use his influence to find funds for the Marietta project. Meanwhile, he told his old friend to solicit letters of endorsement from Atlanta's leadership and to gain title to a tract of land large enough for an airport. The Cobb County leadership wasted no time carrying out those objectives. On 28 October 1940 Blair wrote Clay that he was enclosing letters of support from Atlanta mayor William B. Hartsfield, from the Chamber, and from a Georgia Tech aeronautical engineering professor. He also related that he had secured options on three possible locations, particularly a spacious tract between Marietta and Smyrna that was big enough for both commercial and military aircraft. Lobbying for the biggest airport possible, he noted that a CAA inspector had recently toured the site and assured Marietta officials that it met all specifications for a first-rate facility. The mayor concluded by asking Clay for a spot on the preferred project list.15

Mayor Hartsfield's letter claimed that Candler Field would always be the principal Atlanta airport, but a Marietta facility could be useful if bad weather forced Candler to close. He argued that the Cobb County airport would be ideal for small private planes and potential aircraft manufacturers. Writing in his capacity as chairman of the Atlanta Chamber's Industrial Bureau, Ivan Allen, Sr., expressed satisfaction that his organization had helped generate interest in Cobb County and called for airports in all directions from Atlanta. He argued that Candler Field's location south of town made it inconvenient for businesses and homeowners on the north side. Those people could easily drive north to Marietta since the Cobb County airport would likely be on the main highway between the two cities. The director of Georgia Tech's Guggenheim School of Aeronautics, Montgomery Knight, repeated this argument, claiming that "heavy downtown traffic" made it more likely that Tech students would be involved in accidents traveling to Candler Field than in actual flight training. The professor noted that the Marietta site was big enough for future expansion and for "possible aircraft manufacturing plants."16

Major Clay immediately forwarded the correspondence to Major
A. B. McMullen, chief of the airport section of the CAA. In an accompanying memorandum, he warned that the cost of upgrading Candler Field to a Class 4 status (the highest airport rating) might be prohibitive. Pointing out that the Marietta site “seems to be the location desired by all the local people,” the Cobb County native asked: “Don’t you think our representative should look the site over with the view of submitting a report on it as an alternate site in the present survey?”

McMullen did what Clay asked him to do. Nine days later McMullen informed the CAA regional manager in Atlanta that the terrain around Candler Field made the development of a Class 4 airport a “very expensive undertaking,” especially if dual runways were added in the future. In contrast, a modern airport might be built on a more suitable site for no more than the improvement expenses at Candler. He suggested that if the government managed things properly, the Atlanta area might end up with two airports for the price of one. Consequently, he ordered the regional manager to evaluate the terrain and accessibility of the Marietta location and come up with a rough estimate of the cost of grading and drainage. In a confidential memo to Rip Blair, Clay enclosed a copy of McMullen’s letter, taking credit for having it sent to the Atlanta regional manager. CAA records make clear that Blair and Clay stayed in constant contact, with the latter advising the former on every step as they maneuvered the proposal to fruition. The approval process took about a half year as CAA officials considered various options.

**George Huie McMillan**

In gaining CAA funding, Blair received strong support from Charles M. Head, Cobb County’s commissioner of roads and revenues. On 23 November 1940 Head wrote Clay’s boss, Colonel Donald H. Connolly, that he intended to acquire title to the airport site and to comply with CAA requirements regarding proper maintenance “during the useful life of the facilities.” The commissioner enclosed a resolution from the county government, giving him full authority to carry out these promises.

On 19 April 1941 Head died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of seventy-three. A month later voters chose George H. McMillan to complete his term. Born in 1900, McMillan turned forty-one just two days after his election. He came from one of the most distinguished families in the
Acworth area. His father, James, and uncle, Robert, were partners in McMillan Brothers, the family mercantile business. His maternal grandfather, James Lemon, was a banker. James McMillan owned the first automobile in Acworth and sold cars at the store. When George was about eleven or twelve years old, he made an unauthorized trip to downtown Marietta with several of his friends. Not knowing how the brakes worked, he stopped only after driving through a drugstore plate
Local Leaders and the Recruitment of Bell Bomber

glass window. During his sophomore year at Oglethorpe College, George received news that he was urgently needed at the Smith Lemon Bank. In the aftermath of World War I, a deadly influenza epidemic spread worldwide. When it reached Acworth, it afflicted everyone at the bank. So the young scholar rushed home to help out. He enjoyed the job so much that he never returned to school.

For most of the 1920s McMillan traveled across the region for the Southern Cotton Oil Company, started by his father and several partners to market the seeds left behind in the cotton gins. During these business trips, he met and occasionally played cards with Franklin Roosevelt, recuperating from polio at Warm Springs. Years later, when President Roosevelt made a speech in Atlanta, he spotted McMillan in the crowd and sent an aide to bring him up to the speaker’s platform, exclaiming that he would “know that bald head anywhere.”

When his father died in 1929, George left his job with the cotton oil company to help his uncle, Robert, in the store. After the business failed to survive the Depression, he needed a job to support a growing family. In 1933 Sheriff Edward M. Legg made him a deputy sheriff. He commuted into Marietta from Acworth for a few years, but in 1937 he moved to the county seat, along with his wife and daughters.

When Ed Legg died of pneumonia in November 1938, McMillan became acting sheriff. Less than a month later he was overwhelmingly elected to fill the rest of the term. The new sheriff kept all the former deputies and retained Legg’s daughter, Mrs. Leo Miller, as office clerk. His biggest achievement as sheriff was breaking a murder case against Bill Chappell, the son of the Carroll County commissioner. Chappell brutally murdered the Peek couple of Cobb County, then placed them in an automobile and rolled the vehicle over a cliff near Austell. McMillan proved that young Chappell was a corrupt guard at the Carroll County convict camp and killed the Peeks to silence them, since they knew too much about his illegal dealings. In 1940 McMillan lost a close race to Charlie Head for Cobb County commissioner, but when Head died a few months later, the erstwhile Acworth businessman became his successor. The morning after his election McMillan journeyed to the governor’s mansion to have breakfast and be sworn in by Gene Talmadge. As soon as he got back to Marietta, he went to work on the airport project.

By that time the city and county were close to success, but it was
not clear whether the airport would be used primarily for commercial or military purposes. In February 1941 the U.S. Navy expressed an interest in turning the proposed airstrip into an auxiliary training site. CAA engineers in Atlanta estimated that they could build an airport to navy specifications for $544,930. The county attorney, James V. Carmichael, told the CAA that Cobb would be happy either with a Class 3 or 4 commercial airport or with a military training field, provided the navy paid sufficient rent to retire Cobb’s obligations to its bondholders for buying the site.25

In early May Clay sent a memorandum to Colonel Robert Olds at the War department. The secretary of the approval board pointed out that he was considering the navy’s request for an allocation of four hundred thousand dollars to Cobb County and asked for an immediate response if the War department objected. That appropriation would be enough to prepare a Class 3 airport with two paved runways, each four thousand feet in length and one hundred fifty feet wide. Shortly afterward, the CAA’s Atlanta office notified the U.S. Corps of Engineers that it was about to start the project.24

On 16 May 1941 the Marietta Daily Journal reported that CAA surveyors were at work. Quickly, Marietta and Cobb County finalized the acquisition of the airport site. The local governments were forced to purchase three small tracts through legal condemnation and the rest through negotiation with a number of small property owners. Not everyone was anxious to sell to the government. Rip Blair recalled a couple over age ninety who refused all offers to move. The mayor spent the day visiting with them, finally making an “outrageous offer” and agreeing to help them relocate.25 As a college student, David Miller, Sr. worked for the Corps of Engineers that summer, surveying the site for the airstrip. When the surveyors reached the farm of Joe Thomas, the irate old man met them with a shotgun and ran them off. They went into town and found his son Charlie, who worked for W. P. Stephens Lumber Company. Charlie went out with them and admonished, “This is bigger than you are Papa. Put your shot gun up or they’ll have to take you to town.”26

The county financed the real estate purchases by selling $160,000 of revenue certificates at 4 percent interest, through the services of a local man, Lex Jolley, the cashier for Johnson, Lane, Space & Company in Atlanta.27 With the acquisitions almost completed, McMillan
received official word from the CAA Atlanta regional engineer, Harvie Perkins, that the approval board had conditionally awarded Cobb the funds to build the airport runways. On 10 June 1941 the commissioner and his advisory board accepted the CAA’s offer and agreed to its stipulations that the county gain title to the property, protect aerial approaches by preventing the construction of tall buildings in the vicinity, operate and maintain the facility as an airport, and hold the federal government blameless for any damage suits resulting from construction of the facility. As McMillan sent the resolution to Perkins, he added a cover letter asserting that he was “highly in favor of the proposed project” and that the airport was “a great step forward” for Cobb County.

James V. Carmichael

On 12 June 1941 county attorney James V. Carmichael notified Harvie Perkins that Cobb’s bondholders would turn over to the county the money to buy the airport site as soon as the CAA let the contracts to build the runways. He added that the county was providing for future expansion by gaining title to more land than presently needed. Just fifteen days later the county attorney sent another letter to the regional office, certifying that Cobb had title to all lands required for the airport development. Perkins then notified his superiors in Washington that everything was satisfactory and that the project could proceed.

Born near Smyrna on 2 October 1910, Jimmie Carmichael was barely thirty years old at the time, more than a decade younger than McMillan, Clay, and Blair. Despite his youth, the Emory law school graduate was already a veteran of four years in the Georgia legislature. According to his good friend Judson C. (Jake) Ward, Carmichael was always a leader, despite a horrible accident as a teenager. Jimmie’s parents, John Vinson and Emma Mae Nolan Carmichael, owned a country store in the Log Cabin community along the Dixie Highway and the Atlanta Northern Railway’s trolley line. Jimmie’s formal education began at Locust Grove Elementary School. Beginning with the eighth grade, he road the streetcar to Marietta High School.

One morning the trolley was late. When he finally heard it coming, the young scholar jumped off the loading dock of the family store. He tried to dash across the highway to the adjacent streetcar stop. A
motorist driving about forty-five or fifty miles an hour was unable to avoid him and dragged him over one hundred yards down the road, almost completely severing his spinal cord. A Smyrna physician, Dr. Pace, took one look at him and sent him to an Atlanta hospital (later named Crawford Long). There, Jimmie spent his sixteenth birthday, clinging to life. After he began to recover, he was forced to stay home for almost a year. His sisters remembered, however, that he did not complain. When he returned to school, he wore heavy braces on his legs and a leather corset around his torso. With the aid of crutches he was able to walk by shuffling his feet. After losing a year, Carmichael found himself in the same class with Jake Ward, and the two became fast friends. Each morning Mrs. Carmichael drove Jimmie to the front door of the school, and Jake helped him into a wheelchair.

Ward believed that Carmichael had the same type of charisma as Franklin Roosevelt. Both overcame handicaps to achieve great things.

An excellent storyteller, Jimmie entertained his classmates at recess. While they gathered around his wheelchair, he told hundreds of funny tales, often in dialect. He played the trumpet in the band and started the student newspaper, holding a contest to name it The Pitchfork. By his second year back in school, he learned to drive an automobile, using his feet just enough to get by, although his legs were too weak to put much pressure on the clutch or brakes. Jimmie’s mother insisted that his sister Peggy ride with him to assist in case anything went wrong. The determined young man dropped Peggy off at Waterman Street School, before driving on to Marietta High.

In college at Emory he became an outstanding debater and member of the
Carmichael Store, interior, left to right: Emma, J. H., and John Vinson Carmichael (Cobb-412, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)
orchestra. He had considered going to Georgia Tech to become an engineer, but decided that someone with his physical limitations could be more successful as a lawyer. Just out of law school, at age twenty-six Carmichael was elected to the legislature without opposition. Two years later he won another uncontested race. In 1938 a reporter for the Cobb County Times pointed out that Carmichael had never made a stump speech in his own behalf. That fall he delivered campaign orations for U.S. Senator Walter George. According to the Times, Carmichael’s remarks were “well-received and delivered in fine style.” George was running for reelection against former governor Gene Talmadge and Lawrence Camp, a federal district attorney. Talmadge was a populist who appealed to Caucasian small farmers. An advocate of white supremacy, states’ rights, and small government, he was a bitter political enemy of Franklin Roosevelt. Senator George was a mainstream southern Democrat who supported much of the New Deal, but not enough to satisfy the president. Roosevelt came to Georgia in 1938 to tell the voters that George was not a liberal and that they should vote for Camp. By backing Georgia’s senior senator, Jimmie Carmichael positioned himself as a moderate between the liberal Camp and reactionary Talmadge. That was precisely where the Georgia voters were in 1938, and George was easily returned to the senate.

Ward was impressed with the respect older men had for Carmichael. Recalling a Sunday afternoon tour with his friend through northwest Georgia, the future Emory historian noted, “We would stop in these small towns and out in the country. He would visit with other legislators from Ringgold and so forth. They were all older men. Farmers [and] merchants just looked up to him, asked him questions, what he thought about this.” Ward believed that Carmichael was far ahead of his contemporaries in his vision of what Cobb County and Georgia could become.32

While the airport clearly had military potential, Carmichael dreamed in 1941 of a commercial airport with regular passenger flights. For the right to fly into the airport, Eastern Airlines president Eddie Rickenbacker offered the county five thousand dollars, plus a twenty-five-dollar fee for each plane landing and taking off. Local leaders were so grateful for this deal that they named the airport Rickenbacker Field in his honor. The World War I flying ace responded that he was “highly honored” with the designation and congratulated the “progressive
citizens" of Cobb County for completing an airport of lasting value commercially and of vital importance for national defense.33

Following a visit to Washington by Blair and Carmichael, the CAA agreed in October to give an additional seventy-five thousand dollars to lengthen one of the runways to five thousand feet. The approval board promised a second, six-thousand-foot runway, long enough to accommodate the largest commercial planes, following the next congressional appropriation.34 The W. L. Florence Construction Company of Powder Springs, Georgia, received the contract for grading and paving the runways and taxi strips. Florence was already busy paving the new four-lane highway that ran north from Atlanta on the east side of the airport. As work got under way on the airstrip, the Marietta Daily Journal complimented Florence for staying ahead of schedule in its dirt-moving activities. A relative, David Miller, Sr., noted that “Uncle Will” was like all contractors in wanting to “bury
stumps at night" [when no one was watching], but on balance he "did an excellent job."15

As local leaders planned for the longer runways, they learned that a high voltage line would block the route of larger planes trying to land and take off. The Georgia Power Company wanted Cobb County to pay to move the line. Bond broker Lex Jolley served on the Cobb grand jury that considered whether the county should assume the cost. While instructing the jurors, the judge brought up the question of the transmission line. Jolley remembered going into the jury room, where a west Cobb farmer pulled a newspaper from his pocket with a story about the problem. The businessman had been wondering which side the farmer would be on. Before the jury could even elect a foreman, the rural resident smacked the table with the newspaper and exclaimed, "I know the county’s in good shape! Why in hell don’t Cobb County go ahead and move the line so we can get it [the airport] in operation?" Jolley remembered drawing a deep breath and relaxing.36

In mid-October Lucius Clay, recently promoted to lieutenant colonel, visited Marietta for the dedication of Clay Homes, the large public housing project named for his father. While in town, he toured the new airport with Blair, Carmichael, McMillan, and the county advisory board. CAA and Georgia Power engineers joined the inspection team. At this time they apparently worked out the technical problems of how the line would be moved and the runways extended.37

On 21 October 1941 Commissioner McMillan and the county advisory board adopted a resolution offering to relocate the power line, but six weeks of negotiations followed before the county and Georgia Power came to terms. On 9 December 1941, two days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Georgia Power president Preston Arkwright agreed to move a 7,880-foot section in exchange for a one-hundred-foot right-of-way and $22,350. The company placed the line underground in a ditch dug about three-fourths of a mile from the end of the runway.

Mayor Blair and county attorney Carmichael personally backed the bonds necessary to finance the deal. Blair forwarded the contract to Clay, warning that Georgia Power would need some time to move the line, but that the runways would be finished by the end of December and that two hangars were under construction. In one of his last duties with the CAA, Clay responded that his agency appreciated "the cooperation exhibited by the County in obtaining such a prompt execution
of the contract.”

The American entry into World War II decisively changed the airport's future. Historian Jean Edward Smith argues that Marietta became a likely site for an airplane manufacturing plant largely because of Clay's power in Washington. As soon as war was declared, Clay received orders to attend a conference in which the chief of staff, General George C. Marshall, announced a reorganization of the War department. The army was divided into three branches: ground forces, air forces, and service of supply. Headed by Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell, service of supply consisted of two divisions, run by director of supply, Brigadier General LeRoy Lutes, and director of materiel, Brigadier General Lucius Clay. With this announcement, Clay received a promotion in rank and became one of the most powerful men in wartime Washington. Exercising considerable influence over military contracts, Clay could easily direct work southward.

As he later told Jean Smith, “The air force had to have a new plant—and a big plant, and they came to me to ask for a list of possible places where there was both a labor supply available and an existing airport. And I happened to remember Marietta, so I gave it to them as one of the names. It had a tremendous labor potential—both from Atlanta and from the surrounding mountain area.” Clay explained that Larry Bell visited the Atlanta area and was favorably impressed with the people. So he decided to build a branch there. The general remarked that the plant “brought labor out of those hills that had never had an opportunity to work before, and they did remarkably well.” In response to another question on his role in bringing Bell Bomber to Marietta, Clay asserted: “I helped them in every way I could. It was my hometown. I had no financial interest of any shape, form, or fashion, and none of my relatives did either. But I did have an interest in the town.”

To assist Clay's efforts, McMillan and Carmichael prepared the necessary paperwork. McMillan hired J. P. Baskin of Rome to write a prospectus on the Bell Aircraft site. Baskin was a civil engineer with a Georgia Tech degree. A grandson of Sheriff Legg, David Miller became involved in the project. He first met McMillan when the latter was working as a deputy sheriff. The young man came to consider the erstwhile Acworth merchant as a mentor and substitute father. Miller helped Baskin survey the site on a cold, winter weekend, with sleet falling. The weather was so damp and cold that their “fingers nearly
froze off.” Yet they worked from dawn to dark on Saturday and continued on Sunday until the task was completed. After plotting their measurements, they took them to the Atlanta Blue Print Company to make drawings for McMillan and Carmichael to carry to Washington.40

Lawrence D. Bell

On 22 December 1941 Lawrence D. Bell learned that his company had been selected to build B-29 bombers in a new plant to be constructed in the Atlanta area. A little over a week later, on New Year’s Day 1942, Bell received a wire from the army air corps, requesting that negotiations begin on setting up the assembly plant in metropolitan Atlanta. Their goal was to have a plane off the assembly line by September 1943, with production increasing to sixty-five a month by June 1944 and reaching a total of seven hundred by January 1945.41

Larry Bell was one of the remarkable pioneers of early aviation. Born in Indiana in 1894, he moved with his parents to California as a teenager. With a knack for mechanical pursuits, he and his older brother Grover became fascinated with airplanes. Despite Grover’s death in a 1913 plane crash, young Larry continued his lifelong love for this new mode of transportation. He began at the bottom of the aircraft industry as a stockroom clerk for the Glenn L. Martin Company. Through hard work and superior organizational skills he rose in a few years to superintendent, then vice-president and general manager.

Among the brilliant inventors he helped recruit for Martin was MIT graduate Donald W. Douglas. In 1925 Bell left Martin when the latter refused to make him a partner. After working at odd jobs for three years, he moved from California to Buffalo, New York, to work for another aviation pioneer, Major Reuben H. Fleet (U.S. Army, Retired), who allowed Bell to purchase 2 percent of the stock in his Consolidated Aircraft Company. When Fleet decided to relocate to San Diego, Bell stayed in Buffalo, forming his own company in 1935. With the Great Depression still in full force, the early years of the Bell Aircraft Corporation were difficult. By 1941, however, the company had developed the successful Airacobra pursuit plane, and its future seemed assured.42

Richard W. Croop worked for Bell both in Buffalo and Marietta. He first met Larry Bell when the aviation pioneer visited the pits at the old
Party at Mayor Blair’s house (left to right: Jimmie Carmichael, Larry Bell, and Rip Blair), 1949 (Cobb-497, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)

coliseum track where Croop built and raced midget sprint cars. At first
the crew did not know that Bell was the proprietor of his own company.
They knew him as a racecar enthusiast who got his hands dirty working
on engines along with everyone else. When Bell offered him a job,
Croop took it, earning sixty cents an hour when most of his contemporaries
took home half that amount. Bell stopped to speak any time he
had business on the assembly line. After the Marietta plant opened,
Croop came down; but he continued to see Bell on occasion. Whenever
the company president visited Atlanta, he invited the former Buffalo
men over to his quarters at the Biltmore Hotel to rehash old times.41

As Larry Bell looked for a Georgia site, his legal counsel, William
J. O’Connor, made an appointment with Ivan Allen, Sr., the chairman
of the industrial bureau at the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. On 7
January 1942 O’Connor and two Bell vice-presidents visited Atlanta.
Shortly after, Allen called Mayor Blair, who invited O’Connor to
County commissioner George McMillan recalled dropping by Allen’s Drug Store on the south side of the Square one morning. While he sat at the counter, he heard a stranger asking the “soda jerk” questions about the county. Introducing himself, McMillan quickly discovered that the man was a Bell Aircraft executive, probably O’Connor. The commissioner tried to reach Mayor Blair at his nearby office over Saul’s department store. Since he had not yet arrived, McMillan called him at home, urging him to come as quickly as possible. Along with Carmichael, the three local leaders took the Bell official out to Rickenbacker Field. At the time, the company was considering several other sites around the metropolitan area and as far away as Gainesville and Griffin, but none could offer a nearly completed modern airport bordered by two major highways to downtown Atlanta. Upon viewing the property near the ante-bellum Gardner house, the Buffalo man exclaimed, “This looks good right here!”

Convinced that local officials were up to the task, O’Connor held a press conference on 23 January 1942 at Jimmie Carmichael’s law office, where he announced that Bell was ready to occupy 260 acres to produce the Boeing-designed B-29 for the U.S. Army Air Corps. The Defense Plant Corporation would finance the four-motor aircraft. Bell would lease the plant from the government with an option to buy. O’Connor announced that the airport could be operated for other purposes, but Bell would use the runways to test its planes. Salaries would be far above the prevailing wage scale in the county, with supervisory jobs beginning at twenty-six hundred dollars a year and skilled and unskilled workers earning, respectively, eighty-five cents and seventy cents an hour (roughly seventeen hundred and fourteen hundred dollars annually). In contrast, the nearby Glover Machine Works, an old Marietta business, paid common laborers only thirty-five cents an hour. The Buffalo attorney credited the decision to build a Marietta factory to the area’s “natural facilities” and the ability to find local laborers, who could be trained in area vocational schools. He noted the presence in Atlanta of the Fisher Body Company and Ford and General Motors assembly plants, currently operating on limited Depression-era schedules. These businesses could do important sub-contracting for the bomber plant.

The magnitude of the project was brought home to local utility companies as their representatives met individually with O’Connor.
The Buffalo attorney interviewed officials of Georgia Power, the Atlanta Gas Light Company, Bell Telephone Company, and several railroads. Carmichael’s sister, Willie Mae Williams, recorded in her diary (24 January 1942) a story she must have heard her brother tell about O’Connor’s exchange with a phone company executive. The conversation went as follows: “Mr. O’Connor inquired of Mr. _________ if his company could supply the plant’s needs. The Telephone Company can do anything—just how many telephones will you need—900 was the calm reply which caused one southerner to almost fall from his chair.”48

Originally estimated as a fifteen million dollar project, the Bell plant cost the War department by the end of the war about seventy-three million dollars. Ultimately employing over twenty-eight thousand workers, the Bell facility was an assembly plant, with a relatively small engineering staff, since Boeing did the design work. Bell purchased engines and some other parts from distant vendors, but did most of its own fabrication in the plant in Marietta. At the time of O’Connor’s press conference Boeing had not yet successfully tested the prototype XB-29. So the government built the Marietta branch on faith that the Seattle-based company would fulfill its obligation in time. Fortunately, while the Bell plant was under construction, the XB-29 flew successfully on 14 September 1942. The Boeing branch in Wichita completed the first production model in July 1943.49

The Army-Navy Controversy

Despite O’Connor’s exciting announcement, Cobb’s leadership had to clear several large hurdles before they could be sure they had won the bomber plant. The biggest barrier was the rivalry between the army and the navy. The army air corps had taken the initiative on the B-29 project, but throughout 1941 the navy had kept open the option of using the Marietta airstrip as an auxiliary training site. A month prior to O’Connor’s visit, Lieutenant Commander D. Ward Harrigan of the Navy Reserve Aviation Base in Chamblee officially notified county officials of his intentions. In December Blair, Carmichael, and McMillan had not yet talked to anyone from Bell Aircraft, but they were already working to attract an aircraft plant, and they had invested too much
time and money in Rickenbacker Field to allow it to become merely a back-up training school for the navy. On 18 December 1941 Blair frantically wired Clay that Marietta was “naturally anxious to cooperate,” but wanted the airport “used to best advantage.” An army general, Clay was in no position to take a public position against the navy. He wired back that Marietta might have to give the navy “exclusive rights if required for their operations.” Perhaps thinking he was offering a word of encouragement, he added that the navy’s need might be temporary, since the CAA was working on nearby Ellenwood airport, south of Atlanta in Clayton County, and that it would make an excellent navy training site.

To Blair, this was the worst possible scenario. The thought that the navy might hold the Marietta airstrip just long enough for Bell to go somewhere else was a frightening possibility. The following day Blair shot off a letter to Clay that Rickenbacker Field was too fine a location to be wasted on auxiliary training. He feared that Cobb would lose the contracts it already held if the navy used the airport only for a few months until Ellenwood was completed. Reminding the general of Cobb’s huge indebtedness for airport land, he requested, at a minimum, that the navy take the site “for the entire duration of the war rather than for a few months period.”

At his January press conference in Marietta, Bell attorney O’Connor identified the navy proposal as the only obstacle that could block the company’s plans. He warned that Bell would go outside Georgia, if the navy took over the site. Writing in the Cobb County Times, columnist Joe Harrison reported the frustrations that local leaders had felt for weeks in trying to resolve this issue. Repeatedly, Blair, Carmichael, and McMillan had sent telegrams and telephone calls all over the country. Matters would seem resolved one day, only to fall apart the next. On one occasion Harrison dropped by Carmichael’s office and found everything in an uproar. “Where in the H_____ is Blair,” the county attorney barked at the mayor’s secretary. “Tell him to get down here as fast as he can. All hell’s to pay.” Harrison left while the two placed calls to Washington, Miami, and other places. He said, “I can’t state it accurately as a fact, but ‘I hear tell as how even O’Connor gave up hope.’ But not Carmichael and Blair. They kept on fighting.” In his next column Harrison apologized for omitting McMillan who did his share of the lobbying effort.
According to McMillan’s protégé, David Miller, the commissioner had close political ties to Georgia’s junior senator, Richard Russell, a rising star in Washington on defense issues. McMillan and Russell met on several occasions and talked frequently on the telephone. McMillan convinced Russell that Cobb could provide sufficient workers and services, such as schools, housing, and law enforcement, to support the new aircraft plant. Rip Blair agreed that Russell helped, but believed that Georgia’s senior senator, Walter George, did more. Blair credited seventh district congressman Malcolm Tarver with bringing considerable political pressure on the navy. Other area power brokers who aided Cobb’s effort included the Atlanta newspapers, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the Georgia Power Company, and Georgia congressmen Carl Vinson and Robert Ramspeck. Also of assistance was Atlanta Journal and WSB radio owner James M. Cox, a former governor of Ohio who headed the 1920 Democratic presidential ticket with Franklin Roosevelt as his running mate.

Blair recalled living on “cokes and cigarettes” during this period and coming home late many nights. Despite the fact that his Cherokee Street house was only a mile away from his office, he saw so little of his family that he hardly noticed his wife’s remodeling efforts. One room was completely renovated before he saw it. The “Bomber Threesome,” McMillan, Blair, and Carmichael, grew increasingly uneasy as days and weeks passed with no resolution of the navy problem. Finally, McMillan solicited the assistance of Admiral John H. Towers, a Marietta native stationed in the national capital. Towers advised that the navy would not go out of its way to help Bell, but would step aside if the army expressed a need for the facility. Thus, the Marietta boosters turned their attention to persuading the army.

As the navy began condemnation proceedings, officials from the two military branches held top-level conferences in Washington. Finally, they reached a compromise. The War department sent a formal statement that Bell needed the facility, and Admiral Towers stopped the navy’s takeover. At the same time, Commander Harrigan announced a major expansion of the Naval Reserve Air Base in Chamblee. Seven new main buildings would be constructed, and more personnel would be stationed there. Until the Bell plant opened, the navy retained permission to fly into Rickenbacker Field. Towers sent a radiogram to McMillan a little after 6:00 P.M., alerting him that the navy no longer
stood in the way of Marietta’s Bell project. At the nation’s capital, Senator Walter George made the announcement to the press on 24 January 1942, the day after O’Connor’s press conference in Marietta.\(^5^3\)

With this problem resolved, William O’Connor quickly signed the necessary contracts with local officials and left for Buffalo. For Cobb leaders, frustrations and uncertainties continued for several more weeks, as the governments of neighboring Fulton and DeKalb counties lobbied in Washington for alternative sites south of Atlanta. Blair blamed the Southern Railway for a Fairburn scheme pushed by the Fulton County Commission. The Cobb County Times spoke more generally of powerful railroad executives who were unhappy “because it looked like, for once, they would not get ALL the traffic to and from the projected plant.” This threat was removed in early February, when an army air corps board of investigators recommended Rickenbacker Field as the preferred site and Candler Field as the second choice.

Despite the efforts of the elected leaders of unincorporated Fulton and DeKalb, the Atlanta business community and Atlanta city government seemed overwhelmingly on Cobb’s side. Marietta’s case received an assist from Mayor Roy LeCraw of Atlanta, who made clear his city’s opposition to placing an aircraft plant at the fourth busiest airport in the nation. LeCraw further supported Cobb by announcing the construction of a million dollar water main to supply the Bell facility. Finally, on 19 February 1942 the War department announced that Marietta had been selected. Mayor Blair was sitting in Johnny Walker’s clothing store on the Square at the time. Several of the merchants had planned a party to show their appreciation for the statesmen leading the Bell campaign. Just before the party, Blair received a call from Washington telling him the good news. He remembered that the party turned out to be “quite a celebration.” The perseverance of Cobb and Atlanta leaders had resulted in victory. Winning the plant, however, was merely the first step in the process of bringing growth and prosperity to Cobb County. For the duration of the war, local leaders would remain busier than ever as they met the challenges and opportunities of success.\(^5^4\)
News that Bell Aircraft was coming provoked diverse reactions in Cobb County. In the weeks after the story broke, Bell supporters seemed defensive, as they responded to complaints from friends and associates. Textile executive Guy Northcutt told fellow Rotarians, “Whether we like it or not, our way of life in Marietta, Georgia will soon be gone forever.” He predicted that old timers would divide into those who griped about it and those who adjusted and “cashed in” on the new opportunities. In his weekly “Jambalaya” column, Cobb County Times president Otis Brumby recapped the most common fears: that the town would be overrun by criminals, gamblers, and honky-tonk operators; that hordes of foreigners would take over everything; that Bell Aircraft executives would be robber barons who exploited the masses and created unwanted labor strife; that Bell would abandon Marietta as soon as the war ended, leaving a ghost town behind; and that the quiet life of the community would be destroyed forever.
Brumby refrained from criticizing the naysayers, noting that Larry Bell conceded the concerns were legitimate. But Bell visited Georgia to assure everyone that his company would be a good citizen, doing everything in its power to conform to local values and make things run smoothly. Brumby argued that governments at all levels were determined to keep out racketeers and price gougers and make new homes meet Federal Housing Administration (FHA) standards. He paraphrased Bell that people should concentrate on winning the war and worry later what happened after the conflict. Noting that the project was "the greatest single industrial enterprise ever established anywhere south of the Ohio river," Brumby urged Cobb's citizens to support their local officials and make the most of the opportunities that economic growth afforded.¹

Both Times publisher Brumby and editor Joe S. Harrison tried to prepare readers for the tremendous transformation that was in the offing. Brumby came from an old Marietta family that dated back to the nineteenth century. A Pennsylvania native, Harrison had lived in Cobb County for less than a year and knew what it was like to be a stranger in a new place.² A few days after Bell attorney William J. O'Connor announced that Marietta had won the bomber plant, the Cobb County Times printed a long editorial warning that "our quiet, peaceful 'aristocratic' little city" was about to endure a "torrent of change." Observing that people had the option of welcoming the new ways or opposing them, the paper argued that the latter course was "a little short of wisdom and a long way short of Christianity." The writer noted that old Mariettans had "inter-married back and forth for a century" and would have to ask their grandparents what it felt like to move to a place where they knew nobody. "Yet there was a time," he reflected, "when even the oldest of these families were newcomers here. A long while back, but they came as these new people will come, seeking to live a better life, to work and raise families." The Times challenged longtime residents to make the newcomers feel at home, to invite them to their business clubs, dances, and churches, and to incorporate them into community life. The paper warned that a failure to extend a sincere welcome would mean the growth of two separate communities with longtime residents having "no share in the new way of life." That would be bad because the challenge of the future was to "use our old civilization here as the nucleus of a new order," shaping "the new Marietta into one which has a family resemblance to the old one that is passing."

The bomber factory had the strong support of Atlanta
Constitution editor Ralph McGill, who was pleased with Marietta’s success. On 23 February 1942 Larry Bell spoke at a victory dinner attended by twelve hundred people. Soon after, McGill wrote a column entitled “Marietta’s Sir Galahads.” Remarking that Rip Blair, Jimmie Carmichael, and George McMillan would never be remembered for their good looks, the influential journalist maintained that they “seemed to have an aura about them, and to be as handsome and as noble as shining knights in armor.” McGill concluded, “They had done one of the finest jobs, in behalf of one of the finest counties, that had ever been done in behalf of any county in Georgia. And in doing it they did a job for the whole state.”

Constructing the Plant

In March 1942 the U. S. Corps of Engineers took over the completion of the runways. The CAA had already invested $470,000, but the Corps spent two million dollars more on extensions and improvements. According to Mayor Blair, “the airfield, the reason for putting Bell here in the first place, turned out to be completely unsuitable. The runways were too narrow, too thin, too short, and were pointed in the wrong direction.” They had to be plowed up and new runways put in. The replacements, completed by 1 March 1943, were some of the best in the country. In May 1943 the army air corps accepted title to Rickenbacker Field exclusively for military purposes. In 1950 the site would officially be renamed Dobbins Air Force Base, in memory of Georgia boys killed in the war, particularly Captain Charles M. Dobbins of Marietta, whose plane was shot down at sea near Sicily in July 1943.

While the Corps of Engineers completed the airport, Atlanta-based Robert & Company designed and managed the construction of the aircraft assembly plant. On 30 March 1942 Bell officials gathered for the groundbreaking ceremonies, as excavation began on the new facility. Construction took over a year, but by 15 March 1943 the project was 86 percent finished, and most of Bell’s 1,179 Atlanta employees moved from temporary headquarters in downtown Atlanta to the modern plant in Marietta. Architectural company president L. W. Robert, Jr., described the structure as big enough to house the nation’s cotton crop and large enough for sixty-three football fields, all under one roof.
Groundbreaking, 2 April 1942 (left to right: Frank Shaw, George McMillan, Ivan Allen, Sr., James V. Carmichael, and Leon M. Blair) (Cobb-496, Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Department of Archives & History)

Plant under construction, 20 July 1942 (Bell Aircraft collection, Center for Regional History & Culture, KSU)
Tunnel #17 excavation, 3 August 1942 (Bell Aircraft collection, Center for Regional History & Culture, KSU)
Robert noted that the plant had sufficient tracks for a dozen passenger trains, and the roof was four and a half stories above the ground. The exact dimensions were classified at the time, but a postwar survey gave the measurements of the mammoth B-1 assembly building as a little over 3.2 million square feet. The B-2 administration building was a little over 0.2 million square feet, and all structures in the Bell campus totaled 4,173,083 square feet, double the size of Bell's Niagara Falls plant and the largest business facility ever constructed in the Deep South. Jimmie Carmichael recalled visiting the B-1 building while it was still empty, just before occupation. To the Georgia native the far end seemed so distant that he doubted the company could ever find enough workers and equipment to fill the place. He was consumed with pride that the giant structure was in his small county, where workers could now count on year-round employment at regionally high wages. Thirty years later Carmichael told historian B. C. Yates that "aircraft payrolls helped build the new Cobb County!"6

As a young college student David Miller, Sr., helped to build the Bell plant. While he attended Auburn University, Miller participated in a co-op program, which allowed him to work for the U. S. Corps of Engineers and Robert & Company. His job with the architectural firm was to keep up with the progress of over one hundred subcontractors. At night Miller served as an inspector, making sure that the subcontractors poured concrete correctly. By day he supervised other college students as they measured how much dirt was moved and concrete poured. They took their measurements to a senior Robert & Company employee, J. P. Wey, who determined how much the contractors would be paid every two weeks.

His first true engineering assignment was to build a twenty-four-hole outhouse. The Auburn student remembered one of the contractors "screaming his head off" because his construction workers sat in the outhouse too long. To remedy the situation, Miller and his crew took the doors and roof off. When the Corps of Engineers' occupational safety engineer objected, a colonel came out and negotiated a compromise. The doors stayed off, but the roof went back on. Miller recalled that the FBI later arrested the same contractor for offering bribes to two Robert & Company inspectors. The man would wrap hundred dollar bills around Hav-A-Tampa cigars to tempt them to look the other way while he poured concrete. Apparently, no other
Visit to Bell plant of Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, 18 April 1943
(left to right: C. E. Wilson, Patterson, L. W. (Chip) Robert, and O. L. Woodson)
(Bell Aircraft collection, Center for Regional History & Culture, KSU)

corrupt deals were exposed. Miller claimed that some workers were killed in building the plant, but “there were no real horror stories.”

**Building the First B-29s in Marietta**

The first man in charge of the Georgia branch of Bell Aircraft, Captain Harry E. Collins, had excellent political skills and was ideal while the plant was under construction. With production underway,
Larry Bell transferred Collins to the Washington, D.C. office in June 1943, replacing him with a vice-president from the Buffalo plant, Omer L. Woodson. Under Woodson's leadership, the employees began building airplanes in earnest, delivering the first two to the military just after Christmas, 1943.

Thomas V. Bockman eventually rose to the position of chief electrical design engineer at the Marietta plant. A Georgia Tech graduate, he started at Bell as a draftsman at about eighty cents an
hour. The engineers were located in a small facility between the administration building and the main assembly plant. Since Boeing designed the B-29, Bell engineers concerned themselves mainly with problems that developed when design concepts did not work out well in practice. Bockman had only nine people working directly for him. They frequently were on the assembly floor handling minor discrepancies as they arose. Depending on the color of one's badge, an employee had authorization to go to certain parts of the plant. Bockman had a black badge, permitting him to venture almost anywhere. Because of his electrical engineering responsibilities, he spent some of his time observing the women employees who worked on electrical harnesses. Each B-29 contained seven thousand feet of electrical wiring. The women placed a connector at each end so that the harnesses could be plugged into equipment that would be assembled later. Some of the harnesses were extremely long and intricate, consisting of one hundred to two hundred wires, all stamped with an identification number that allowed workers to install them in the correct location in the airplane. Despite the fact that few workers had a technological background, they seemed to do excellent work after going through the company's training programs.9

The Marietta facility was an assembly plant that received engines from Pratt & Whitney and some parts for wings and tails from other places. Most of the parts were constructed from scratch in a two hundred thousand-square foot fabrication bay in the B-1 building. The loft engineering group had the responsibility of making templates from which parts would be shaped in the shop. Whenever workers in a particular department needed a special jig or fixture, they placed an order through the planning department. The planners sent a work order to Tool Control, the tool design unit that prepared blueprints. Then mechanics, machinists, and welders turned the drawings into tools of all sizes and shapes, from small vices to giant jigs. According to Bell's magazine, The Bellringer, workers who knew nothing about airplanes when they enrolled in the company's training school became increasingly skilled. After two years of practice, many who initially struggled to reach a tolerance of 1/64th of an inch "now [thought] nothing of working to tolerances of .002."10
Main electrical harness assembly board; inspector at right is Eula Dow (Bell Aircraft collection, Center for Regional History & Culture, KSU)
Assembling the fuselage section (left to right: Dewey Abney, Berry Hicks, Dorothy House, Grady Carter, Grace Head, and Henry Turner) (Bell Aircraft collection, Center for Regional History & Culture, KSU)
Harold S. Mintz was one of the first workers at the Marietta branch. Reared on a South Carolina farm, he completed a three-month training program at the Nashville (Tennessee) Aircraft School, then worked on airplanes for Vultee in Nashville before coming to Bell in May 1943. Since he already knew something about constructing planes, he instantly became a training department instructor in the old Westinghouse building at 426 Marietta Street in Atlanta. At the time inexperienced workers went through the training school before going out to the Marietta plant. Mintz’s job was to pick out talented employees and train them to teach others.

After briefly running the school for instructors, Mintz transferred to Marietta, where he started as a sub-foreman in the rear gunner’s department (Dept. 52-6). Before permanent jigs arrived, Mintz and his workers made a wooden jig and built their first six sections. Soon he was promoted to foreman. According to Mintz, everyone was so dedicated to winning the war that the end of a shift meant nothing. If they still had work to finish, they stayed until the job was completed. For the first several months the roof of the B-1 building was not yet in place and the workers got wet whenever it rained. When they worked late, they could look up and see the stars.

With the rear gunner’s department running smoothly, Mintz moved to the nose section (41 section) to try to improve its efficiency. The inspectors had scrapped twenty-eight aluminum skins. Bell lofted practically all its parts, except for a few items routinely produced by vendors. Somehow, the workers drilled the holes in the wrong place, so they did not fit onto the plane’s nose. Mintz recalls that the skins were sitting on the dock, about to be cut up into pieces. Meanwhile the 41 section was holding up the other assembly lines. He found six good mechanics, and together they worked two straight shifts. Inserting cleco fasteners in the holes, they managed to attach the skins snugly, salvaging twenty-six of the twenty-eight. Most of the riveters were women. Mintz devised a large score board, which recorded at a glance who was working on what and who was completing her tasks the quickest. A little friendly competition developed between individuals on a particular shift and between the three different shifts. Working seven days a week, the nose section soon caught up with those constructing other parts of the fuselage.

The innovative foreman promised the workers a party when they
got on schedule. They were not disappointed. Production manager Norm Gill, a Bell employee from Buffalo, threw the party at his house in Atlanta for the three thousand laborers in the various shifts working on the nose section. A young family man, Mintz at this point of the war received a series of five-day deferments from the military. Finally, the deferments ran out and he went back to his South Carolina hometown, where he was ordered to the navy air force. Soon he learned that the general manager of the Bell plant had gone all the way to Washington to win him a special deferment, signed by President Roosevelt. Back in Marietta, Mintz rose to assistant superintendent, responsible for all fuselage construction.11

Stinson Adams was another young man who worked at Bell Aircraft in the early days. An Oglethorpe University graduate, he labored during the Depression years as an auto mechanic and then in a parts warehouse. When he heard in 1942 that Bell was recruiting aircraft mechanics, he applied and was sent to Buffalo, New York, for training. While the plant was under construction in Marietta, he helped to build the Airacobra at the Niagara Falls plant. He could have stayed permanently in Buffalo, but a few days when the thermometer dipped to twenty below zero convinced him he was better off in the South. Contrary to the popular assumption, Adams quickly concluded that Georgia employees worked harder than the typical northern worker. The Georgians considered it their patriotic duty to help win the war as quickly as possible, but apparently some of the northerners felt otherwise.

As soon as the Marietta factory opened, Adams returned home where he worked in the B-4 building (the final assembly and clean-up hangar). Many of the workers he supervised were farmers with no experience working on planes. Nonetheless, if they were mechanically inclined and wanted to work, they made good aircraft mechanics. Adams asked the one experienced worker in his crew to serve as union steward, so that labor complaints could be filtered through someone who recognized a legitimate grievance. When planes came off the assembly line, they went to B-4, where they were inspected. Next they were sent to a nearby hangar where the engines were run for the first time. After the inspectors shook down the planes again, they released them to the company test pilots for the first flight. When all problems had been erased, Bell turned the B-29s over to military inspectors and test pilots. After completing this process, the army bought the planes,
and the ferry command picked them up and delivered them to various military bases. Despite their inexperience, the men and women of Georgia quickly learned how to do their jobs properly. None of the Marietta-built B-29s ever crashed while they were being tested.

Adams preferred working the night shift, because there were too many engineers around in the daytime, telling him what to do. If a test pilot came in and said a propeller was out of balance, Adams' daytime counterpart often could do nothing about it, because the substitute parts were locked up somewhere in the B-1 building. Adams would arrive at work thirty minutes early to learn about the problems of the day. Then he would send a couple of men up to the main assembly building with a pickup truck to find the necessary parts. If they needed a carburetor, they took it off a plane under construction, replacing it with the bad carburetor. While these actions violated company rules, they made his superiors happy when the planes were successfully tested on time.12
Major Jack Millar visits Jimmie Carmichael and Larry Bell, 24 August 1944. A Marietta native, Millar commanded a Bell-built B-29, the “Georgia Peach,” on missions over Japan. (Bell Aircraft collection, Center for Regional History & Culture, KSU)

Bell Bomber in Full Production

Eventually, the Marietta facility built 663 B-29s. By 1944 as many as three a day came off the assembly line. The company achieved a peak labor force in February 1945 of 28,158 workers. The second general manager, Omer Woodson, deserves credit for bringing the assembly lines to full production; but the pressure of the job eventually became too much for him. Telling everyone he was leaving for a non-existent job with Howard Hughes, Woodson resigned in August 1944. Carl Cover took his place, while Jimmie Carmichael moved up from legal counsel to assistant general manager.

A pioneer test pilot on Donald Douglas’s original DC-1, Cover tragically crashed and died while flying his plane in late November 1944 to a business meeting at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. As he attempted to land, his twin-engine aircraft struck a power line and burned. At that point Carmichael moved up to general manager for the
duration of the war. In something resembling a World War II version of affirmative action, Larry Bell expressed satisfaction in finding a southerner qualified to run his factory. Previously, he described Carmichael and Blair as “the best minds of the South.” Now, in a private letter, he told his new general manager how happy he was “that there was available a southerner, and more particularly, a Marietta boy to assume command of this great enterprise.” He advised that managers of small companies needed to know the technical details of how their products were made, but strong leaders of large organizations made the big decisions and relied on department and division heads with specialized training to handle the smaller matters. He emphasized that no aircraft plant manager could succeed without realizing that quality had to come before quantity in making airplanes.

Carmichael insisted on safety, but still met production goals on time. When the company completed the four hundredth B-29 in May 1945, Bell complimented his general manager on the fact that there had never been a crash in test flying or delivering the planes to the military. He called it perhaps the greatest achievement of its kind in the brief history of aviation, particularly for a new plant and an inexperienced work force. The northern executive concluded, “The people of the South can forever be proud of that record and contribution to the war.” Having followed the young businessman around the plant, staff writer M. L. St. John of the Atlanta Constitution noted that Carmichael quickly picked up the technical language of his engineers. The general manager told him that he had to depend on experts to run the various departments, but “when the bombers fail to leave the factory on time, I know something is wrong. I find out where the slowdown occurred. Then, if some specialist continues to fail to produce, he is replaced by someone who can.”

Women at the Bomber Plant

To prepare workers for aircraft jobs, Marietta operated the Rickenbacker Aircraft Training School. Other area school systems offered similar vocational programs. Once workers were hired, Bell provided extensive training programs inside the factory. As a result, local people with little previous knowledge of airplanes and minimal industrial experience became proficient workers. About nine-tenths of the employees came from the South,
and by February 1945 some 10,354 (37 percent of the total labor force) were women. The female employees worked in a great variety of jobs. Issues of the company magazine, *The Bellringer*, feature women in such diverse roles as riveters; painters; machine operators; electrical harness assemblers; crane operators; draftswomen; machine-shop engine lathe operators; inspectors; teachers in the plant's Upgrading Center; eye goggle repairers and adjusters in the Industrial Health and Safety Department; secretaries; clerks; cafeteria workers; staff car drivers for top managers; and foot and bicycle couriers, carrying messages within the vast plant. Numerous photographs show women working on the assembly line side by side with male employees.17

While the glass ceiling was very low, women became supervisors in areas where the workers were all female. On rare occasion women on the assembly lines held supervisory positions over men. Betty L. Morgan [McLean/Williams] was a sub-foreman supervising anywhere from thirteen to twenty-five counter sinkers on the wing assembly. The counter sinkers drilled a funnel shaped hole for the rivets that held the plane together. An Indiana native, Morgan finished high school in the early 1940s and then enrolled in an aeronautical school operated by the Republic Aircraft Company in Evansville. The eighteen-week training program prepared her in riveting, counter sinking, and other tasks on Republic's single-engine P-47. With World War II under way, the government paid her fifteen dollars a week to help with expenses while she completed the program.

Morgan was employed for a while at Republic. Then the manager in charge of the fuselage assembly took a job at Bell Bomber and recruited nine of his workers, including Morgan, to come with him. Most had trouble adjusting to southern culture and quit after a short time, but Morgan and her good friend, Sylvie Gallanette, persevered. Before coming south, they had not thought of themselves as Yankees, but that was how fellow Bell workers saw them. They survived by concentrating on their jobs and not allowing the prejudices of others to bother them. Morgan went through various training programs inside the Bell plant, receiving a certificate of merit in November 1943 for finishing an elementary blueprinting course. The following July she completed a foremanship training class. By that time Betty and Sylvie had married servicemen, two cousins named McLean, whom they met at the Fox Theater in Atlanta while the men were on leave.
Because of their training at Republic, Betty and Sylvie were more experienced than most employees at Bell Bomber and quickly moved into supervisory positions, Betty working on the wings and Sylvie the nose. They were not aware of any other women on the assembly line who supervised men. Betty Morgan McLean recalled that she had three strikes against her as a sub-foreman. She was younger than most of the workers, she was from the North, and she was female. She claimed that most of them thought, "You’re a woman and you should be home doing the pots and pans and cooking cornbread."

The men frequently were married with several children, while she was still in her late teens. They did not like to be told what to do, but responded well when she showed them by completing a task herself. When the men resented her presence, she claimed that she “mostly laughed it off” and let them know that she was just “doing my job like they were.” While sub-foremen could not fire anyone directly, she occasionally had to file complaints against incompetent employees. After three complaints they went before a board that decided their fate. She believed that she had
the backing of foremen and superintendents, and got along well with union shop stewards whom she found sufficiently experienced to know what workers were expected to do.

An infantry staff sergeant, Betty's husband Allen McLean was killed in France in November 1944, saving his men during a German attack. He was posthumously awarded a silver star. After his death, Betty quit working at Bell and returned to Indiana for a while. With most of her acquaintances gone to the war or working somewhere else, she grew lonely and returned to her friends in Georgia. By then the war was almost over. In 1945 she married Paul Williams, whom she had known from the Bell plant. He had been a sub-foreman on another part of the wing assembly. They lived in the Atlanta area after the war.18

The writers for *The Bellringer* took pride in the fact that women instructors in the Upgrading Center taught men such tasks as riveting, fabrication, and electrical crib work. They led classes designed to teach recently promoted workers how to be effective foremen. The magazine maintains that men typically “took a dim view of being taught by women,”
but once they saw that the teachers knew their subjects they became "satisfied customers." The corporation provided a number of recreational activities for women as well as men. The company softball team, the Bomberettes, won the 1944 Atlanta city tournament.

In 1943 the federal government built Marietta Place, a housing project for Bell workers along Fairground and Clay Street. Having submitted a low bid of $785,580, Hardin & Ramsey of Atlanta received the contract for the five hundred units. Of masonry construction, the individual buildings contained four to eight units. Apartments consisted of one to three rooms, typically a living room, combined kitchen and dinette, bedroom, and bath. In addition the government built at Marietta Place a community and a child service building. In the latter the Marietta school system operated a federally funded twenty-four hour daycare facility for the children of employees. In the beginning, Mrs. Will Dean and Mrs. N. S. Herod taught thirty-five children. Hot lunches were served, and hours of
operation coincided with the day shift at the bomber plant. After the success of the Marietta Place nursery school, others were opened around town, including a Bell nursery on Claymore Drive, in a duplex project called Pine Forest built privately by Mayor Rip Blair and his partners.21

Dorothy Petty [Odom] was single at the time she started working in 1943 at Bell’s downtown Atlanta employment department. Her job was to help process applications, checking people’s birth certificates, citizenship papers, and other records. Some applicants who lacked birth certificates brought in big family Bibles to document their birth dates. Bell grew so fast in the first year of operation that the company hired virtually anyone who applied. Within a year her office moved to the Marietta plant. She and five other women formed a carpool from the Piedmont Park area to work. Personnel workers put in long hours—many days from nine in the morning until midnight. So she caught up on sleep during the forty-five minute journey.22
Ruth Asbell [Ivey] was also an office worker at the plant. Growing up near Athens, she went to Atlanta at age seventeen when a friend suggested they could find work at Bell. They moved into a spacious boardinghouse for women on the corner of Peachtree and Fourteenth Street and for a while took the streetcar to Marietta. Starting as a stenographer, Asbell eventually was given responsibility for the industrial engineering typing and stenographic pool. Since many of the engineers lacked a personal secretary, she made the work assignments when typing requests came in. The stenographers rarely worked overtime and always worked the day shift from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 or 5:30 P.M. Since she was unattached at the time, she remembers having a good time, going to USO dances and having a full social life. After the war, she married a veteran, Ashley Ivey, whose plane was shot down in occupied Holland and who spent four and a half months evading the Germans.
Bell’s most famous female employee was Helen Dortch Longstreet, the widow of Confederate general James Longstreet. Born in 1863, she was eighty years old when she learned riveting at Marietta’s Rickenbacker Aircraft Training School. In October 1943 she appeared on We the People, a national radio show, where she called on others to take similar training classes. Longstreet wrote frequently for area newspapers and sent Larry Bell a copy of her article, “My Day,” describing her life as an aircraft worker. She told her readers: “I work in a Bomber Plant, nine hours at night, every minute on my feet, building B-29’s, without which, the ghastly war in which we are engaged, cannot be won. I get to bed about 5:00 o’clock in the morning. I have no reservoir of youthful reserve strength on which to draw. Ensueingly, the rest that comes between the morning hour when I retire and the time when I must arise and dress to go to the Bomber Plant for the succeeding night’s work, is vital. I could not hold out to do the work without these hours of rest and sleep.” On her Sunday off she went to Mass, did her washing and ironing, and cleaned her apartment. She noted that the domestic help on which middle and upper class southerners used to depend had deserted the homes for war production, forcing women like her to do the work themselves.

Longstreet wrote frequently to President Bell and other prominent people, presenting her views on a variety of subjects. Harold Mintz learned about her influence with powerful people when she was working on the nose section. While he was trying to speed up production and put the section back on schedule, he noted that Longstreet was working so slowly that she was holding up the line. He instructed the foreman to talk to her and warn her to labor faster or go somewhere else. The next day the manufacturing manager summoned Mintz into a meeting that included the production manager and the superintendent. The manufacturing manager asked, “Harold, do you like working at Bell Aircraft?” He responded in the affirmative, whereupon the Bell executive related: “We just got a call from Washington, a member of the President’s staff, saying that you have caused a problem with Mrs. General Longstreet.” Mintz admitted: “Well, I guess maybe I did.” The manager said, “You have to fix it.” So Mintz gave Longstreet a separate workbench and told her sub-foreman to find her plenty to do. The general’s widow brought in individual snuff cans in which to place different size rivets, nuts, and washers. When she did good work, the company used it. If she drilled her rivets too deeply, the sub-foreman quietly threw the piece away. But she no longer held up the other
workers. Mintz started going by on a daily basis to talk to her, and they became good friends.26

While large numbers of men were off fighting, women occupied numerous non-traditional jobs, both inside the bomber factory and without. For instance, Nancy Garner became Marietta’s first female taxi driver at the Safety Cab Company, while her husband, Staff Sergeant A. L. Gamer, was stationed at the Marietta Army Air Field. Despite her previous employment as an El Paso bus and streetcar driver, the local Georgia Power-operated trolley line rejected her application because she was female. Her employers at the cab company were glad they gave her a chance. They discovered that she caused less trouble than the male drivers and kept her cab in better mechanical condition. After a twelve-hour day, she prepared a late dinner for her husband and children and did her other household chores. Since her shift began at 7:00 A.M., her husband helped by getting the children off to school. Gamer told a reporter, “Everybody has been swell to me.... Once in a while some fellow starts asking personal questions, but I put them on the ball right quick.” Gamer wore a “uniform-looking shirt” and pants, opened doors for passengers, and carried their bundles like her male counterparts.

In the same article, the Marietta Daily Journal editorialized that single women had trouble finding apartments in Marietta, forcing some to drive as far as one hundred miles to work at the plant. The paper identified a need for more boarding houses, since the women disliked going out by themselves to find a restaurant after a ten-hour shift. Pointing out the potential profits for smart businessmen, the MDJ insisted, “The girls are patriots. Most of them come from good homes. It is worth doing something about.”

African-Americans and Other Minorities

A number of former Bell workers had vivid members of midgets working in tight places. Harold Mintz claimed that they worked well in the nose section, where they could stand up and not become as tired as taller workers, who had to stoop over or work on their knees.28 Still suffering from his high school accident, general manager Carmichael took great satisfaction
in the bomber plant's record of employing 1,757 disabled workers who, he claimed, had less absenteeism, fewer work stoppages for health reasons, and a better retention rate than other laborers. At the time, he was less sympathetic toward the aspirations of African-Americans. Situated in the Deep South, the Bell factory conformed to local traditions by concentrating black laborers in menial jobs and doing little to address the numerous complaints of discrimination filed with the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC).

As the United States drifted toward war in the spring of 1941, black labor leader A. Philip Randolph began to organize a march on Washington to protest the exclusion of African-Americans from skilled jobs in defense industries. The American government presented itself and its British ally as defenders of democracy against fascist, totalitarian Axis powers. Segregation in the U.S. military and discrimination in private defense factories exposed the hypocrisy of the American position. To avoid the embarrassment of a mass protest in the nation's capital, President Roosevelt in June 1941 issued Executive Order 8802, establishing the FEPC and prohibiting government agencies, unions, and defense employers from discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion, or nationality. As a result, Randolph called off the march.

The FEPC required a non-discrimination clause in all defense contracts, but the agency lacked a large staff and true enforcement powers. Consequently, FEPC officials could do little more than hear complaints and try to negotiate a redress of grievances with company personnel directors. In 1942 the federal government gave local officials in the Atlanta area large grants to create aircraft training programs. Despite guidelines requiring the distribution of funds without regard to race, black applicants were initially excluded from all the schools. Without specialized training it was impossible for African-Americans to obtain skilled positions at the Bell plant. To remedy the problem, the Atlanta Urban League created the Council of Defense Training (CDT) to lobby and organize protests calling for a separate black training school. The CDT conducted a registration drive and collected signatures of over five thousand black Atlantans who wanted to enroll. Following an official complaint from the CDT, the Fair Employment Practices Committee ordered Atlanta to comply. The result was the creation of a training program in November 1942 at Atlanta's Booker T. Washington High School.

Even after the African-American school began to produce gradu-
ates, Bell at first refused to hire them for skilled positions. A typical complaint filed with the FEPC was that of Mrs. Sarah Madison, who completed eight weeks of training at Booker T. Washington. Even though she studied such subjects as riveting, fabrication, and blueprinting, she found work at Bell sweeping floors and dusting shelves and workbenches. The Atlanta Urban League intervened in the black trainees’ behalf and managed to negotiate an agreement with the company. In 1944 Bell took over the Washington High training program, provided better equipment, paid trainees sixty-five cents an hour, and guaranteed employment to those completing a three-week session. The company apparently had an unstated quota in mind, because after it reached eight hundred skilled African-Americans, it refused to hire any more. Bell placed the black skilled laborers in segregated parts of the B-1 building or in other structures; some worked as far away as Roswell Road, roughly a mile from the plant. The company was so effective in its segregationist policy that few white workers were aware that blacks performed skilled jobs.32

After a 1945 meeting with Jimmie Carmichael, Dr. Witherspoon Dodge, the FEPC Region VII director, concluded that Bell Bomber had no intention of integrating black and white workers and that Carmichael was knowingly in violation of President Roosevelt’s executive order, barring racial discrimination in defense industries. As late as April 1945, when the company advertised job openings for positions such as female trainers, bench mechanics, and stenographers, it placed the announcements in the white female section of the Atlanta Constitution, never in the “female colored” section.

The FEPC maintained that Bell’s “system of departmental segregation...is not in any sense a step toward compliance because it cannot possibly lead to equal job opportunity.” But Dodge realized that his enforcement powers were limited. The country was in a struggle for survival, and the Roosevelt administration considered victory over external enemies more important than the achievement of racial equality. FDR reasoned that southern congressmen and manufacturers were vital to the war effort, and he would not risk losing their support by pressing too hard for equal rights. So Dodge decided not to forward his complaints about the company to the War Manpower Commission in Washington, but to try harder to settle the cases with the company liaison in Marietta.33
Despite its segregationist policies, Bell hired a significant, but relatively small proportion of black laborers. In January 1945 the plant employed 2,069 African-American skilled and unskilled workers, about 8 percent of the total labor force. In 1940 the African-American segment of Cobb's population was 16 percent, double the share at the bomber factory. Considering the huge African-American labor pool in Atlanta, the employment record at Bell could clearly have been better. However, few employers, North or South, championed equal opportunities for non-white workers. In the context of the age, the uniqueness of the Bell plant was not that it discriminated against blacks, but that it offered African-Americans the highest wages they had ever had a chance to earn.

One African-American domestic worker who found employment at Bell was Ernestine Slade of Marietta. Her specialty was washing and stretching curtains and doing linens and tablecloths. She placed her application at Bell's Atlanta employment office, because she feared the Marietta office would not knowingly hire the servants of prominent local families. In the factory she continued to do housekeeping work, going inside the plane when a section was completed to clean up. She also rubbed down long pieces of the plane with something akin to steel wool before placing them in a special solution.

Having earned seven to ten dollars weekly in her former job, she was excited to discover that her first paycheck was "like a million dollars.... It was about thirty-three or thirty-four dollars.... It just helped in every way." She quickly paid off her debts and was able to buy things for her family, such as nice dresses and an extra pair of Sunday shoes for her girls. Before she had never had a savings account. Now she could begin to set part of her income aside. While recognizing the company's discriminatory practices, she was impressed with the expanded economic opportunities that Bell provided.

In the early days friction existed between white northern and southern workers, who had different views of proper industrial relations. Originally from the Buffalo area, Dick Croop detected considerable resentment when southerners thought they were being "ordered by a Yankee." Sensitive to local feelings, he tried to show his work crew what to do rather than just tell them. Croop found that he was well received as long as he gave instructions "not in a nasty way, but...in a friendly way." An Alabama native, Stinson Adams noted that supervisors who
came down from Buffalo did not always last long. One man who "just didn't understand rednecks" tried to order people around in the gruff manner he used up north. In Georgia he needed to be more polite. The company had to send him back to New York, where he worked more effectively. Adams maintained that southern workers generally learned things rapidly. If a boss showed them one time, they did the task with no problem. But the instructor had to be tactful and not convey a superior attitude, as southern laborers took exception to anyone who looked down on them.  

Few employees in the Georgia Division had ever worked in a large factory. During World War II, William G. Gisel was a key financial officer at the Bell plant in Buffalo. Shortly after construction began, he came down to Marietta to open up the payroll department. Since he attended the University of Miami in the 1930s, he understood something of southern culture. But he found the different traditions a major challenge for the aircraft corporation. He recalled that the Georgia workers "were farmers—cotton farmers and things like that. They were not used to regimentation, as far as punching your time card. Then there was this serious question about the blacks being uneducated and not eating in the same place with the whites. It was quite a problem at that time to educate the people to get involved in a big industrial effort. It took a lot of time and effort in that era, and we did spend a lot of time and effort. I think we did a good job in training people."  

It seems clear that Bell's top management was determined not to interfere with southern race relations. Gisel admitted that the northerners had "to get used to a situation." The first general manager, Harry Collins, employed his considerable diplomatic skills to win the trust of everyone, white and black. The Bell executive staff worked with the NAACP, but never challenged the system of segregation. Gisel thought that race relations were "faced properly" and that the company had fewer labor problems in the South than in the North.  

Tardiness was a major problem for rural Georgians, accustomed to outdoor work governed by the sun, but they gradually conformed to factory time. Unfamiliar with the system of time cards, some new Georgia employees punched in on Monday, stuck their time cards in the toolbox, and did not punch out until Friday. After one mistake, however, they used their time cards correctly the second week.  

Dick Croop recalled that a significant minority of Georgia work-
ers were illiterate and had to sign their name with an “X.” Whatever southerners lacked in business skills, they more than made up in hospitality. Croop observed, “It was a new world for us! A new world! In the North everybody was after money at that time. They could take you to the cleaners, as they say. It was dog-eat-dog up there. [But southerners] took us into their heart. It may sound foolish, but many times I would be invited to somebody’s house for dinner. Like I say, we weren’t used to the way they were eating, but it was always [fried] chicken. It was always delicious chicken. Well, it was just because they liked us.”

Bill Gisel was close to Larry Bell and eventually became president of Bell Aerosystems Company, serving in that capacity from 1960 to 1980. He spent only a few months in Marietta creating the payroll system. But during his frequent trips into the general manager’s office, he was attracted to Captain Collins’ secretary, Katherine Lee. The daughter of a Marietta city councilman, Katherine (or Kay) found employment at Bell through the assistance of family friend Jimmie Carmichael. A 1944 Bellringer article described her as “one of the Georgia Division’s veterans” who joined the company “when the embryo bomber plant consisted of a small suite of offices in downtown Atlanta.” Gisel did not want to arouse southern prejudices by dating her while she was in Georgia. Fortunately, Larry Bell transferred Collins to the Washington office, and Lee went with him. When Gisel traveled to the national capital on business, he told her, “Finally, I have you on the other side of the Mason Dixon. Now, we can talk serious.” Soon they were engaged.

Mayor Rip Blair hosted a reception for them at his house on Cherokee Street. During the festivities, two Marietta policemen walked in and asked for a William Gisel from Buffalo, New York. He identified himself, and they told him that he was under arrest and had to come with them. When he asked the charge, they said he was wanted for kidnapping a Georgia belle. At that point Kay got mad and said, “Rip Blair, you can’t do this.” She thought that her fiancé might have to spend the night in jail as one of the mayor’s practical jokes. Despite her protest, Gisel went quietly. The policemen drove him around the block several times, and then let him escape. He walked back to the party, and that was the end of the matter. They were married on 25 November 1944.
B-29 in flight with plant and Kennesaw Mountain in background (Bell Aircraft collection, Center for Regional History & Culture, KSU)
Closing the Plant

By mid-1945 the plant began scaling back its workforce in preparation for the war's end. After the Japanese surrendered, the military canceled the B-29 contract. On 17 August 1945, less than two weeks after the bombing of Hiroshima, the company announced the sudden termination of eight thousand workers. By the end of September the workforce was down to a few thousand. Fearing public reaction, Larry Bell came down to Marietta so that he could personally announce the plant's closure. As general manager, Jimmie Carmichael summoned the workers to a mass assembly. The employees took the news calmly. As executives mingled with workers, Carmichael recollected that people "came by, spoke to us, told us that it had been good to have a part in the war effort," and that they appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the B-29 project. He added that he was never prouder of the people of Cobb County than on that day.40

The ex-employees' positive attitude resulted in part from the abundance of good jobs in the post-war era. Throughout the late 1940s unemployment rates remained low. Born in 1926, Fred Bentley, Sr., was the son of the manager of Schilling's hardware store. Before World War II, opportunities seemed limited for a struggling, middle class family. Bentley once observed that the best job he "could ever aspire to was the manager of the Holeproof Hosiery Company, and I had to wait till everybody died off before I could possibly achieve that." At a time when many bright people were moving away, he decided to relocate as soon as he could to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. When Bentley came home in 1945 on leave from the navy, he got lost as he drove through Pine Forest, the large development of duplex homes on tree-lined streets, built during the war by Mayor Blair, Jimmie Carmichael, and other partners. He later noted, "For me to get lost in Marietta, Georgia—especially here where I had grown up—was amazing. I said, 'Things are happening here.' So, I thought of Russell Conwell's great old speech, 'Acres of Diamonds in your own back yard.'" Bentley scrapped his plans for moving north. After graduating in 1949 from Emory law school, he opened an office in Marietta. Within a few years he was a successful attorney and member of the state legislature.41

Bell workers had trouble finding jobs that paid as well as those at Bell, but they found other sources of employment in the peacetime labor
force. Even without the bomber plant, Marietta’s population by 1950 reached 20,687 and Cobb County’s 61,830 (increases of 139 percent and 62 percent, respectively, over the 1940 figures). A host of new businesses, including machine shops, electrical appliance manufacturers, and furniture and chenille plants, contributed to the continued good times. In a postwar article Carmichael boasted that Marietta had not become a ghost town and virtually every house remained occupied. The area’s small factories seemed to have as many orders as they could handle.

A number of workers went into business for themselves. Harold Mintz had a chance to stay at Bell to the end and help the company salvage parts off the planes they were scrapping. But he found the job too sad to contemplate, so he went back to his home in South Carolina and started a Pure Oil service station with his brother, a prisoner of war who had just returned home. When Lockheed came to Georgia in 1951, he returned to the aircraft industry. Stinson Adams also left the Bell plant earlier than he had to. One of Carmichael’s assistants told him that he could be the last man to leave the B-4 building, but he was anxious to move on. Adams entered a partnership with a neighbor in a garage and service station on the Four Lane highway and later invested in Marietta Parts Warehouse, where he sold auto parts for the rest of his career.

Dick Croop invested in a trailer park, which he ran in Fair Oaks, adjacent to the plant. He thought that everybody had more money than before. The housing industry was booming and employing hundreds of workers. Some workers put in utility lines or helped to build highways. Others started specialty shops, refinishing furniture, selling antiques, and so on. Tom Bockman was drafted when he lost his deferred status as soon as the plant closed. After a year in the army, he put his engineering skills to good use with an oil pipeline company.

Some of the female employees got married or went back to domestic duties when their husbands came home from the war. Betty Williams, for instance, started a family, while her husband Paul went to work for a grocery store until better jobs came along. A significant number of women remained in the work force. Dorothy Petty Odom left the plant a few months before the conclusion of the war. Realizing that the end was near, she responded to a newspaper advertisement and took a secretarial job with a downtown Atlanta business. Ernestine Slade left Bell due to a pregnancy. After a few years she worked on commission for a black insurance agency, and then took a job as a cook at the Marietta
World War II brought about a major transformation in Cobb County and the entire South. The region had a better-trained work force, the people had more spending money, the population was a little more cosmopolitan, and soldiers returned home from overseas with new ways of looking at things. The “greatest generation” endured the Great Depression and the War for Survival and anticipated a brighter future. In the next several decades the Southland would witness massive economic, political, and social upheavals that were byproducts of the wartime experience. While erstwhile Bell employees adjusted to new economic realities, the key players in bringing the company to Marietta continued distinguished careers. The next chapter will consider the postwar achievements of Lucius Clay, Larry Bell, and the “Bomber Threesome” of Carmichael, Blair, and McMillan, including the record of the McMillan administration in beginning the first major infrastructure improvements for a growing population.
Following the Japanese surrender and the termination of the B-29 contract, Larry Bell presided over a much smaller company. Retrenchment was less drastic in Buffalo than in Marietta, but total corporate employment fell from over fifty thousand to about three thousand. Bell endured a hostile takeover attempt in 1947 by dissident stockholders and a nasty strike in 1949 by UAW Local 501. Having survived these challenges, the aviation pioneer absorbed an additional blow in 1950. According to future company president Bill Gisel, Larry Bell "was completely taken back by the fact that he never got [the Georgia] plant back.... He had a great devotion for that plant, and when the government awarded it to Lockheed, after we closed, he was very despondent." Gisel added, "I think that was the end of Larry Bell."!

After Bell Bomber closed in 1945, the plant on South Cobb Drive stayed virtually unoccupied for five years. With the nation no longer at war, the Truman administration scaled back military spending, and the mammoth factory no longer seemed needed. The government leased
space to a few agencies and private businesses, but none of Georgia’s larg­er industries wanted the four-million-square-foot facility. Former Marietta Daily Journal editor Alec Tregone worked for the Veterans Administration after World War II. His office from 1946 to 1949 was located in the B-2 (administration) building, which housed supervisory personnel for five southern states. In one corner of the B-1 building a company manufactured prefabricated houses for a while, but the site was something of a “white elephant.” Selected by the Air Force, the Tumpane Company maintained the plant in operating condition and stored for the government some fifty thousand World War II machine tools. This, obviously, was not the factory’s most efficient use, and local leaders yearned for the day that airplanes would again be produced in Cobb County. That opportunity arrived with the outbreak of the Korean War.

How Lockheed won Air Force Plant No. 6 will be discussed in the next chapter. The Pentagon did not explain why it overlooked Bell Aircraft, but a logical hypothesis is that the company had moved in new directions and was more valuable doing other things. In 1956 Bell’s experimental X-2 airplane reached altitudes of over 126,000 feet and speeds in excess of twenty-one hundred miles per hour. By then the company was heavily involved in helicopters and guided missiles. Gradually, employment in Buffalo rose to over twenty thousand workers. Having no children of his own, the aviation pioneer developed a fondness for those of Bill and Kay Gisel. He left funds in his will to cover plastic surgery costs for a Gisel daughter who had been badly burned. Gisel asserted that Bell “had great capability at leadership. He was a good salesman.” Unfortunately, Bell’s health deteriorated, and on 20 October 1956 he died of congestive heart failure at age sixty-two.

The great legacy of this aircraft giant may well be the bomber plant in Georgia. Biographer Donald Norton argues that Bell became convinced, as the affluent Sun Belt emerged, that his company started the growth. He quotes Bell that “my friends down there have repeatedly told me that the operation of Bell Aircraft probably had more influence on the rebirth of the South than anything that’s ever been done.” The aircraft industry, of course, was not the whole story of southern economic progress, but it was a big part of it. During and after the war, the larger picture includes a vast increase of federal funds to a host of defense industries and military installations. Wartime factories not only put more dollars in southerners’ pockets, they trained a skilled work force. Thus, many top
corporations built southern offices and plants in the postwar era to take advantage of the new markets and talented labor pools in metropolitan Atlanta and other urban centers. By cooperating with the federal government in building a Georgia division, Bell justly took satisfaction in helping to initiate the southern economic revival.  

**General Lucius D. Clay and the Berlin Airlift**

Of those responsible for bringing the Bell Bomber plant to Marietta, Lucius Clay became the most internationally famous. After World War II he served as military governor of Germany and became a Cold War hero. The victors of World War II (the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union) temporarily divided defeated Germany into four zones of occupation. In the eastern sector the Russians introduced communist institutions, while the western sectors evolved in a capitalistic, democratic direction. Berlin, the former German capital, was located well inside the Soviet sphere, but all the allies were promised access. The great powers divided the city into free West Berlin and communist East Berlin. At first, the Roosevelt and Truman administrations thought they could work with the Soviet Union; but by 1948 the Cold War was underway and relations had become tense. In that year the Soviets decided to squeeze the western democracies out of all parts of Berlin and turn the large population center into a communist bastion. They posted armed guards at the border into East Germany and prohibited anyone from trying to reach free Berlin by road or rail.

As military governor of the American zone, Clay wanted to march U.S. troops across the border and defy the Soviet Union to shoot at them. He thought that Russian dictator Joseph Stalin was bluffing and would back down when America asserted itself. His superiors on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, considered that course too risky. They did not want to start World War III. Clay did not need their permission for an alternative course of action. On his own, he ordered an airlift to fly into West Berlin whatever the city needed for survival. If the Soviets tried to shoot down our aircraft, the blame for starting a war would clearly be theirs. At first Clay did not have enough planes to make the airlift effective, and the Air
Force seemed reluctant to give him what he needed. But commander-in-chief Harry Truman overruled the top military brass and backed his determined military governor. With the firm support of President Truman, Clay made the airlift work.

For about three hundred days the Americans and British flew to the beleaguered city food, supplies, and even a power plant. Stories are legion of American pilots paying special attention to the needs of children, providing everything from candy bars to puppy dogs. Outside the communist bloc, worldwide public opinion supported Clay and the United States. It was obvious that the citizens of free Berlin were struggling valiantly not to fall under communist control. In 1949 Soviet dictator Stalin gave up and again allowed free passage into the city. Clay became one of the most popular men in the western world for his successful containment of communism. When he had the opportunity to visit his hometown of Marietta later that year, he received a huge hero's welcome.
Clay Day celebration in Marietta, 26 May 1949, parade around Square (Blair papers, Kennesaw State University)
Shortly afterward, General Clay retired from the military and returned to the United States to become chief executive officer of the Continental Can Company. To avoid conflicts of interest, he turned down important executive positions with defense contractors such as General Motors and IBM. A New Deal liberal, he switched to the Republican Party after helping to persuade his close friend, Dwight D. Eisenhower, to run for the presidency in 1952. President-elect Eisenhower asked Clay to select his initial cabinet heads. Then, when President Eisenhower became convinced that a public works program was needed to keep the economy healthy, he chose Clay to head the committee that created the interstate highway program. While the Marietta native generally stayed out of state and local politics, he made a public endorsement in 1966 of the candidacy of Howard (Bo) Callaway, the first Georgia Republican to run for governor in the twentieth-century. Clay continued to be a national figure in business and politics into the early 1970s. Suffering from emphysema, caused by years of heavy cigarette smoking, he died in 1978, just six days shy of his eightieth birthday, and was buried at West Point with full military honors.

Leon M. Blair, Lorena Pace Pruitt, and the Growth of Cobb’s Cities

Another New Deal Democrat, Rip Blair left his law practice after World War II to devote more time to an aluminum furniture business he started with Jimmie Carmichael and other partners. Designed to provide jobs for former employees of the bomber plant, the furniture company was housed near the railroad tracks in the former Brumby chair factory. That venerable Marietta enterprise had closed during the war when it became impossible to acquire needed raw materials. Blair also continued to manage his Pine Forest development near the Four Lane highway. In an era when the housing stock in Cobb County remained limited, young professionals viewed Pine Forest duplexes as attractive and affordable. Its occupants included newcomers to the area and younger members of old Marietta families.

Blair served almost ten years as mayor of Marietta. After an uncontested election in September 1938 to complete the term of the late Tom Brumby, Blair was reelected without opposition four more times (in 1939, 1941, 1943, and 1945). In addition to his pivotal role in bringing Bell
Aircraft to Marietta, Blair was credited with paving many streets, starting public housing, and building the Brumby Recreation Center, the Larry Bell Park Center, and a number of schools. In 1947 the city began to construct a modern hospital; after Blair left office it opened in 1950 under the name of Kennestone.7

Along with Smyrna mayor Lorena Pace Pruitt, Blair played a central role in providing urban residents with an adequate water and sewerage system. Pruitt was the first woman in Cobb County history to hold the post of mayor. Born in Smyrna in 1896, she held a variety of supervisory posts for the county and state. When World War II began, she was in charge of the Georgia Training School for Delinquent Girls. In December 1943 she went to work at Bell Bomber as manager of one of the cafeterias. Pruitt's sister,
Helen Pace Thompson, was also a successful professional, becoming Fulton National Bank's first female vice-president. The last cafeteria foreman to be let go when the plant closed, Lorena Pruitt decided to run for mayor of Smyrna when the incumbent resigned in midterm. Dr. J. T. Pace, her grandfather, had held the same post four decades earlier. In December 1945 she defeated a male opponent by a tally of 237 to 61. Her platform was the need to improve the city's system of roads, streetlights, water and sewerage.8

Providing an adequate water supply was crucial to community growth. Marietta's first waterworks started as a project of the Marietta Paper Manufacturing Company, shortly after it moved downtown from its original site on Sope Creek. In need of a reliable water source, this private business purchased the old Isaac Sewell mill property (currently on the campus of Life University) about two and a half miles southeast of town at Rottenwood Creek. In early 1896 the paper company built a stone dam, reservoir, and pumping house, designed by Olin C. Gillette, a civil engineer from New York. The system pumped water through a ten-inch pipe to a fifty-foot standpipe on a hill adjacent to the National Cemetery near Roswell Street. Built by Walsh & Weiner of Chattanooga, the standpipe held 350,000 gallons of water and was visible throughout the community. From that location, water flowed through a series of mains and hydrants to the paper company and to other private subscribers.

Unfortunately, the Marietta Paper Manufacturing Company experienced hard times and sold all its property a few years later to a group of Atlanta and Marietta businessmen, operating as the Georgia Manufacturing and Public Service Company. The Atlanta owners included such prominent entrepreneurs as Ernest Woodruff and Hugh T. Inman. The Marietta contingent consisted of Moultrie and George Sessions, Robert H. Northcutt, and James T. Anderson. By this time, the demand for water was outstripping the capacity of the reservoir on Rottenwood Creek, and local citizens were calling for a public rather than a private system. On 16 November 1908 Marietta voters approved a bond referendum, permitting a more modern waterworks and sewerage system. Under the direction of chairman T. A. Gramling, the Marietta Board of Lights and Water opened the new waterworks on Sessions Street exactly two years later. In the rest of the county residents continued to rely on wells behind their houses. On the eve of the American entry into World War II, Cobb County government began a modest water distribution program for a few homes in unincorporated areas south of Marietta, but the embryonic sys-
tem relied on deep wells for its water supply. 9

The arrival of the Bell Aircraft Company led to dramatic infrastructure improvements. While the plant was under construction in 1942 Atlanta ran a temporary twelve-inch main above ground from Northside Drive to the old Dixie Highway and from there to the worksite. To supplement the Atlanta project, Marietta ran a temporary six-inch pipe under the railroad tracks on Jonesville Road and on to the Bell plant. According to commissioner George McMillan, the bomber facility was expected to use about eighteen million gallons of water a month—as much as the entire city of Marietta. That estimate proved to be extremely conservative. Between June and August 1942 the U.S. Corps of Engineers laid a twenty-inch permanent main from Atlanta for Bell’s exclusive use. The new pipes were the first in the area constructed of steel rather than cast iron. The head of the Atlanta waterworks department, W. Zode Smith, remarked that the new main would “furnish water for the bomber plant as long as the Chattahoochee river runs.” The capital city agreed to pay the army back, amortizing the debt from water sales. 10

In late November 1942 Mayor Blair, announced his plan to service the growing neighborhoods around the bomber plant by tapping into the Atlanta line opposite the airport along the Four Lane Highway. The following year the city launched a $450,000 expansion of its water and sewer system, including a modern disposal plant two miles south of the city limits. The improvements were needed to provide for the wartime housing needs on the south side of town. By this time the Marietta population had reached almost eighteen thousand, double what it had been just three years earlier. Recognizing Marietta’s contribution to national defense, the federal government agreed to pay about two-thirds of the cost. The expansion was just in time, as Marietta residents experienced severe water shortages during the summer of 1943, despite the tap in the bomber plant line. 11

Just south of the aircraft facility and air base, Smyrna was the next Cobb County town to build a modern water and sewerage system. Under the leadership of Mayor Pruitt and city attorney Harold Willingham, Smyrna in April 1946 issued a $215,000 revenue anticipation certificate, purchased by Atlanta brokers Brooks, Tindell and Company and Johnson, Lane, Space and Company. The certificate provided eighty thousand dollars to build a pumping station, replace existing mains, add fire hydrants, and lay an eight-inch main from the city limits to the Four Lane Highway, where it would tap into the Atlanta main. The remaining $135,000 would
be used for the construction of a disposal plant and sewerage system. The plan to build sewers with revenue certificates was controversial, as the Georgia legislature had permitted this type of debt on the assumption that local governments would pay back the certificates through water-bill collections. Cities could make money by selling water, but sewerage facilities did not typically generate revenue.

No previous town in Georgia had built its disposal system with revenue anticipation certificates, but attorney Willingham persuaded Smyrna to test the constitutionality of this innovative form of financing. Fortunately for the city, the Georgia Supreme Court upheld the bonds later that year. When local residents went without water during a drought in early 1947, the value of the new system was made manifest. Smyrna negotiated a deal with Atlanta to provide water for thirty years at a rate of eight cents per thousand gallons. Mayor Pruitt’s son Rex would later recall that his mother “charmed Mayor Hartsfield [of Atlanta] into running a waterpipe across the Chattahoochee to Smyrna, and Smyrna had the water it needed to grow.”

Just after the war Pruitt and Blair had to deal with the impact on their communities of changes in mass transportation. In 1946 the Southeastern Greyhound bus company started regular commuter bus service from Marietta to Atlanta. The competition threatened to eliminate the interurban trolley line running from Marietta through Smyrna to Atlanta. Beginning on 17 July 1905, the Atlanta Northern Railway (ANR) carried thousands of streetcar passengers during its forty-one year history. During World War II this Georgia Power subsidiary ran a spur to the Bell Aircraft plant for the benefit of the bomber employees. The ANR provided a popular service and had the virtue of taking a few cars off the highways. Unfortunately, the streetcars never made a large profit, and the ANR claimed it could not stay in business if the bus line cut into its customer base. Mayors Pruitt and Blair were strong supporters of the trolley system. While they did not oppose competition, they feared that buses added to congestion of their streets; and Blair maintained that the Greyhound bus station in Marietta was “disgraceful.”

Promising to cut fifteen to twenty minutes from the travel time into Atlanta, Southeastern Greyhound in 1946 announced bus service down the Dixie Highway adjacent to the trolley line. On 25 March 1946 the ANR went before the state Public Service Commission (PSC) to try to block bus competition, arguing the lack of sufficient business to sup-
port both trolleys and buses. According to Georgia Power's president, W. E. Mitchell, the issue was "not a case of competing service—it is a question of one or the other." Atlanta Northern Railway (ANR) attorney Harlee Branch claimed that the bus company had no legal authority to establish the new routes without notifying the ANR and without first gaining the Public Service Commission's approval. He also noted that a 1932 Marietta ordinance prohibited buses on Atlanta Street or within two thousand feet of the trolley company's right-of-way. Branch's brother John, serving as Greyhound's legal counsel, countered that the bus company possessed an unrestricted certificate to add scheduled stops as needed along highways 3-E (the Four Lane) and 3-W (Atlanta Road) between Marietta and Atlanta.15

In November 1946 the PSC ruled in favor of mass transit competition, permitting Greyhound to operate twenty-seven round trip routes between Marietta and Atlanta. Angered by the PSC decision, Rip Blair invoked the 1932 ordinance, sending out Marietta police officers to arrest bus drivers traveling down Atlanta Street. Beginning the evening of 25 November Chief Harold Griggs and his force served twenty-one citations against ten Greyhound drivers, ordering them to appear in recorder's court and post a ten-dollar bond per case. Chief Griggs threatened jail time for any bus operator charged with a second offense. Blair announced, "We're going to determine some day who's going to run Marietta—whether it will be companies like Greyhound lines and Atlanta Gas company, or the mayor and council of Marietta." He added, "All the John L. Lewises are not heads of coal mining unions14—some are groups that are running public services and think they can dictate the management of our city streets. The rights of the people of Marietta are going to be preserved and defended as long as I am in office."

On 26 November local Greyhound attorney Sam J. Welsch went to court and won a temporary restraining order from Judge Harold Hawkins. It prohibited the city from interfering with Greyhound operations along any part of Georgia Highway 3-W (Atlanta Street). The judge ordered Blair to appear in court on 21 December to explain why the order should not be made permanent. Meanwhile, Mayor Pruitt and the Smyrna city council passed resolutions outlawing bus routes through the city. The next day they persuaded Judge Hawkins to stop Greyhound from going through Smyrna on its Marietta to Atlanta turn-around routes. Hawkins ordered the bus company to appear in court on 21 December along with Mayor
Blair to try to reach a final solution.15

These political and legal skirmishes did little more than delay the inevitable. In the affluent post-World War II era the vast majority of Georgia families acquired an automobile, reducing the need for public transportation. As traffic congestion became an urban nightmare, Atlanta mayor William B. Hartsfield wanted as many lanes as possible devoted to automobiles and viewed trolley tracks down the middle of city streets as an obstacle to smooth vehicle flow. Hartsfield held the upper hand. Atlanta Northern Railway's franchise rights in the capital city were due to expire in 1947. Recognizing that the day of electric trolleys had passed, Georgia Power sold the ANR in mid-November to a new corporation, the Atlanta Northern Lines (ANL). J. C. Steinmetz, the new president of the ANL, immediately petitioned the Public Service Commission to eliminate the trolley line and run ANL buses from Marietta to Atlanta near the old tracks.16

For a few days an intense struggle ensued between Greyhound and the ANL. Eventually, they agreed to coexist. The competitors realized that they had enough riders to support both firms operating on different schedules over the same routes. So they decided to charge the same rates and honor each other's tickets. With the demise of the streetcar, the bus companies rotated departures every eight minutes from Marietta during the rush hours of 6:00 to 8:00 A.M. and from Atlanta between 4:00 and 7:00 P.M. For the eight hours from 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. buses left every twenty minutes. At twenty-five cents, fares on the forty-one seat buses were a dime cheaper than on the old trolley. Those with commuter tickets paid even less: sixteen and two-thirds cents a trip.17

On 9 December 1946 the Marietta city council accepted the new arrangement, and Cobb's citizens resigned themselves to the end of a popular trolley service. Regina Rambo Benson proposed a midnight celebration for Marietta on the night of the last streetcar run. The Cobb Chamber of Commerce arranged the event. ANL president Steinmetz and Georgia Power officials attended, and the Marietta High School band performed for the occasion. Some five hundred people turned out to see the "Alexander Stephens Clay" leave Marietta for the last trip to Atlanta. Honored guests included four passengers on the maiden streetcar journey in 1905: Jeff Crowe, W. O. Eaton, Guy Northcutt, and Mrs. L. D. Spinks. Northcutt remembered as a boy living on Atlanta Street when the first northbound streetcar came by. The crew had to stop the car just in front of his house to trim back the limbs of an old water oak before it could pro-
ceed. Guy and his friends, Dee Black and Ralph Grist, were outside watching. One of the passengers, Mr. J. H. Carmichael, asked them if they wanted to hop aboard. They jumped on and enjoyed the ride until the trolley came back by the Northcutt home on the return trip. Northcutt observed that only about three Mariettans had automobiles at the time, and none of them journeyed far out of the city. Back then, he said, “the new trolley schedule permitting travel to Atlanta in an hour, every hour, was progress with a capital ‘P.’”

In her two terms in office Lorena Pruitt presided over the extension of the water system, the paving of several streets, and other infrastructure improvements. With a population nearing two thousand, Smyrna by 1948 was Cobb’s second largest city. On the completion of her second term, Cobb’s first woman mayor decided she had held office long enough and chose not to run again. In 1949 commissioner John Heck and the county advisory board appointed her as chairperson of the Cobb County Board of Zoning Appeals. She held that position until Lockheed opened in 1951, when she took a job as personnel manager for Slater System Maryland, Inc., the operator of a plant cafeteria. She retired after two years, but continued her active community involvement for several more decades. In 1982 she died at age 86.

In Marietta, Rip Blair’s political career ended in defeat. No mayor in the city’s history had done more to stimulate economic development and to build a modern infrastructure. Yet after a decade in office, Blair had created many enemies. Not everyone admired his fiery personality. Young veterans home from World War II felt that they lacked a voice in high places. Critics considered him dictatorial and secretive. Those who crossed the mayor found him arrogant and vindictive.

In July 1947 Blair’s political opponents held a number of closed-door conferences, trying to decide on one strong candidate to run against him. They settled on a veteran legislator, Sam J. Welsch, who won his first election to the Georgia legislature in 1934 and had served in both the House and Senate. Rep. Welsch had practiced law in Marietta for a number of years and had teamed with Blair in 1931 on the George Goumas murder case. Before that he had been a teacher and coach at Marietta High School. His platform called for the hiring of a city manager, more openness in government, and continued public improvements. The main issue was the record and personality of Blair and whether it was time for a change. When the day of the election arrived, some 80 percent of the reg-
istered voters cast their ballots, an unusually high turnout in a local election held in the summertime. The vote went overwhelmingly against incumbents. Welsch defeated Blair three to one (3,416 to 1,157), and only one member of the city council (Earl Williams) won reelection. The electorate made clear that they wanted new leadership.

While Blair lost every other polling place, he won the box in Ward 5 where African-Americans were allowed to vote. The mayor was a segregationist, but no more so than his opponent Welsch; and he had done much to improve housing for the working poor. He was also closely associated with Jimmie Carmichael, who won the black vote in 1946 in his gubernatorial campaign against the race-baiting Gene Talmadge. In the context of the times, Blair was considered a racial moderate.20

During the campaign, the Marietta Daily Journal came out strongly in favor of Welsch. The Cobb County Times gave Blair more favorable coverage. Nonetheless, following the election, the Times editorialized that the mayor had been out of touch with his constituents for a long period. In the year that the Republican Party took control of the U.S. Congress for the first time since the Depression began, the Times noted that anti-incumbency was in the air throughout the nation. Welsch made good on one of his central campaign pledges. The same day the mayor and council were inaugurated, they appointed Clyde L. Brown, a thirty-three year old state Veterans' Education official, as Marietta's first city manager. After the election, Blair never ran again for public office. He continued his career as a successful businessman until his death in 1964 at the age of sixty-nine.21

Commissioner George McMillan and Improvements to the County Infrastructure

George H. McMillan served as county commissioner from 1941 to 1949. In addition to his role in developing Bell Bomber, he was proudest of his part in improving conditions for county prisoners. While he served as sheriff the work camp was located on Fairground Street on the site of an old fairground and racetrack. The camp was notorious for its "sweat box," a narrow container with a window at the top where alleged troublemakers
were punished. When the convicts went out to labor on the roads, they traveled on a mule-drawn wagon in a steel cage built by the Manley Company in Dalton. Toward the end of the war the city and county joined with the Federal Works Agency to convert the camp into a forty-acre public park and recreation center. On 30 November 1945 the Cobb Chamber of Commerce hosted a ceremony dedicating the new Larry Bell Park. McMillan supervised the creation of a modern prison farm southwest of town on County Farm (currently County Services) Road.

McMillan took the lead in championing the county's first bond referendum to pave its rural roads. By the end of World War II the state had paved most of the major intercity arteries. Motorists could travel on hard surfaces down such routes as Dallas and Canton Highways and Roswell and Powder Springs Roads. The Dixie Highway had been paved for some time, and the new Four Lane Highway ran from Atlanta to just north of Marietta. But only 102 miles of the thousand-mile county road network were paved. Stimulated by Cobb's wartime growth, local politicians turned their attention to hard-surfacing the rural byways. Commissioner McMillan argued that good roads were more important than any other factor in facilitating progress and prosperity. In January 1946 unusually heavy rains and cold weather made road improvements imperative. The dirt roads became impassable and twenty-one bridges were washed out. As the Chattahoochee went over its banks, the bridge on Atlanta Road at Bolton closed for a day to all but pedestrians. Streetcars from Atlanta had to stop at the river, and passengers walked across the bridge to board buses on the other side. While the bridge at Johnson's Ferry remained standing, it was made unsafe when the raging river swept away the fill around it. On the western side of the county torrential rains destroyed bridges over Nose's, Mud, and Allatoona creeks.

Harold Martin of the Atlanta Constitution remarked that Cobb's roads were worse than they had been at the start of the century, when mules and wagons navigated around mud holes much more efficiently than could the modern automobile. After the column appeared, numerous angry constituents sent the article and nasty notes to McMillan. The besieged politician observed that every taxpayer thought the worst mud hole was in front of his house. In some parts of the county workers could not travel to their jobs. The commissioner had to send a bulldozer to pull a hearse to a rural church for a funeral and then to the cemetery for the graveside service.
Major County Roads and Planning Units (Cobb County Planning Department, Cobb Data Report: 1976)
To prevent similar crises in the future, McMillan scheduled a bond referendum. On 19 June 1946 voters overwhelmingly approved $1.4 million to pave slightly over one hundred miles of roads. The twenty-three routes hard-surfaced under this mandate included part or all of Burnt Hickory, Mars Hill, Stilesboro, Macland, Shiloh, Shallowford, Bells Ferry, Roberts, Sandy Plains, Johnson Ferry, Lower Roswell, Powers Ferry, Florence, Gordon and South Gordon, Camp Highland, Floyd, Concord, Vinings, and Oakdale. Herbert McCollum, a future commissioner, clerked for George McMillan as a young man. Years later he recalled with admiration that his old boss “watched every penny” and “didn’t waste a dime” of the road money.24

McMillan played a role in the development of the county water system. To service unincorporated areas, the commissioner and his advisory board (made up of the clerk of superior court and the ordinary) issued three hundred thousand dollars of revenue anticipation certificates on 1 June 1946. The county used the funds to extend water lines along Atlanta Road to the Chattahoochee River. In November 1948 the county opened a new pumping station connected to the twenty-inch Atlanta main. At the time the county had a mere 1,162 customers. McMillan’s successor, John Heck, continued the expansion of the water system. On 1 April 1950 the county advisory board issued eight hundred thousand dollars of water and sewerage revenue bonds. Retired over a thirty-year period, the bonds made possible county service to Vinings, Mableton, and the south Cobb area along the Bankhead Highway. Later in the 1950s the demand for county water would accelerate rapidly and the government would sell an additional $4,775,000 of revenue bonds, expanding the water and sewerage system through the heavily populated areas south of Marietta and north and west of Smyrna. Wanting more time for his family, McMillan left office in 1949. For a while he served as managing partner of Acme Lumber Company on the old Dixie Highway in Acworth. He retired from the business in 1972 and died six years later at age seventy-eight.25

**Growth of the Cobb County School System**

Reflecting Cobb’s tremendous population growth, the Cobb County School District went from a small rural system during World War II to the second largest in Georgia and thirtieth largest in the nation by the year
2000. Over the last half of the century the county school board constantly engaged in construction projects to keep up with the demand of an escalating population. For much of its history the Marietta school system was clearly superior to that of Cobb County. The separate Marietta system at mid-century was much better funded and offered a greater variety of courses and extracurricular activities. Supported not only by property taxes, but also by revenues from the Marietta Board of Lights & Water, the city system maintained a fiscal edge until the 1980s.

As late as World War II the county system struggled to provide rural schools with such basics as indoor plumbing and sets of encyclopedias. Most schools lacked science laboratories and managed to offer little more than the basics. Despite a large endowment from the estate of Lula D. McEachern, the rural McEachern High School was unable to field a football team before 1960 and did not have a stadium on campus until 1965. Prior to the late 1940s none of the county schools offered a band program for aspiring musicians. Unincorporated Cobb County was typical of rural areas throughout the South in its inability to finance a high-quality school system. The problem for unincorporated areas was that farm owners had sizable tax obligations, but most of their capital was tied up in land, equipment, and labor. On paper, they seemed well off; but, typically, they had little cash on hand when tax bills came due. Consequently, they favored low taxes and limited government. Schools were forced to stick to the essentials; and teachers, mainly women, had to contend with low salaries, ranging during the early 1940s from a minimum of $31.25 a month to a maximum of one hundred dollars. Despite their professional status, they made less than privately employed unskilled or clerical workers.

Still, there was progress in the World War II era. Under the leadership of Superintendent Francis T. Wills, the white county schools by the 1940s had all expanded to a nine-month academic year and the “colored schools” to at least seven or eight months. Born in Forsyth County just after Reconstruction, Wills served his native county as school superintendent from 1902 to 1908, then spent a quarter century as an ordained Baptist minister. Late in his career he studied law and was admitted to the bar in Marietta. In the depths of the Depression, he won election as Cobb County school superintendent, where he worked tirelessly to keep the schools open and teachers paid. After eleven years in this post, the seventy-one-year-old educator realized that his health
Between Bell and Lockheed: the Development of Cobb County in the Late 1940s

Francis T. Wills (Cobb County School District)
W. Paul Sprayberry (Cobb County School District)
was declining and did not offer for reelection in 1944. Unfortunately, he was unable to complete his term of office. Just as he was making plans for an extended vacation to south Florida, he died of a heart attack following a school board meeting on 25 January 1944.27

The board of education asked one of its members, Cobb County Times publisher Otis Brumby, to serve as interim superintendent until a new head could be elected in the Democratic primary scheduled for 16 February, just about three weeks away. In a low-key contest W. Paul Sprayberry emerged victorious over J. H. (Joe) Howard. Both candidates were longtime educators. Howard had spent fourteen years as principal of the Austell School. During that period he had served four years as president of the Cobb County Teachers Association and ten years as president of the Cobb County Principals Association. A Cobb native, Sprayberry held the post of principal for several years at the Acworth School, and then worked for Row Peterson Book Company in Atlanta.

Textile manufacturer Bob Kienel remembers Sprayberry as a great principal, whose concern for students extended beyond the school day and included service as scoutmaster for an Acworth troop of Boy Scouts. The outgoing school administrator had a reputation for teasing students. When he passed male scholars in the halls, he delighted in reaching out and grabbing a fistful of flesh, squeezing until they hollered. Once he intercepted a love note from Kienel to his future wife Betty and, to the couple’s great embarrassment, read it in the morning chapel. Receiving strong support from the Acworth area, Sprayberry won a decisive primary victory. Since Cobb Republicans never fielded candidates in that era, a victory in the Democratic primary was final. The new term of office did not begin until the next January, but Brumby resigned immediately from his interim post, so that Sprayberry could be sworn into office on 7 March 1944. The new superintendent was reelected several times and held the job until his retirement in 1960.28

Benefiting from the impact of the aircraft industry and a rising standard of living, Sprayberry and the school board set out to raise the quality of the schools. The development of music education provides one example of improved curricular opportunities. A trumpeter and band director, Captain Ken Stanton spent the Second World War traveling to army bases throughout the southeast to entertain the troops. After the war he worked for the Veterans Administration in Atlanta
where he was assistant chief of recreation and entertainment. Stanton played in bridge tournaments with Morrell M. Hall, the principal of the McEachern Schools from 1947-51. Together, they went to Sprayberry in 1949 to determine whether he would support a band program.

When the superintendent pleaded a lack of money, Stanton offered to work for a dollar a head. The schools already provided space for piano teachers to offer private lessons; such instructors received no salary but charged the students for their services. Consequently, the school board did not have to implement a new policy to accept Stanton’s offer. The only difference was that the band director worked with classes of twenty to twenty-five pupils per school rather than with individual students. To supplement his income Stanton asked permission to rent instruments to the students. Since his salary came from the parents and not from the school board, the superintendent saw no conflict of interest. So Sprayberry agreed to the plan on a trial basis.\footnote{29}

During the summer of 1949 Stanton attended principals’ meetings to acquaint them with his plans and to become familiar with the curriculum. All the principals were enthusiastic about the establishment of a music program. The band director opened his first Ken Stanton Music Store in a ten by twenty foot space inside the Marietta offices of a collection agency. First National Bank of Cobb County lent him enough money to buy horns and other musical instruments to rent to students. For several years he journeyed long distances over dirt roads to the six county high schools. Facilities were often a challenge. At McEachern the band practiced in a room heated by a pot-bellied stove located in the front of the room. Stanton found it a challenge not to get so carried away with his conducting that his backside brushed against the hot stove. Smyrna High School held band practice in the cafeteria where the smell of onions was often so strong that the band director cried all the way through class. In schools such as Fitzhugh Lee the practice room had little insulation and teachers up and down the hall complained about the noise created by beginning performers.

At first, Stanton used simple method books to teach popular tunes such as \textit{Silent Night}. The goal was to prepare the students for an initial performance at the annual school administrators’ banquet in December. While the band members practiced at their individual schools, they came together, 125 strong, for the Christmas concert. Stanton hoped that school officials would be pleased to hear familiar
holiday songs. He operated under the assumption that there was “safety in numbers,” with the better musicians drowning out those who occasionally hit a discordant note. As it turned out, the superintendent and the school board were so pleased that they voted to give Stanton a regular salary. The musician accepted, as long as they agreed to find band directors for each of the schools to replace him as soon as possible.

The musical entrepreneur helped find his replacements. He had taught briefly in Covington, Kentucky, before the war. A former student, Roy Dawn, became his first recruit. Soon Stanton attracted Robert G. Ousley, a fellow student during his college days in Wichita, Kansas. Within a few years Stanton found band supervisors for all the county high schools and worked himself out of a job. In the late 1950s he filled an emergency need as teacher and bandleader at Marietta High School, until Boyd McKeown was recruited as a replacement. During that interim period Stanton helped with the band program at Lemon Street High School and provided some of the students with instruments. McKeown also assisted at Lemon Street and was impressed with the school’s band program and the students’ showmanship in performances. Retired from teaching, Stanton continued to expand his music store and worked with various community bands. In 1974 Southern Living magazine did a feature on his career, describing him as a “builder of bands.” From these modest beginnings the school music program would expand by the end of the century to over one hundred music teachers with bands and individuals performing throughout the nation.30

While Stanton was building a county music program, the board of education was busy preparing for a $1.5 million bond referendum to finance new school construction. Recognizing the tremendous growth in all parts of the county, the voters on 15 November 1950 approved a plan for the construction of three new high schools, one at Campbell and Atlanta Road in the Smyrna area, a second strategically located at the cross roads of several major thoroughfares in south Cobb, and a third at Allgood Road and the Four Lane Highway in east Cobb. In 1952 classes began at Campbell, South Cobb, and Sprayberry High Schools, the last named in honor of the superintendent. The bonded indebtedness also provided revenues for ten new classrooms at the Robert L. Osborne grammar school.31
Progress in the Marietta School System

World War II proved a boon to Marietta, as well as to the Cobb County School System. The arrival of the Bell Bomber plant brought many newcomers and badly needed dollars into the local economy. In 1944 the county applied for the first of many federal grants designed to help overcrowded schools in communities feeling the impact of a large influx of defense workers. Marietta received federal dollars, based on the number of children of defense employees enrolled in the public schools. Up to this point Marietta operated only one secondary and two elementary schools for whites and a high and elementary school for blacks. With the wartime population explosion, the schools had to operate on double sessions with half the students attending in the mornings and the other half in the afternoons. During Shuler Antley’s seventeen years as Marietta school superintendent (1942-59), the city embarked on twenty school construction projects, either to expand the older schools or build new ones. In 1944 Park Street became the first new elementary school to open, followed by Pine Forest the following year. Two day-care centers built for the children of Bell Aircraft employees underwent conversion in 1947 into Dodd Street and Allgood elementary schools. As the school-age population continued to rise, the school board next built West Side (1949). Then in the latter part of Antley’s tenure as superintendent, Marietta added schools for white children at Lockheed Elementary (1953), Banberry (1955), and Hickory Hills (1959).

Funding for black schools lagged far behind that for whites, but some progress was made. In 1947 a newly elected Marietta city council toured the grammar school on Lemon Street and was shocked by what it found. The old wooden building was in far worse repair than the modern brick high school across the street. The 1894 structure lacked indoor plumbing, so the children had to use outdoor toilets. Lighting was poor and heating came from one coal stove per room. The building had not been painted inside in years, and the blackboards bulged. Embarrassed that the city still held classes in a structure regarded as a firetrap, Marietta went to work to construct a safe brick building. The new Lemon Street Elementary School opened in 1950.12

At a time when the principals of all county schools were males, the Marietta school board took the lead in choosing a woman to head Marietta High School. A native of Calhoun, Georgia, Mary Hall Swain
received undergraduate degrees from the University of Georgia in education and journalism. When she started to school in Athens during the 1920s the normal school for future teachers was separate from the university and the female students lived regimented lives. She occasionally hid in a closet or under a bed to avoid the matrons who forced the young women to march to church on Sundays. Brought up by liberal parents, she considered it her right to become whatever she wanted to be. However,
she was aware that occupational opportunities for females were limited to little other than teaching and nursing. By the time she was nineteen, she had begun a teaching career in her hometown of Calhoun.

After she married, she followed her husband to Atlanta, thinking that she would be happy as a housewife. Before long, she yearned for the stimulation of an academic job. From the Smyrna School she moved to Osborne High School and then to Marietta High. One day in 1949, Superintendent Antley called Swain into his office and asked, “How would you like to be principal of the high school.” Her first reaction was that she was not qualified, since she had never taken a course in administration. But she always enjoyed a challenge, especially of the intellectual variety. So she immediately accepted. For about eleven years until 1959 she led the premier educational institution in the city and county.

Shortly after becoming principal, Swain attended a meeting of administrators that made her aware of how rare it was for a woman to serve in her capacity. When she arrived in Memphis for the annual conference of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, she found that everyone else in attendance was either a man or a nun from one of the Catholic female institutes. The Marietta system was clearly ahead of most others in the South in promoting a woman to the post of high school principal. There were limits to Marietta’s progressivism, however. After accepting the job, Swain discovered that she was paid a thousand dollars less than the man she replaced, even though he had been forced out for his inability to maintain discipline.

Swain had no allusions about the societal biases against professional women. Yet, in an interview years later, she reflected that she never liked to think of herself as a woman principal, because in her view gender made no difference in her job performance. Except for a few coaches who felt they were too important to attend faculty meetings, she found the teachers, male and female, to be fully supportive. She could speak to fifteen hundred students in the school auditorium, and all would give her their full attention. Due to the backing of the parents, she was able to maintain strict discipline. She found that one visit to the office was usually enough to make the girls conform to her expectations. The boys were sometimes more difficult, but a three-way conversation in the principal’s office with Swain, the boy, and the student’s father usually produced positive results. A third offense for missing class, smoking, or profanity resulted in a thirty-day suspension. A fourth offense led to permanent expulsion.
Swain admitted that both students and parents would resent such rules a generation later, but at the time they produced a disciplined environment where students were free to learn. After her tenure as principal, Swain moved into the central offices as assistant superintendent and curriculum director. When Kennesaw Junior College opened in 1966, she joined the faculty as an English professor and stayed there until her retirement eight years later.

James V. Carmichael and the New South

After his career as general manager of Bell Bomber, Jimmie Carmichael made a run for governor, and then went back to the business world, where he was one of the most important executives of postwar Georgia. His 1946 campaign promised to continue the progressive record of the Ellis Arnall administration. Having closed down the Bell Bomber plant earlier in the year, the former general manager seemed reluctant to enter the gubernatorial race. Due to his broken back as a teenager, his health had always been fragile. He did not welcome campaign travel and the heat of a contested campaign. But he looked with dismay at the leading Democratic candidates: former governors Eugene Talmadge and E. D. Rivers. Talmadge had served three terms in the mid-1930s and early 1940s; Rivers held office for two terms between 1937 and 1941. In contrast to Arnall, both Rivers and Talmadge presided over corrupt administrations that severely harmed Georgia's reputation among business leaders and anyone who favored good government.

In some ways Rivers had been a progressive governor, supporting the New Deal and creating the first state planning board in Georgia's history. But two members of his administration were convicted in federal court on fraud charges, and during his last day in office he distributed pardons in wholesale fashion to hardened criminals, including twenty-two murderers. Whether he “sold” pardons, as some critics suspected, or merely exercised bad judgment, he undermined his credibility with responsible Georgians.

Known as the “wild man from Sugar Creek” [from a stream near his Telfair County home], Gene Talmadge issued even more pardons than Rivers and once declared martial law around the state Capitol to get his way in a battle with the highway department. Few of the small farmers who gave him undying loyalty realized how heavily Georgia Power and
other corporations financed Talmadge’s campaigns. The businessmen may have cringed at his populist campaign rhetoric, but they loved his vehement denunciations of New Deal regulatory agencies.

In March 1946 Carmichael wrote Bell Bomber’s first general manager, Harry Collins, “For the moment it seems to be Talmadge and Rivers—God, what a situation! We still have hopes that someone will appear to keep these two birds out of office.” When it was apparent that no other progressive was prepared to make the race, political insiders pressured Carmichael to announce his candidacy. Governor Arnall saw the Marietta statesman as the best hope to continue his liberal policies. Carmichael made up his mind to run in mid-April. He told Leo Aikman of the Cobb County Times that a sermon he heard at Marietta’s First Presbyterian Church was the deciding factor. Offered by visiting pastor T. K. Young of Memphis, the sermon challenged the congregation to put duty above convenience, arguing that only through service did one win the right to share in the rich heritage passed on by previous generations. Feeling guilty over his desire to stay on the sidelines, Carmichael reluctantly decided it was his duty to run.16

Carmichael’s chief opponent, Gene Talmadge, presented himself as a champion of the small farmer and staunch opponent of urban progressives. He denounced a recent federal court decision overturning Georgia’s white primary and allowing blacks for the first time to help select the candidates of the Democratic Party. While Carmichael never criticized segregation, he advocated improved race relations, called on Georgians to obey the law, and refrained from race baiting. In contrast, Talmadge claimed that alien and communistic influences from the East were behind the effort to enfranchise blacks and that the outsiders intended to destroy southern traditions. Opening the campaign in Moultrie the former Bell general manager attacked the Talmadge machine, denouncing “asphalt-drooling profiteers waving fiery crosses” and “ranting dictators in [Talmadge’s trade-mark] red suspenders.”17

Unlike Talmadge, Rivers was seen as a pro-New Dealer; but he could stoop to the use of ethnic slurs in trying to discredit his Marietta opponent. On occasion Rivers made anti-Semitic references, calling the Marietta candidate “Car-mickel,” insinuating that he was Jewish. Either Rivers or Talmadge forces in Moultrie put out a misleading handbill designed to rile white racists by announcing that Carmichael “especially invites his colored friends” to a scheduled barbecue. Perhaps because of his
opponents’ dirty tricks, urban voters looked to Carmichael as the one candidate capable of enhancing Georgia’s image as it competed to attract new industry. The former Bell executive ran well in Georgia’s cities and received more Democratic primary votes than any previous gubernatorial candidate. Carmichael tallied over 313,000 ballots to ex-governor Talmadge’s 297,000 and former governor Rivers’ 69,000.  

Despite winning a statewide plurality, the Cobb County native lost rural South Georgia, with its critical county-unit votes. Under Georgia’s constitution, the eight largest counties had six county-unit votes, the thirty middle-sized counties had four, and the 121 smallest counties had two. The system was extremely unfair, penalizing metropolitan areas where the population was many times greater than that of the rural counties. By carrying most of the small counties, Talmadge won the election with 242 county-unit votes to Carmichael’s 146 and Rivers’ 22. Longtime secretary of state Ben Fortson maintained that dirty politics defeated Jimmie. At one point when Rivers was running out of campaign funds, Talmadge people found the money to keep him in the race, because they reasoned that Rivers was more likely to take votes from Jimmie than Gene. Fortson believed that they also swapped votes. In counties where the Carmichael-Talmadge race was tight, Rivers power brokers threw their support to Gene. In the few counties where Talmadge had no chance but Rivers was competitive, the Talmadge leaders threw their support to Ed. Consequently, Carmichael lost some counties by less than twenty votes.  

Returning to the business world, the Cobb countian in 1947 assumed the presidency of Scripto, Inc., a business that, ironically, was the successor to Leo Frank’s old company. In 1919 Monie Ferst purchased the bankrupt National Pencil Company from his father-in-law, Sigmund Montag. He already owned the only pencil lead manufacturer in the United States. In the early 1930s Ferst built a new plant in a black neighborhood on Houston Street, near Sweet Auburn. Scripto became one of the first Atlanta industries to employ African-American production workers. Under Carmichael’s leadership the company expanded overseas and became the largest manufacturer of writing instruments in the world. By the 1950s the company added ballpoint pens and lighters to its product line.  

When the Air Force in 1951 asked Lockheed to come to Marietta, the California giant persuaded Carmichael to take a leave of absence from Scripto to reopen the aircraft plant. His successor as general manager, Dan
Haughton, gave Carmichael credit for conducting a successful B-29 modification program, planning for B-47 production, and preparing the way for the C-130 Hercules project. In 1952 Carmichael returned to the pen company, but continued to serve on the Lockheed board of directors until a few months before his death at age sixty-two on 28 November 1972.41

Back at Scripto Carmichael aggressively instituted employee benefits and turned down several offers to move the company out of downtown Atlanta. Because of this enlightened paternalism, he was shocked when the workers voted in 1963 to join the International Chemical Workers Union. As the union campaign turned into a civil rights crusade, Carmichael defended his record, telling the employees that support for the union was “a slap in the face of one of the truest friends the Negro ever had in Georgia or the entire South.” By the 1960s Carmichael’s physical condition was deteriorating rapidly, as back pains from his childhood accident became more intense. In September 1964 the Marietta resident was elevated to chairman of the board, while Carl Singer assumed the presidency.

On Thanksgiving 1964 the workers went out on strike over pay and other issues. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference joined their effort. Although Carmichael came under attack for his allegedly racist company policies, he remained true to his moderate beliefs, winning the praise of Coretta Scott King and other liberals when he attended the biracial Atlanta banquet held in Dr. King’s honor after he won the Nobel Peace Prize. Conspicuously absent were Carl Singer, Monie Ferst’s son Robert, and a host of other Atlanta business leaders. Around the end of the year King and Singer reached a secret compromise strike settlement, much to the chagrin of labor leaders, who believed that King made too many concessions in his haste to reach Selma, Alabama, to lead a voting rights campaign. Peaceful times returned to Scripto, but with Carmichael out of the direct management, the company was never again as prosperous as it had been in the 1950s and early 1960s.42

In addition to his business and political achievements, Carmichael is remembered for his extensive record of public service. He was the first head of the Atlanta Arts Alliance, a trustee of Emory University, and from 1965 until his death a member of the board of regents of the University System of Georgia. His 1950 commencement address at Emory University articulated the progressive business creed that governed his life. Despite
Between Bell and Lockheed:  
the Development of Cobb County in the Late 1940s

his ties to liberal Democrats, such as former governor Arnall, Carmichael demonstrated his distrust of New Deal welfare programs by ridiculing those who lived off Uncle Sam rather than working. He read the graduates a poem in which a son angers his father, asking why the parent thought it was all right to live at public expense, when he could be contributing to society. The father responds:

My faith in you is shrinking son,  
You nosey little brat,  
You do too damn much thinking son,  
To be a Democrat.

The civic leader challenged the Emory graduates to contribute to society. He expressed his disdain for those who clung to the Confederate past and failed to address the problems of the present. Carmichael said, “I sicken of these people who are always waving the Confederate Flag, and telling us what a glorious heritage the South has. No one denies this heritage, but too many of our people want to keep on living on who they are and where they came from. The only criteria of individual worth is what a person is doing and where he is going.” He called on the graduates to live in the present and to learn how to serve the current and future needs of the region. The Emory trustee asserted that his heart ached over the section’s backward economy, inferior schools, limited cultural opportunities, and “complete absence of an acceptable, nationally recognized advanced graduate school in so large an area of the South.” He maintained that the region had sadly isolated itself from the rest of the country either out of false pride, a sense of inferiority, or lack of vision. However, the time had come to merge into the national mainstream, “economically, culturally and educationally.” Carmichael insisted it was no longer acceptable for a school, such as Emory, to think of itself as the “best in the South.” In the future regional leaders had to set their sights much higher.41

In a solidly Democratic state, Carmichael would have committed political suicide by openly joining the Republican Party, but he demonstrated a strong tendency in that direction as early as 1947. A few months after his loss to Gene Talmadge, the ex-gubernatorial candidate told interviewers Calvin Kytle and James A. Mackay that Georgia needed two competing parties (“Call ‘em Democrats and Republicans, Democrats and Loyal Democrats, or anything you please”), so that races would be decided in the general election rather than the Democratic primary. In 1960 he
again advocated a “true two-party system” while introducing Richard Nixon during the Republican presidential candidate’s Atlanta campaign appearance. Like Clay, Blair, and McMillan, this heir of a professional, small-business heritage found his vision not in a past of “white columned plantation homes with the fragrance of Magnolia and Wisteria in the air,” but in a meritocracy where one would be honored for bringing the South to wealth, power, and cultural influence. With equal disdain, he denounced members of the lower classes who felt entitled to public support, and members of the upper classes who would stop progress to protect their privileges.44

In an era when politicians divided into Talmadge and anti-Talmadge camps, the Cobb County businessman was consistently in the latter. Resembling the ante-bellum Whigs and urban, post-Civil War leaders of New South and Progressive campaigns, Carmichael opposed the small-government, limited service philosophy of the Talmadge camp. Along with his friends Blair, McMillan, and Clay, he viewed government as a potentially positive force in bringing economic development to an impoverished region. These pro-growth progressives parted company with liberals on labor and racial issues, but they favored good schools and adequate services for all Georgians and saw economic growth as favoring rich and poor, black and white. Through their experience in bringing the Bell Aircraft Corporation to Georgia, they helped to produce a long anticipated, prosperous New Georgia. And they set the stage for the next generation of Cobb County leaders who would continue Marietta’s reputation as an aircraft industrial giant and would put in place the infrastructure needed for Cobb’s suburban growth.
By the end of World War II the United States was the world's most powerful country, militarily and economically. The Soviet Union was the greatest threat to American interests. The two superpowers fought together against Nazi tyranny, but became bitter rivals in the postwar years. As Soviet-backed governments came to power in Eastern Europe and China, President Truman and a bipartisan congressional leadership developed a containment policy. They wanted to avoid World War III, but they committed the nation to holding the line against further communist expansion. As related in the previous chapter, General Lucius Clay pulled off one of the greatest containment successes in 1948-1949 when, as military governor of Germany, he orchestrated the Berlin airlift.

The Cold War suddenly became hot when North Korean troops on 25 June 1950 launched an invasion across the 38th parallel, the dividing line between the Russian-aided north and the pro-American south. The United States entered the war under the flag of the United Nations, after that agency denounced the north for aggression. The United States and its
allies quickly liberated South Korea and drove the communists north of the 38th parallel, but the war became stalemated after Red China entered on the North Korean side. For several frustrating years casualties mounted and victory became less and less likely. After the inauguration in 1953 of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the two sides concluded a truce. Prisoners were exchanged and the prewar boundaries maintained. Containment had worked, but at a huge price.¹

**The Decision to Reopen Air Force Plant No. 6**

These dramatic events in the Far East led directly to the decision to reopen the Marietta plant. On 28 September 1950, three months after the start of the war, the *Cobb County Times* carried a front-page article revealing that two aircraft companies (Fairchild and Lockheed) were studying the facility. Fairchild had just completed a survey, and Lockheed was beginning a feasibility study. The following day the *Marietta Daily Journal* reported that the Air Force had promised to let Lockheed have the site, if the conflict in Asia required a great increase in plane production. However, the Pentagon had not yet made an official commitment.²

The Lockheed Corporation dated back to 1913 when Allan and Malcolm Loughead successfully tested their garage-built seaplane in a flight across San Francisco Bay. For a while they called their business the Loughead Aircraft Manufacturing Company. Realizing that few people could pronounce the name correctly, the brothers decided to spell it phonetically. Thus, Loughead became Lockheed. The company had a rough beginning, going out of business in 1919, resurfacing in 1926, going public on West Coast stock exchanges, and then experiencing a hostile takeover in 1929 by the Detroit Aircraft Corporation. When the company in Detroit collapsed during the Great Depression, its only profitable division was the Lockheed operation in Burbank, California. By 1932 the Lockheed work force was down to four, and a federal receiver offered the company for sale.

Robert E. Gross and several associates put in the lone bid of forty thousand dollars. A 1919 Harvard graduate, Gross was descended from a prominent northeastern family. By his early thirties, he had made a num-
ber of shrewd investments and was already a millionaire. His obsession with aviation began in 1927 when he purchased his first airplane and twenty thousand dollars of stock in Stearman Aircraft of Wichita, Kansas. Aware of Detroit Aircraft’s financial difficulties, Gross decided that Lockheed would be a good investment. A U.S. district court judge in Los Angeles had to approve the transaction. On 21 June 1932 he snapped up the offer with the comment, “Young man, I hope you know what you are doing.” It was soon apparent that he did. Within a half-year Lockheed engineers were working on the twin-engine Model 10 Electra. On 23 February 1934 the new plane passed its initial flight test, and it was sold a few months later to Northwest Airlines. According to historian Walter Boyne, “The Model 10 Electra, very fast and pleasant to fly, had a tonic effect upon Lockheed’s balance sheet.”

Over the next several years, Burbank engineers perfected the Model 12 and Model 14, featuring such innovations as Fowler flaps that retreated backward from the wing and integral fuel tanks, where reinforced wing ribs served as built-in fuel containers. With the outbreak of war in Europe the British became a leading customer, purchasing some 287 Hudson bombers, a variation of the Model 14. According to longtime Lockheed-Georgia public relations director, Lee Rogers, Robert Gross’s brother, Courtlandt, met several British purchasers in New York and persuaded them to come to Burbank. Before they left the east coast, Courtlandt Gross alerted company officials in Burbank that a huge military contract was in the works. “The story goes that from the time Mr. Gross and his associates contacted them in New York until [the] train got to California (there wasn’t much transcontinental flying in those days), the Lockheed engineers had redesigned the [Electra], a Lockheed commercial airplane, into a bomber. The British bought the design, and it became the Hudson bomber, which was a mainstay of the British bombing fleet in the early days. That order was the biggest order in aviation history.” By 1940 the Lockheed work force expanded to seventeen thousand, then peaked at 90,853 three years later.

Sherman Martin was one of the Lockheed employees who came to Marietta in 1950 to research the bomber plant. A thirty-three year-old middle manager, he was already a veteran of thirteen years with the Lockheed Corporation. When he started at Burbank, the total work force was only about fifteen hundred. As a teenager, he had completed a year-long training program at the Lincoln (Nebraska) Airplane and Flying
School. His first experience with all-metal planes came when Lockheed trained him to work on the Electra as a riveter. According to Martin, the Gross brothers created a warm, family atmosphere in the early days. The owners were concerned about the workers’ welfare, and labor and management respected each other. When Bob Gross addressed the workers, he told them truthfully how the company was doing. If he asked them to make sacrifices, they trusted him enough to do what he wanted. By the time that Martin reached Cobb County, the Fairchild Aircraft Company had surveyed the dimensions of buildings and runways. The Lockheed planner received a book with blueprints and an analysis of the local labor force and culture. The manual described Marietta as quiet and rural.

Martin learned that the military was interested in Marietta to produce Boeing-designed B-47 jet bombers. During World War II Lockheed’s Vega division had joined with Boeing and Douglas to construct B-17s. The so-called B-V-D coalition worked well together, convincing the Air Force that they could cooperate harmoniously in the Korean crisis. When he saw Air Force Plant No. 6, Martin became excited about the possibilities. The Burbank headquarters had developed haphazardly, with airplane production taking place in some one hundred buildings. In contrast, the huge B-1 structure in Marietta allowed everything from fabrication to wing assembly under one roof. Moreover, the old Bell plant was air conditioned, an innovation still lacking at the California work site.

During the last half of 1950, it was by no means certain that Lockheed would be awarded the plant. Not only did Bell want it back, but Fairchild and other competitors had put in their requests. The Air Force intended to reopen a huge facility in Fort Worth, Texas, as well as Henry Ford’s old Willow Run airplane factory near Detroit. So the possibility existed that Lockheed might go into one of those places.6

In Cobb County rumors began circulating publicly in December 1950 that the plant was on the verge of reopening. On 15 December 1950 Bill Kinney wrote an article in the MDJ, speculating that the Air Force wanted Fairchild to build cargo planes in Marietta. His source, seventh district congressman Henderson Lanham, volunteered that he and Carl Vinson, the chairman of the House armed services committee, had met with Fairchild’s president, who was actively lobbying in Washington for the Marietta site. He further revealed that James V. Carmichael was on his way to Washington for some unspecified purpose. Lanham warned, however, “Nothing is definite yet and the plant to date has not been assigned
to anyone for defense production.”

Five days later the MDJ carried a story from the Dayton Daily News, claiming that the Kaiser-Frazer automobile company had signed a contract with Air Force procurement officials at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. Allegedly, Kaiser-Frazer would build Fairchild C-119 cargo planes at Ford’s former Willow Run plant and Boeing B-47 jet bombers in Marietta. Nonetheless, Colonel R. W. Taylor, the assistant public relations director at Wright-Patterson field, told a Marietta reporter that the story was “a complete surprise” to him. The following day, Taylor clarified that the Air Force was negotiating with Kaiser-Frazer over the Willow Run location, but not over Marietta. Representative Lanham told the Daily Journal “confidentially” that Kaiser-Frazer “was putting tremendous pressure on the Truman administration” over the old Bell site, but a high-ranking official of the congressional armed services committee opposed Kaiser’s bid. One infers that Chairman Vinson, a veteran Georgia congressman, was that official. On 22 December 1950 the MDJ quoted Vinson that Lockheed was under consideration. The powerful representative asserted that somebody would soon operate the bomber facility, but he could not say whether it would be Fairchild, Lockheed, or another manufacturer.

When Brigadier General Alfred H. Johnson toured the plant on 27 December, he affirmed that Lockheed still held the option given the company in September to occupy the Marietta facility, should it reopen. The chief of the industrial planning division for the Air Force Materiel Command, Johnson was in Marietta to inspect the tools and machinery that the Tumpane Company had in storage in the B-1 building. He took time from his visit to advise that the reopening depended on orders for a total defense-industry mobilization, but that the plant would be needed if hostilities in Asia “continue to get worse.”

On 4 January 1951 Lockheed officials formally announced that the Air Force had asked them to take over Plant No. 6. President Robert E. Gross cautioned that a contract was not yet signed and that Tumpane would need several months to remove all the machine tools. He noted that construction and repair work on airplanes could only begin at that time, with the first task being the modification and upgrading of World War II-era B-29s. The Lockheed president revealed that his ultimate goal was to construct in Marietta complete airplanes of a current vintage. Gross further indicated that Jimmie Carmichael was coming back to run the
Marietta plant. The former Bell executive retained his presidency of the Scripto pen company, while adding the title of vice-president of Lockheed and general manager of the Georgia Division. He also kept his position as advisor to the Army on procurement and production issues, a heavy workload for a forty-year-old man with perennial back pains from his high school accident.¹⁰

Headed by Charles E. Wilson of General Motors, the Office of Defense Mobilization had been considering Carmichael for a key post; but Wilson and his chief assistant, Lucius D. Clay, deferred to the wishes of the Air Force. Indeed, Clay had served as an intermediary for the military in persuading his Cobb County friend to take the Lockheed job. The Air Force wanted Carmichael for his contacts in the community as much as his expertise. He had stayed in touch with his management team from Bell Bomber and could persuade some of them to work for Lockheed. In assuming the post Carmichael said, “I have accepted this tremendous responsibility in addition to my duties at Scripto because the people in Washington charged with the defense program, particularly the Air Force and Mr. C. E. Wilson’s office, have urged me to take it as being the greatest service I could render my country in these troubled times.” He added that Scripto’s board of directors granted him as much released time as necessary to run the Lockheed plant and that Scripto was engaging in war production by taking on a large ordnance project.¹¹

**Delivering B-29s From the Desert**

When Bob Gross made his first visit to Marietta, Carmichael wined and dined him. The next morning he took the California tycoon out to breakfast at a restaurant on the Square. Gross was surprised to find customers drinking Coca-Cola with their eggs and bacon. The corporate head appointed as assistant general manager a senior Lockheed executive, Daniel J. Haughton, who would take charge when Carmichael returned full-time to Scripto. Prior to this assignment, Haughton was serving as president of Airquipment Company, a Lockheed subsidiary. A University of Alabama graduate, Haughton entered the industry in the 1930s as an accountant for Consolidated Aircraft. When his boss, P. E. Ryker, jumped to Lockheed, Haughton went with him. There he became friends with Courtlandt Gross, who served as his mentor.
Haughton developed a reputation for caring about far more than balance sheets. The young accountant quickly picked up the essential details of how an airplane was built. Lockheed historian Walter Boyne says that the Alabama native constantly walked the factory floor, "insisting on knowing all the details, spotting irregularities and deficiencies, and categorically demanding improvement." As he moved up the corporate ladder, "his managers had to know their jobs as he knew his, and that meant in depth and breadth and with passion." Possessing the charm of a southern gentleman, Haughton was also known to give a tongue lashing to anyone who failed to live up to his expectations. According to Lee Rogers, no one was certain how well Carmichael and Haughton would work together, but they quickly developed a mutual respect and affection. Fortunately, their wives also got along well together.12

While Lockheed was still negotiating a contract with the Air Force, Chuck Wagner, the chief manufacturing engineer in Burbank, called Sherman Martin into his office. When Martin entered, he found Dan Haughton there. Wagner explained that Lockheed was looking seriously at the Marietta plant and that Haughton was heading up the effort. Since Martin had done preliminary work on the Cobb County site, Haughton wanted him to fly with him to Wichita. The Boeing plant in Wichita had manufactured B-29s during the last war and was gearing up to produce B-47s.

The next morning Martin, Haughton, and their wives boarded a plane in Los Angeles and flew eastward. Martin had his first opportunity to converse at length with Haughton and discovered how dynamic he was. The rising Lockheed star dominated the discussion, spelling out his goals for the future. Already, he was making plans to set up a Lockheed Management Club in Marietta. As Haughton talked, the time passed quickly, and soon the plane was on the ground in Wichita.

Haughton asked Martin how much he knew about B-29s. The former riveter responded that he could recognize one at five thousand feet, but had never had the opportunity to work on one. Inside the plant, Haughton sent Martin to learn about B-29s, while the future Georgia Division general manager went off to talk to Boeing executives about B-47s. After one night in Wichita, Haughton announced that he was going on to Marietta, while Martin was going to Pyote, a tiny town in the southwest Texas desert, where the local military installation was nicknamed Rattlesnake Air Force Base. His wife Mary returned home, and Sherm
hopped a little plane to the Odessa-Midland airport. From there he took a bus the rest of the way to nearby Pyote.

His first view of the air base shocked him. Pyote was a giant airplane graveyard, where, around the clock, military personnel dragged surplus airplanes to a gigantic smelter. A huge guillotine came down, chopping off wings and cutting fuselages in half. A crane picked up the chunks, carried them to a big pot, and melted them down, with ingots coming out the bottom. Martin met with the major in charge and was assigned a jeep and a bunk in the officers’ quarters. In a few days Haughton sent to Pyote four assistants, Chuck Wyatt, Kingsley Hooker, Charlie Penn, and Dick Becker. Martin and the four helpers spent a week picking out B-29s to send to Marietta. One man inspected the outside of the planes, while the others checked out the cockpits, tails, and bomb bays. Fortunately, they encountered only one rattlesnake. They wanted to make sure that the planes were not too badly damaged from anti-aircraft fire or from flying into hurricanes in postwar service as weather birds. Up on blocks, with their bomb bays open to allow air to circulate, most of the planes had not flown in five years. The military had taken off the guns and ammunition, but maps still littered the cockpits where the pilots had left them.

By the end of the week the examination crew selected 130 planes for transport to Cobb County. In a press conference on 10 January 1951 General Manager Carmichael indicated that the B-29s would be flown from Pyote to Marietta as quickly as they could be put in flying shape. Lockheed would then refit them for combat. He predicted that the task would require two or three thousand workers, particularly skilled mechanics with expertise in electronics, radar, and similar technologies.13

One of the people involved in the Pyote project was Joe B. Gabriel, who had served at Bell Bomber as a foreman. During the war he developed a close working relationship with an army air force lieutenant, Jim Watson. Bell pilots had flown the newly built B-29s first. After they were satisfied with them, they turned them over to military test pilots such as Watson. The young lieutenant liked to have Joe Gabriel manning the engineer’s panel when he took a plane up. After Bell closed down, Gabriel opened a business selling safety equipment. In late March 1951, Watson called his old friend and offered him a job at Lockheed.

Now a Lockheed pilot, Watson met Gabriel at the Atlanta airport, where they boarded a commercial flight to Midland, Texas. A Lockheed representative met them there and took them by station wagon to Pyote,
where Gabriel was introduced to Sherman Martin for the first time. Lockheed Air Service was already hard at work, washing the B-29s, “depickling” the engines, and doing a superficial inspection before the planes were ready for flight. The inspectors worked so quickly that they ignored the instrument panels, so pilots on the trips to Marietta observed visual flying rules and stayed under ten thousand feet. They listened to commercial radio stations, guessing by the strength of the signal how close they were to the next big town.

Like Martin, Gabriel was stunned by how desolate Pyote was. In building Rattlesnake Air Force Base, construction crews filled a big canyon with boulders. When Lockheed employees were stranded there on weekends, they fought off boredom by sitting on the edge of the canyon with their .22 rifles, waiting for the temperature to rise, and then shooting the gigantic rattlers that came out to sun themselves. There was little else to do other than take advantage of the bar at the officers’ club.

It took about a year to fly all 130 B-29s to Marietta. As soon as a crew delivered one plane, it got on a commercial flight back to Texas. Sometimes, the men flew into Dallas-Fort Worth and rode the Texas Pacific Railroad to Pyote. Quickly they learned how unreliable the Wright 2300 engines had become after five years of inactivity in the desert. The paper-thin gaskets between engine mating surfaces had dried out. During the four-hour trip to Marietta, most leaked oil, and the crew would have to make frequent stops for repairs. After a few flights, Lockheed adopted the policy of taking the old engines off and shipping them to Marietta for renovation. Meanwhile, the company sent so-called “slave engines” to Pyote on tractor-trailers to attach to the planes.

Gabriel would either operate the engineer station or ride in the back where he could alert the pilot of smoke or other visible signs of danger. He almost got fired once after the crew was forced down in Birmingham due to bad weather. The next morning pilot Jim Watson was in a hurry to get home to attend a meeting. He had already told the crew to stand by for takeoff, when Gabriel noticed that the bomb bay doors had not closed properly. He was worried that a hinge might blow off and get into the props, causing the plane to crash. So he ignored the chief pilot’s orders and cut the master switch, stopping all four engines. An angry Watson sent him out to close the doors manually, then made a sarcastic comment when Gabriel returned to his station. By the next day, however, Watson had calmed down and gave Gabriel a raise for standing up to him and possibly
saving the lives of the crew.

Only one plane ever crashed, and Gabriel was on it. Plane 065 was twenty miles east of Dallas-Fort Worth when fuel started hitting the back bulkhead where the gunner would sit. Gabe volunteered to leave the engineer’s panel and try to fix it. While crawling back to the bomb bay, he was soaked with 100-octane fuel. His flight suit, parachute, and all his clothes were saturated. When he reached the back of the plane, he took off everything except his parachute and there he stayed while the plane returned to Carswell Air Force Base at Fort Worth.

The pilot, Victor Gibson, cut off the engines to keep them from catching fire and planned to land the plane on its belly. But the commanding officer at Carswell foolishly ordered him to turn the engines back on, so that he could lower the landing gear. When he did so the aircraft caught fire, some five or six minutes from touch down. The plane came in across Lake Worth, hit a bank fourteen feet short of the landing strip, and bounced onto the runway. As the B-29 skidded down the pavement, the tail section, where Gabriel sat, slid around at an angle. Finally, the plane stopped, and fire trucks doused it down. Gabe jumped out the back, assuming he was the normal seven feet off the ground. It turned out the distance was only six inches. When he crawled around to the front, he noticed that Gibson had bailed out a window, but was hanging five feet off the ground, with a rawhide thong around his neck, still attached to the microphone inside. Finally, it broke and the pilot fell, breaking several vertebrae. Eventually, he recovered, but never flew B-29s again. On the other side, the co-pilot was a somewhat overweight navy officer. He got stuck trying to go through a window. Crewmember Joe Sedita kicked his rear-end until he forced him through the opening. The meat peeled off both sides of his rib cage, but he survived. Later, in the hospital, he came over to Sedita to thank him for saving his life. “Save your life, hell,” Sedita said, “You had my hole [i.e., escape route] stopped up.”

The crew spent three days in a Dallas hospital. The plane crash occurred on a Saturday, and Gabriel was the only one in condition to call Marietta to explain what happened. He had no money, so he called collect. The Lockheed operator had trouble finding anyone who could authorize the call, but eventually located Stan Austin in the purchasing department. Austin got in touch with Dan Haughton, who called Gabe at the hospital. “Uncle Dan,” Gabriel said, “We tore your damn airplane up.” The assistant manager responded, “Don’t worry about that.
Tell me about the crew.” Haughton sent a Lockheed employee, Charlie Black, over to the hospital to give the men some money to buy clothes and other necessities.

The crew’s hospital beds were all in one big room. The men suspected that the Air Force had placed a spy in a neighboring bed to hear what they said about the crash. So they started complaining about an imaginary “fluttenary valve,” which allegedly would not reclean. Before an Air Force hearing board the next week, the men were asked about the “fluttenary valve.” Despite the fact that they kept their sense of humor, the crew members were shaken by the crash. Gabriel took another job at Lockheed and flew on no more B-29s out of Pyote.16

From the B-29 to the B-47

In Marietta the first major task before B-29s could be refurbished was to clear out the plant. Shortly after World War II, the Air Force selected Marietta and Martin, Oklahoma, as the only two sites in the nation to store surplus machine tools. John J. Tumpane’s company took over the B-1 building about a year after the Bell plant closed. For almost four years Tumpane employees and sub-contractors transported the tools to Marietta, coated them with preservatives, catalogued and crated them, and stored them in every available spot in the factory. Now the equipment had to be removed as quickly as possible.

Don Morgan saw the cluttered plant before and after Tumpane moved in. While stationed at Fort McPherson just after World War II, he received orders to retrieve some cafeteria tables that Bell no longer needed. On that occasion he had time to cycle around the nearly empty B-1 building. In early 1951 the view was considerably different. Just hired as a young Lockheed engineer, he was overwhelmed by the sight of equipment everywhere. Claiming that photographs cannot convey the reality of the situation, he asserted, “The plant was crammed full of equipment. You couldn’t fit another thing in there—nothing. We cleared up an area of about 300 feet and started moving B-29s in. Somehow, everything eventually was moved out—or degunked and put to work.”17

The Korean conflict created a demand for the machine tools, as a host of large and small defense plants received government contracts to prepare the country for the emergency. Tumpane employees set up an
assembly line on the north side of the building. Crane and hydraulic lift operators moved the tools to the assembly line, where other workers steam-cleaned out the preservatives and made them functional. The heaviest pieces of machinery weighed as much as forty tons. Once they were operational, workers bolted them to heavy skids, waterproofed them, and placed them on trucks or flat bed railroad cars running through the plant. Major Wilbur R. Britton, chief of the Materiel Command at Dobbins Air Force Base, recruited motor freight lines to help haul the refurbished machines.18

During World War II George Carson transferred from Buffalo to Marietta, where he served as a consultant to the Corps of Engineers and Robert & Company in building the Bell facility. Once it was finished, he became plant engineer, supervising approximately three thousand janitors, grass-cutters, and landscapers, as well as the skilled workers who kept in operation the sewage, lighting, heating, and air conditioning systems. He went into business for himself following the war, starting Carson Machine and Welding Company with machinery he bought at bargain prices from the War Assets Administration, the agency responsible for disposing of surplus wartime equipment. Carson also worked for Tumpane, hiring many of his old Bell employees and setting up a maintenance program. As soon as Dan Haughton arrived from California, he visited Carson and persuaded him to do the same job for Lockheed that he had done for Bell. The plant engineer’s first task was to construct temporary buildings on the south side of the plant to assist Tumpane. For Lockheed’s B-29 project, he supervised the selection and reconditioning of machine tools “out of that mess” in the B-1 building. Carson stayed at Lockheed for two years. Finding himself working almost twenty-four hours a day, he left the aircraft company in 1953 to return full-time to his own business.19

An assistant superintendent at Bell, Harold Mintz started receiving phone calls as soon as Lockheed arrived in Marietta. On 16 April 1951 he left his South Carolina filling station to return to work in Cobb County. By then the B-29s had started arriving from Pyote, and Mintz set up a repair shop in the B-1 building to replace any damaged parts that had to come off the airplanes. Many of his old Bell employees came back to work for him. Once they renovated a plane, they loaded it on dollies and pulled it over to the B-3 building for a paint job.

About the last of May, a superintendent, Lee Poore, asked Mintz to join him on a visit to the Boeing plant in Wichita. Poore knew that the
Georgia Division would start building B-47s as soon as the B-29 project was completed. Wichita was already constructing B-47s and was advertising for more assembly line personnel. Poore thought that both companies would benefit if Lockheed provided workers from its Marietta labor force. Mintz's job in Wichita was to negotiate the details. Shortly after arriving, he attended a meeting of about eighty Boeing and Air Force officials, where he made Lockheed's proposal. Mintz told them that Lockheed could provide qualified mechanics, engineers, inspectors, and anything else that Boeing needed. He explained, "They need the experience so we can start off, and this should reduce our learning curve. In the meantime, you need people that can come in here and keep your production line going." The Wichita administrators liked the plan and asked how long it would take to bring the workers to Wichita. Mintz promised the arrival of the laborers in two weeks. Boeing paid them the same wages they were making in Marietta. Lockheed assumed transportation and travel costs, and Mintz agreed to handle all personnel problems.

Back in Marietta, Mintz picked the workers who went to Wichita. Then he accompanied them to Kansas, where he tried to keep them out of trouble. He recollected, "I had people in every jail in Wichita; I had them in every hospital at the same time." He told the hotel managers to report any problems directly to him, and he would make sure that all bills were paid. If a Lockheed employee got arrested or performed unsatisfactorily, he was fired and sent home. Despite a few problems, the B-47 training program went well. By the beginning of 1952, when Lockheed started building this advanced jet bomber, the company had experienced workers to take charge.

Jimmie Carmichael served as general manager for only one year before stepping aside for Dan Haughton. A future company president, Paul Frech, believed that Carmichael's main role was to introduce Haughton to the community. From the beginning, the assistant manager played the central role in organizing the plant. Frech called Carmichael "Mr. Outside" and Haughton "Mr. Inside." After the Marietta businessman returned to Scripto, he turned down an opportunity to assume a much larger managerial position. In the early 1950s Robert W. Woodruff tried repeatedly to attract Carmichael to Coca-Cola. At that point, Woodruff had spent a generation turning Coca-Cola into one of the world's most recognized trademarks. As he reached retirement, he looked for a successor. The former Bell and Lockheed general manager was his choice. For
several years a mating game took place in which Woodruff made increasingly attractive offers, first asking Carmichael to become chief operating officer, then suggesting that he become vice-president of the executive committee with the intent of assuming the presidency by the end of 1954. In the end Carmichael rejected all offers, fearing that such demanding assignments would undermine his health. On 23 March 1954 he wrote that he had “thought and prayed over this matter between us until I am really about sick.” But he said that he had to consider the best interests of his wife and three children. A little over a month later he wrote again that in a sales organization the “head man must continually offer the inspiration, the example, and the drive which forever pushes the organization up and up in accomplishment.” He finally informed Woodruff that his “spinal cord [was] all but broken [from his teenage accident], and there is only a small portion of it left to carry the load.” He admitted that he suffered constantly from pain and feared that too much exertion could cause him to lose control of his lower body. He ended: “The Good Lord just didn’t intend for me to be able to do some things—run, play golf, dance, climb hills, and run the greatest company on earth.”

A top administrator in Burbank, Dan Haughton at first had been reluctant to come to Georgia to be an assistant manager for someone he did not know. But the Gross brothers persuaded him that he would be of greatest value to the corporation in Marietta. According to public relations director Lee Rogers, “He was a born leader, and he was a shirt-sleeve leader. He got down right with the people, and he walked the line all the time. He was out early and stayed late; he was there on Saturday and Sunday too.” Southern workers related particularly well to an executive from the Alabama coalfields; he “knew their language and knew their talk.”

Tarver Kitchens, an aircraft inspector, related an example of his decisive leadership. On one occasion Haughton wanted to know why parts production had been slowed down while multiple tests were performed. When shown the place in the policy manual mandating the numerous tests, he ripped out the offending pages and told Kitchens, “We’ve got a good product with this plane. Don’t hold it up longer than it needs to be. You do the tests at the end of the line. I’ll bet they’ll be just fine.” When a Lockheed official checked into the origin of the testing policy, he found that the surplus tests had been established years earlier during the initial start-up on the plane to give inspectors extra on-the-job training. Upon
Daniel J. Haughton (Lockheed Martin)
review, the company changed the policy book to eliminate the unnecessary inspections.24

Joe Gabriel had a similar experience when Haughton observed some engines blowing dust forty feet in the air just outside the B-1 building. He asked Gabe why no one had erected a blast fence to redirect the dust, so that it did not cover everything in sight. Gabriel said that he had completed the paper work for a fence ten or twelve times, but someone up the chain of command kept discarding the order. The general manager told him to find a vendor and bypass the chain of command, bringing the paper work straight to him. Despite his reluctance to anger his immediate bosses, Gabe did as he was told. As soon as Haughton signed the order, he told Gabriel not to wait for a purchase order but to bring the fence manufacturer to the plant as soon as possible. So in a day or two the blast fence was under construction.25

A development test engineer remembered, "Dan always had the plant humpin', and when you were working with Haughton, you were humpin' all the time." In his daily tours of the factory, he learned the names of hundreds of employees. A former vice-president of marketing, Ed Shockley, recalled with reverence an early encounter with the general manager. Haughton wanted to know how long it would take to solve a hydraulic system problem. Shockley started to give a long explanation of the procedure he had to go through to come up with a solution. Haughton interrupted, saying he did not care how Shockley solved the problem; he wanted to know when. When Shockley again avoided a direct answer, the general manager cut him off, telling him that it was a mistake to think that inventions and innovations could not be scheduled. After all, the company scheduled the building and delivery of aircraft long before they finished designing them. So he asked a final time, "When are you going to have this problem solved?" Shockley asserted, "In three weeks." A satisfied Haughton retorted, "Fine. I'll check back with you then."26

Harold Mintz experienced Haughton's direct approach while he was working the B-47 nose section. On his frequent inspection tours through the plant, Haughton would ask managers if they needed anything. Not wanting to get into trouble with his superiors, Mintz would generally say, "No." But on one occasion Haughton caught Mintz while he was mad at an inspection foreman who had rejected all his skins because of some surface scratches. The defects did not weaken the struc-
ture and would be invisible once they were painted. After a frustrated Mintz told Haughton his problem, the general manager had the inspection foreman and the director of quality control on the floor within four minutes. After a brief discussion, Haughton told them, “Get those [rejection] tags off of there, get the skins where they ought to be, and I don’t want to see anything else like this again.” In time Mintz became assistant superintendent, under Vick Alexander, on a project to modernize B-47s with the latest technology. Later, Lee Poore asked him to head up the fabrication department. Prior to his retirement in 1986, he also was in charge, on occasion, of the production machine shop and the paint shop.27

When Dan Haughton moved to Georgia in 1951, he brought with him Carl Kotchian, who served as assistant director of financial operations. Kotchian managed to persuade Boeing to share cost of production information on the B-47. As a result Lockheed had sufficient information to negotiate with the Air Force a lucrative Cost Plus Incentive Fee (CPIF) contract, allowing the company to enhance its earnings by assembling planes below the production cost estimates. Haughton sold the Lockheed board of directors on the idea of sharing profits with the managers on the assembly line floor. He argued that giving supervisory personnel a financial incentive would encourage them to find ways of increasing efficiency. Under Haughton’s strong leadership, the Georgia Division finished the B-47 project so far under budget that the company gave back to the Air Force some two hundred million dollars of the estimated $750 million cost of building the airplane. Ultimately, Lockheed built eight B-47Bs and 386 B-47E’s.28

The C-130 and the Maturation of the Georgia Division

Impressed with the Georgia Division’s record on the B-47, the Gross brothers decided to give the Marietta plant the company’s next major project, the C-130 Hercules. This new transport plane was a byproduct of the military’s problems in Korea and the realities of warfare in the nuclear age. By the 1950s it was increasingly obvious that no one could win a third world war; and, thus, the era of great battles between massive armies...
seemed over. In the atomic age countries would accomplish their military objectives with efficient, well-trained ground forces that moved rapidly to distant battlefields. For this role, the Pentagon needed a medium-sized transport, which could carry troops or equipment, land on unprepared dirt or sand airstrips, and take off again with only one engine, if necessary.

In Korea the Far Eastern Air Forces Combat Cargo Command performed valiantly, but its Douglas C-47 Gooneybirds, Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcars, and Curtiss C-46s were incapable of carrying the heavy support equipment needed at the front. Perhaps, the biggest deficiency of the old planes was their lack of capacity to take off from short fields with heavy loads after one of their engines had been damaged. Despite the need for rapid troop deployment, military tacticians had to give the Air Force two days to move an infantry division into battle.

On 2 February 1951 the Air Force called on the major aircraft manufacturers to bid on an improved medium-weight transport that could take off despite the loss of an engine. The plane had to be able to carry ninety-two infantrymen or sixty-four paratroopers eleven hundred nautical miles. When moving cargo, it had to be able to ship thirty thousand pounds of equipment some 960 miles. The new plane had to be able to slow down to 125 knots to drop paratroopers or go even slower for assault landings, and it had to be able to land and take off from virtually any type of rough surface.

The Lockheed engineers in Burbank immediately went to work on a new design. Salesman Chuck Burns and design engineer Al Lechner took a fact-finding tour around the country, visiting various military bases and talking to key personnel. A colonel at the Strategic Air Command in Nebraska proved to be prophetic, when he told them that the company that won the contract would probably build at least two thousand of the new transports. Willis Hawkins, the project general supervisor, compared Lockheed's task to devising a hybrid of a jeep, truck, and airplane. Robert W. Middlewood, later Lockheed-Georgia's chief engineer, saw "simplicity, reliability, and rugged construction" as the main goals of the design team. Gradually, they came up with a four-engine proposal, which combined propellers with jet power. In meeting military demands for a transport plane, the design engineers shocked purists who expected Lockheed planes to have sleek, thin, aerodynamic bodies. Made to carry heavy loads, the C-130 was built more like a tight end than a wide receiver. Despite its bulk, it was functional, and surprisingly fast, thanks to its turboprop pow-
erplants, a radical departure from the traditional piston engines. This union of propellers and jet power allowed the C-130 to reach speeds of 360 miles per hour, much faster than its transport competitors or the passenger airlines of the day. The propellers provided thrust for rapid ascents. Jet turbines provided more power and had fewer moving parts than the old piston engines and thus were less likely to break down.

The Hercules had unusually high wings, running in a spread-eagled fashion across the top of a relatively flat fuselage. By placing the wings so high off the ground, the designers gave the pilots the maximum opportunity to avoid obstacles on the ground. The boxcar-sized fuselage was spacious enough to meet military demands. By designing the cargo floor only forty-five inches above the runway, and by adding a large back door and built-in ramp, the engineers allowed trucks and other heavy vehicles to drive rapidly into the interior. The C-130's large, low-pressure tires came down from wheelwells in the belly of the plane. Since the tires were never
fully visible, the plane seemed to scrape the concrete in landing. Historian Martin Caidin remarked that the C-130 seemed to rest “more on caterpillar treads than it did on wheels. The Hercules didn’t really rest on the ground; it hugged the concrete and glowered.”

The Air Force wasted no time deciding that Lockheed had the best design. The California manufacturer was awarded a contract to produce two YC-130 prototypes on 2 July 1951, just five months after the initial request for proposals. Over the next three years Lockheed’s Burbank workforce built the prototypes. The second actually flew first. On 23 August 1954 test pilot Stanley Beltz and co-pilot Roy Wimmer took the plane on a sixty-one minute flight from the Lockheed Air Terminal in Burbank to Edwards Air Force Base. The YC-130’s performance exceeded Air Force requirements in practically all respects. Average cruise speed was 20 percent faster, the plane needed less distance to take off and land, and it climbed faster than anyone expected. At 108,000 pounds, the plane weighed five thousand pounds less than Lockheed engineers had first estimated and about ten thousand pounds below other company’s proposals. As expected, the test flights pointed out a few problems that the company had to resolve. Difficulties with Curtiss-Wright electric propellers, for example, persuaded designers to go with Hamilton Standards on the C-130B. Nonetheless, it was obvious from the beginning that Lockheed had a winner.

While the two prototypes were under construction, Robert and Courtlandt Gross considered assembling the C-130 at the Georgia Division. Public relations director Lee Rogers had been on the job two months when the Lockheed board of directors held their December 1951 meeting in Atlanta. The day after, Rogers drove Robert Gross out to the Marietta plant for a press conference. As they turned into the entrance on South Cobb Drive, the visionary Lockheed president gazed at the gigantic plant and grew suddenly quiet. After a moment, he exclaimed, “This is a magnificent facility. We ought to make this permanent.” Then, as they reached the gate, he added, “Well, I guess we shouldn’t do that. Look what we’ve done to the Valley out in California.” Gross recalled that Lockheed was the first company in the valley near Los Angeles, but soon many support businesses arrived, industrializing the area and disrupting the pleasant life style. Once inside the plant, the Georgia Division’s leadership took Gross up to the B-1 building’s mezzanine, where the president again grew enthusiastic over the plant’s capacity. Looking down at the great assembly
floor, he exclaimed, "My gosh, we could have four assembly lines going down through this place. Two in that direction and two in that."

Sometime later, executive vice president Courtlandt Gross visited the Marietta plant. Gross, Haughton, and Lee Rogers rode together to a luncheon in downtown Atlanta. Haughton used the opportunity to lobby Gross for the C-130 contract. Before arriving, Courtlandt agreed to bring the matter up with his brother Bob. Not long afterward, Robert Gross asked the Air Force for permission to manufacture the plane in Marietta. When the company announced this decision in October 1952, the Georgia Division's future was assured.

Richard S. Combes, a historian and senior research engineer at the Georgia Tech Research Institute, argues that the C-130 contract transformed the Marietta facility from a mere assembly plant to "a permanent and complete aircraft manufacturing operation." Under the branch plant model, most of the design, engineering, and sales occurred outside the region. For example, Boeing designed the B-29s and B-47s at corporate headquarters in Seattle. The YC-130 prototypes were engineered in Burbank. About the time that Lockheed received its first C-130 contract, however, the total operation shifted to the Georgia Division. Lockheed's next great transport plane, the C-141, was designed from the beginning in Marietta. In 1961, the year that Lockheed won the C-141 contract, the Georgia Division experienced a name change to the Lockheed-Georgia Company, with vice-president and general manager, Dick Pulver, receiving a change in title to company president. With this transformation the composition of the labor force experienced a radical shift. During World War II Bell's Georgia branch consisted of twenty-seven hourly workers for every one salaried employee. By the 1960s the ratio at Lockheed-Georgia had dropped to 2.7 to 1.

In 1952 Al Brown became the C-130 project engineer. He had been the chief engineer at the Bell Bomber plant and served as project engineer on the B-47. With his C-130 assignment he moved temporarily from Marietta to Burbank, along with forty talented engineers. A dapper dresser, who loved his Studebaker coupe almost as much as he loved airplanes, Brown had a host of inventions to his credit. Within a year he returned to Georgia with most of the design team, who operated out of the mezzanine area of the B-1 building. The company built a full-size one hundred thousand-pound wooden mockup of the C-130 and shipped it on a military vessel from California through the Panama Canal to Savannah. From there,
Georgia Division liaison engineer Roy Knight placed the huge model on two tractor-trailer trucks and carried it across the state. The trip through small-town Georgia generated excellent publicity for the company, as mayors came out to issue proclamations and teachers dismissed their classes to let the school children watch the wooden monster pass through. Situated in the B-4 building, the mock-up saved the company many hours, since new systems could be tested on the model to make sure they fit properly before being produced in bulk.33

One of the technical difficulties worked out in the Marietta plant was the manufacture of door latches sufficiently strong to hold the large, nine-by-ten-foot rear cargo door when the plane was fully pressurized. In the first experiment inside the B-4 building, the ramp door latches blew off when the cabin pressure reached 12.7 pounds per square inch. The latches were damaged so badly that the engineers could not determine exactly where the weak spot was located. To resolve the problem the engineers adopted a British technique, placing the aircraft under water in a forty-foot high strange-looking “swimming pool” with the wings protruding from the sides. When they repeated the test, the explosion this time occurred more slowly, causing less damage, so that the faulty equipment could be examined. Determining that the latches were too brittle, the Lockheed engineers devised new parts that passed a 200 percent pressure test.14

By the first YC-130 flight, the Georgia Division had grown to almost twenty thousand workers. The Hercules project arrived just as B-47 production reached its peak. As the B-47 task slowed down, the C-130 took its place. On 10 March 1955 Governor Marvin Griffin journeyed out to the Marietta plant to christen the first Georgia-built Hercules. After three failures to break a bottle of Chattahoochee River water, the governor finally smashed the container across the nose of the plane. He then joked that Lockheed built “tough airplanes.” About a month later on 7 April Lockheed employees turned out on their lunch breaks at 11:39 A.M. to watch pilots Bud Martin and Leo Sullivan take the first successful flight. Sullivan remarked that the Hercules accelerated so quickly that it “made other transports look like diesel trucks.” Impressed with the ease of handling, Martin exclaimed that it was “the finest, cleanest airplane” he had ever flown.35

After working out a number of remaining engineering problems, the company delivered the first C-130s to the military. On 9 December 1956 five operational planes arrived in Ardmore, Oklahoma, for the 463rd
Troop Carrier Wing of the Tactical Air Command. President Robert Gross was on hand to announce the "delivery of a new recruit—Hercules, the strong man of airlift—to the United States Air Force." From the C-130As of the 1950s to the C-130Js of the 2000s, Lockheed has continuously modernized and upgraded this rugged, heavy-duty aircraft. By the end of the twentieth-century over 2,150 had been built and sold.³⁶

When Lockheed first came to Marietta, skeptics, remembering Bell's sudden departure after World War II, predicted that Lockheed would do the same when the Korean conflict ended. Within a few years it was apparent that the pessimists were wrong. The C-130 project gave the Georgia Division a permanency that carried the company through good times and bad. In the 1950s Lockheed's impact on the community was immense. As the population accelerated, local governments scrambled to keep up with the demand for schools, roads, and other infrastructure needs. How well Cobb County dealt with these problems will be the subject of future chapters.
In early 1966 James V. Carmichael addressed an Early Bird breakfast of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce. His topic was the phenomenal growth of the county since World War II. The business executive began by telling the story of a little boy who heard in Sunday school about Moses crossing the Red Sea. After church, his mother asked him what he had learned. He explained how Moses ordered the Corps of Engineers to build a pontoon bridge to let the Israelites cross on dry land. Half way across the river, Moses looked back and saw Pharaoh closing rapidly with his armored tanks and trucks. So the great lawgiver got on his walkie-talkie and commanded the bomb squadron to blow up the bridge with the Egyptians on it, as soon as the Hebrews reached the opposite shore. When the mother criticized the child for making things up, he responded, "Momma, if I told it to you like the teacher told it to us this morning, you wouldn't believe a damn word of it." Carmichael added: "I'm afraid that if I tell you what has really happened to Cobb County between 1942 and now, you will not believe a
damn word of it. All of us are prone to take what we have for granted and assume it has always been here. This just ain’t true!”

After giving a quick history of the county’s transformation, the former Bell and Lockheed general manager provided statistical evidence of Cobb’s dramatic transformation. In the quarter century from the early 1940s to the mid-1960s the number of county schools grew from thirty-eight to fifty-three, and one-room schools were eliminated. The number of telephones multiplied from under three thousand to about seventy-four thousand. Automobile ownership rose from under ten thousand to over seventy thousand. Measured in kilowatt-hours, electricity usage grew by over 400 percent. Meanwhile, the county tax digest increased from $12 million to $274 million.

Carmichael reminded the Chamber that Marietta would not have become a major manufacturer of airplanes without Atlanta’s cooperation. Detecting the growth of “a selfish attitude of self-containment,” he urged the local businessmen to continue working for harmony across the Chattahoochee. Carmichael claimed that the builders of modern Cobb were leaders who put community good above private gain. He called on the current generation to continue “giving for the benefit of the area and not for personal gain or personal aggrandizement and credit.”

Carmichael’s glowing assessment ignores the fact that most of the leaders of the previous generation profited immensely from their association with the county, and a few stretched the bounds of ethical propriety. As a group, they were no more (and probably no less) virtuous than those who came after them. Their legacy is that while helping themselves, they performed marvelously to benefit the people in general. It is remarkable that Cobb’s accomplishments in this era came under a simple form of government designed for much smaller counties. While the population expanded from thirty-eight thousand in 1940 to about 150,000 by 1965, the top elected official was a single commissioner of roads and revenues. He met regularly with an advisory board consisting of the ordinary (probate judge) and clerk of Superior Court. They generally reached unanimous decisions, with the ordinary or clerk making a motion, the other offering a second, and the commissioner concurring. These officials relied heavily on the advice of the county attorney, who joined the elected officials in formulating policy. The commissioner and county attorney possessed immense power. Hindered by few
restraints, they operated decisively and creatively in responding to the challenges of rapid growth. At the same time, unlimited power tended toward arrogance and corruption. Blighted by these twin evils, the one-man commission system spawned several major scandals that marred an otherwise laudatory record. One of those blemishes came just after the untimely end of the Heck administration.

**John Heck, Harold Willingham, and the Paving of Rural Roads**

The first county commissioner of the 1950s was John Heck. Born in 1897, Heck graduated from Marietta High School, and then served two years in France as an army officer in World War I. Governor Gene Talmadge appointed him in 1933 to the state highway board. There, he played a role in building the first leg of the Four Lane Highway. During World War II he held an administrative job at Bell Bomber. Afterwards, he worked for the Veterans Administration until entering the race for county commissioner in 1948. Running in a crowded field against five other candidates, he won 45 percent of the ballots and bested the runner-up almost two to one. His tenure in office extended from the start of 1949 until his death on 9 October 1953, nine months into his second term. Operating on the advice of Harold S. Willingham, his brilliant county attorney, Heck established an outstanding record of achievement. While in office he continued the road-building program of his predecessor, George McMillan; started a county water authority; and played a central role in turning Lake Acworth into a popular recreational area.

In 1950 Harold Willingham was elected to the state senate. A Marietta native, he descended on his mother's side from the famed Sapelo Island planter-statesman, Thomas Spalding. His grandfather, Charles B. Willingham, was executive secretary to the Confederate vice president, Alexander H. Stephens. In the mountains of north Georgia his father, Harold S. Willingham, Sr., owned dolomite quarries, from which he produced agricultural limestone and a white-terrazzo flooring product. The senior Willingham served in the state senate in the 1920s. In the mid-1930s he asked his friend John Heck to help eighteen-year-
old Harold, Jr., find employment with the highway department.

Young Willingham started as a rod man on a widening and repaving project for the Dixie Highway in south Cobb. In the late 1930s he participated in the construction of the new U.S. 41 highway. In the evenings he earned an accounting diploma at Georgia Tech Evening School (the forerunner of Georgia State University) and a law degree at Woodrow Wilson Law School in Atlanta. While he was still enrolled, he began working for the state tax department as an auditor. During World War II he headed the tax section of the navy's Judge Advocate General's office in Washington. Well-connected politically, Willingham came home in 1946 to win a seat in the Georgia House of Representatives. Under the old county-unit system Cobb shared a senate seat with two other counties. The seat rotated with each county holding the post two years out of every six. When it was Cobb's turn, Willingham won in 1950 without opposition.

An ally of Governor Herman Talmadge, Willingham became chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. One of his first responsibilities was to help the governor amend the Gholston Highway Act, a measure that the General Assembly had hastily adopted in the closing days of the last session. Condemned by a Cobb grand jury and most county leaders, the Gholston formula virtually prohibited state funding for farm-to-market and other secondary roads. In Willingham's alternative bill one-third of all state spending would be used to pave rural roads that were not part of the state highway system.

Still more rural than urban, Cobb County had hundreds of miles of unpaved country roads. Over the opposition of the Atlanta Constitution and big-city legislators, Talmadge and Willingham prevailed. As a result, Willingham was able to bring millions of dollars of state roads money to Cobb. In his role as county attorney, Willingham took John Heck to a February 1951 meeting of the state highway board where highway chairman Jim Gillis helped them receive funding for a number of projects, including improvements to Powder Springs Street in Marietta and the paving of such rural routes as Bob Clay Road from Mableton to Clarkdale, Highway 92 through west Cobb, and Lower Roswell from Johnson's Ferry to the Fulton County line. The following year the state realigned and relocated much of State Route 3E (the Dixie Highway) running 15.5 miles from Elizabeth through Kennesaw and Acworth to Emerson.
Improvements to the major roads whetted the voter’s appetite for further public works. In early 1953 the advisory board set a 15 April date for another million-dollar bond referendum. On that day Cobb’s electorate approved the road improvement bonds by a lopsided vote of 2,401 to 267. With the additional revenues the county paved King Springs Road near Smyrna; Old Lost Mountain Road near Macland and Powder Springs; Trickum, Holly Springs, and Davis roads in the Gritters district; Hickory Grove Road out of Acworth; and Big Shanty and Bill Chastain roads near Kennesaw. In addition the county purchased the right-of-way of the old trolley line.5

During the Heck administration state and federal funds were used to complete the Four Lane Highway from just north of Marietta to the Bartow County line. In November 1950, a week before the road officially opened, Cobb County Times columnist Chess Abernathy went around the barricades and drove to the end of the pavement. Predicting rapid development, he reported in the paper’s next issue: “Riding along, staring at the rolling hills and gentle valleys—now painted by autumn—the fine rural homes, the small industries, the dairies, the beef cattle, and all that goes with such a choice suburban area spring into reality without much prodding from the imagination. The reason is simple. Some are already there now.”6

Starting the Cobb County—Marietta Water Authority

In the early 1950s Willingham and Heck played the central role in finding new sources of water for an expanding population. The city of Atlanta had notified Cobb County that it could no longer supply new customers across the Chattahoochee; so Cobb’s leadership decided to build its own pumping and treatment plant. In his position as state senator, Willingham introduced legislation, enacted 21 February 1951, that created the Cobb County—Marietta Water Authority. The original three-man authority was chaired by the county commissioner and included a representative from Marietta and one other municipality. As a nonprofit wholesaler, the authority provided water at cost to the county and cities.7
The energetic Willingham was attorney for the county and all six of Cobb’s cities. He used his influence in persuading the different governments to join the system. Willingham reasoned that the authority would be able to negotiate from a stronger position in the bond market if it was the wholesaler for all local entities. Heck and Willingham tried to require the towns to stop using their previous supply, whether it was well water, the tap from the Atlanta main, or Austell’s small water plant on Sweetwater Creek. This attempt at unity broke down, however, when Austell failed to cooperate. Austell was a small town in southwest Cobb with only fourteen hundred residents at the time.  

The city at first agreed to buy county water, but meter readers soon discovered that none was being consumed. Heck summoned Mayor G. L. Strickler to his office and politely reminded him that the town had an obligation to do business only with the county. Strickler responded, “Well, John, I just signed that contract because you and Harold wanted me to. We don’t need the water down there.” Heck warned, “You’re going to have to take it, or we’re going to be in the soup with the bond folks.” The mayor then resolved the issue by saying, “I want to cooperate with you fellows; you know that. I always have. I’ll tell you what, John. You just figure out how much water we’re supposed to take every month, send us a bill, and we’ll pay it. We’ll just run that much of your water out on the streets down there in Austell and get rid of it for you.”

Seemingly, both sides were struck with the ridiculousness of this proposal. On 22 February 1951 Mayor Strickler and his entire city council sent a letter to Heck, asking that the contract between Austell and the county be terminated. They pointed out that the city had just installed a water filter plant large enough to meet the city’s needs. In the April meeting of the advisory board, Heck announced that Austell did not need county water, and Cobb’s system was already operating at full capacity. Claiming that the contract’s cancellation was mutually desirable, the commissioner persuaded the board to terminate the arrangement.

In the end, Austell’s secession made no difference. Willingham and Heck were aware that Lockheed’s arrival made the county eligible for federal assistance given to areas heavily impacted by defense industries. So they asked the U.S. government for a little over $350,000 to help build the pumping and treatment plant. This was the first federal
grant ever given to a county water authority. Assured of federal funding, Cobb was able to raise in 1952 an additional three million dollars from various bond companies.\(^9\)

Under the supervision of the Merritt and Welker engineering firm, the Cobb County—Marietta Water Authority built a raw water pumping station in 1952 on the Chattahoochee River at Johnson's Ferry Road, several miles above Atlanta's intake. The same engineers constructed a treatment plant and a water storage basin on Lower Roswell roughly a half mile west of Mt. Bethel Church. The heavy usage of the Chattahoochee was made possible in the 1950s, when the Corps of Engineers built Buford Dam and Lake Lanier about forty miles upstream. By 1959 the water authority constituted an investment of almost six million dollars. Cobb's intake was large enough to carry thirty million gallons daily. At the time the county pumping system could
handle only about half that amount, but it was devised so that additional pumps could easily be installed when necessary. As the county grew, the authority’s water sales gradually rose from under one billion gallons in 1954 to almost 2.8 billion in 1958.

The raw water reservoir at the treatment plant held up to twenty-five million gallons, while a treated water storage facility at Blackjack Mountain in east Cobb held another four million. County contractors ran a thirty-inch water main from the pumping station to the filter plant and on to the Blackjack Mountain reservoir. From there the work crews ran the main to the Four Lane. Another twenty-four-inch main ran to Smyrna to tie in with the current water system. John Heck’s wife Alice remembered that her husband had “a fit” worrying whether the new system would work properly. She claimed, “Everybody that was against it just knew the water would not start.” The commissioner suffered from a heart condition that prevented him from engaging in strenuous exercise. So Mrs. Heck volunteered to climb up the side of the tank “like a durn spider” and peer inside with a flashlight to determine whether it had filled properly. She noted that “the county never did pay me nothing for that time.”

The Acworth Lake Authority

A related undertaking was the creation of the Acworth Lake Authority. On the Etowah River the U.S. Corps of Engineers in the late 1940s built a dam that created a huge man-made Lake Allatoona, covering parts of Cobb, Bartow, and Cherokee counties. The civic leaders of Acworth were excited that the lake would extend to the borders of their community. But they knew that the Corps of Engineers would periodically let water through Allatoona Dam, lowering the lake level. When that happened, the Acworth section, on the outskirts of the lake, would become an unsightly mud flat. In early 1946 the Corps advertised for bids on the $17 million dam and reservoir project. At the first public hearing in January, seventy-five representatives from north Georgia communities met at the state Capitol with Col. Mark M. Boatner, the U.S. district engineer.

The community leaders all expressed support for the project and offered their cooperation. But the Acworth delegation took the
opportunity to express their concerns. The chairman of the Acworth planning commission, textile executive Fred B. Kienel, argued that Acworth could become a major tourist site if water levels could be held constant. He suggested a secondary dam at Proctor Creek, creating Lake Acworth, to capture the waters before they escaped into the main lake. He thought that Lake Acworth would turn the city into a recreation center and would help to solve the area’s sanitation and water-supply problems. Representing Acworth women, Varah Hill Awtrey, the wife of a local banker, endorsed the goals of the planning commission.

Willingham recollected that the struggle to build a sub-impounding dam was extremely difficult. According to the county attorney, “Whenever you take on the Corps of Engineers and the power company at the same time, why, you’ve got a job on your hands.” However, the city and county received strong support from their seventh district congressman, Henderson Lanham. Elected initially in 1946, Lanham had little seniority, but Willingham described him as “a very able congressman [who] just raised hell with them up there [in Washington].” The result was that the sub-dam was completed by July 1950 as the last stage of the Allatoona project. The new concrete dam was forty-eight feet high, with a lake level behind it of twenty feet. At the opening, Times reporter Jim Betts exclaimed: “Much to the distress of the Florida chambers of commerce, Georgians have found themselves a new vacationland. Cradled in the famous North Georgia hills, a newly created 11,500-acre [Allatoona] lake is picking up business faster than the water can go under the dam, the Allatoona Dam, that is.” Over several months, as the reservoir gradually filled, boaters and swimmers discovered the lake and headed for the only improved beach, at Betheny Bridge near Acworth.12

A little earlier in the year Governor Herman Talmadge visited Acworth to make a campaign speech during his reelection campaign. Willingham had not been a strong Talmadge supporter early in his career. In fact, when Herman’s father was serving his third term as governor, the senior Talmadge had fired the young attorney from his job with the state income tax department. Nonetheless, John Heck was a longtime Talmadge loyalist from the days when he served on the state highway board. Before the speech, Herman asked Heck and Willingham about the concerns of the people of Acworth. They told
him that the city wanted to build a beach and a bathhouse for swimmers who used the facility. In his address, the governor praised Acworth for its progress and promised to find twenty-five thousand dollars to build the beach and bathhouse.

In the 1951 legislative session Senator Willingham, as chair of the finance committee, saw to it that Acworth received the proposed allotment and then some. When the appropriations bill came over from the House of Representatives, it contained the twenty-five thousand dollars for Acworth that the governor had pledged. In committee, however, Willingham upped the amount to fifty thousand dollars a year for each of the next two years. The wily attorney later recalled that John Heck was a "dyed-in-the-wool"

Talmadge disciple, who took Gene and Herman’s word as “gospel.” He thought that if the governor promised twenty-five thousand dollars, then Acworth would get that amount and no more. The commissioner bet Willingham a new hat that he would not get away with his chicanery.

Not long afterwards, the Cobb leaders went into Atlanta to meet with the governor. Willingham warned Heck not to remind Talmadge how much he had pledged. When the matter came up, Georgia’s chief executive recalled his promise and asked, “Harold, you’ve got the
money appropriated, haven’t you?” Willingham responded, “Yes, sir, Governor.” Talmadge immediately said, “Let’s spend it!” He never asked how much. So Willingham made Heck buy him “the best Stetson hat in Georgia.”

Willingham worked out an arrangement where the U.S. Corps of Engineers leased to Georgia about two thousand acres at Lake Acworth. The state, in turn, leased the property to the Lake Acworth Authority. Only one hurdle remained. The head of Georgia’s department of parks and recreation asserted that state recreation funds could not be spend on county property. So Heck and Willingham went back to see Talmadge. The governor summoned the parks and recreation head and told him, “You aren’t the legislature, and you aren’t the governor.... The legislature appropriated this money for Lake Acworth up there, and I’m the governor and I say we’re going to spend it. You just get yourself back upstairs with Harold and arrange to spend that money the way Harold and John Heck want it spent.” The bureaucrat responded, “Yes, sir,” and so Acworth won its beach and bathhouse.¹³

Scandal at the County Work Camp

Suffering from a history of heart trouble, Heck took off early on the afternoon of Friday, 9 October 1953. He had recently spent a month in Kennestone Hospital and was not yet back to a full work schedule. At about 4:30 P.M. he placed a call from home to one of his recent political appointees, Warden Davis Taylor of the county work camp. A
Georgia legislative committee had begun an investigation of work camps around the state, and prominent officials, such as Judge James T. Manning of Marietta, were criticizing the wardens for allowing convicts too much freedom while out on work details. Everywhere in Georgia, inmates were used on road improvement projects; and the public was growing alarmed over how loosely they were supervised. Perhaps Heck and Taylor discussed procedures at the Cobb facility, and the commissioner hung up with the problem weighing on his mind.

Shortly afterwards, Heck went to bed, where he suffered a massive heart attack and died. His wife found the body when she returned home from a shopping trip a half-hour later. Heck was a few weeks shy of his fifty-sixth birthday. Eleven days later a convict in Warden Taylor’s custody wandered away from his work assignment and committed a vicious crime that rocked the county. An investigation revealed gross ineptitude at the work camp and forced changes in personnel and procedures. By that time, the prisoner, Amos Reece, had been found guilty and sentenced to die. The case reached national attention two years later when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the conviction and forced changes in the way that Cobb County selected its grand juries. For its role in challenging due process procedures for black defendants, the Amos Reece case is one of the most significant in Cobb’s history.14

The Reece case15 reveals the changing criminal justice standards for African-Americans in the post-World War II South. Just a few years earlier a comparable crime would have ended in a lynching or swift execution with no appeals to higher courts. In contrast, this mid-century case went through over three years of appeals and two retrials. A Cobb County native, Amos Reece was a member of Big Bethel Baptist Church, located between Marietta and Powder Springs. His first conviction came in 1945, when the twenty-year old laborer received a sentence of four to sixteen years on each of four counts of theft and assault with intent to rape. Despite the long sentence, the contemporary Marietta Daily Journal accounts provide no evidence of attempted rape. In the first report of the incident the newspaper mentions only the robbery at gunpoint of two white girls, Jean Foster and Marcella Sanders. Reece approached them while they were walking by the Confederate and city cemeteries on Powder Springs Street on a Saturday night. He stole their pocketbooks and fled. Later that night three Marietta policemen arrested him near the crime scene with one of the purses still in his
possession. Reece entered a guilty plea and was sentenced by Judge Harold Hawkins on 23 July 1945, less than two months after the incident. He had a sixth or seventh grade education and was regarded as low in intelligence. In his rape trials in the 1950s the defense would argue that he was incapable of understanding the consequences of his actions.16

After his first conviction Reece was assigned to the Cobb prison farm. As an inmate, he saw considerable service on road gangs paving county roads. By 1953 Reece had been a prisoner for eight years, and Warden Taylor permitted him to operate a heavy piece of machinery called a road patrol, which was used mainly for grading work. On 20 October 1953 Taylor sent Reece to fill ditches dug by county water department employees. As the day progressed, the warden ordered Reece’s guard to send the prisoner and his grading machine to another work site three miles away. The guard, on loan from the water system, allowed Reece to drive his road patrol unguarded to the new location. On the way, the prisoner stopped at the house of a white woman on Cooper Lake Road. She was home alone with a four-month old child. According to the young mother’s testimony, Reece asked her for a glass of water. She unlocked the screen door and gave it to him. After requesting and receiving a match, he asked the woman “if she had ever had anything to do with a colored man.” Alarmed, the woman ordered him to leave. Instead, he grabbed her by the throat, forced her into the house, and raped her.17

Reece returned to his road patrol and drove at a rapid speed to his original destination. By that time the victim had called her husband who notified the Smyrna police. When Reece arrived at the work site, they were waiting for him. The suspect confessed and made no attempt to escape. The officers noticed that he was drunk. A brother of the victim claimed that Reece had purchased whiskey with money lent him by a guard. Deputy Sheriff Dewey Gable testified under oath that he interviewed Reece at the jail and the suspect told him: “I’m your man. I did it. I feel better in here now that I’ve told. I wouldn’t have done it if I hadn’t been drinking.” The prisoner confessed to purchasing a pint and a half of moonshine and consuming well over a half-pint by the time of his arrest.

The incident was extremely embarrassing for Warden Taylor and cast a long shadow over the reputation of the late commissioner, John
Heck, who had been buried just the previous week. As the county superintendent of maintenance, Taylor was skilled at repairing roads, but he had no experience running a prison. Six months earlier, Heck had fired a competent warden, George Bryan, a veteran of almost twenty years in prison work. Prior to his ouster, Bryan made the mistake of confronting the commissioner's brother-in-law, H. L. Hawthorne, a mechanic in charge of county machinery at the prison camp. Bryan was incensed that Hawthorne had been sending prisoners from one job to another without the warden's approval. Feeling his authority undermined, he demanded that the subordinate stop interfering. Hawthorne apparently felt threatened, because he swore out a warrant to protect him from "bodily harm." Heck then intervened and fired Bryan. The ex-warden took his termination gracefully. He had been given the job by Heck four years earlier, and the two had worked well together to this point. Bryan told the *Cobb County Times*, "Commissioner Heck was always nice to me, but he leaned toward his brother-in-law too much."18

The novice warden, Davis Taylor, found himself under attack for failure to protect the public. At the time he was quoted as saying, "It is unfortunate that a thing like this happened. We usually trust a prisoner after he has proved himself reliable, which Reece had done during the past few years. In doing roadwork, it is all but impossible to watch every prisoner every minute of the day. If we did that it would take one guard for every prisoner working."19

The average citizen no doubt found this comment as shocking as the incident that provoked it. The joint legislative committee investigating the work camps invited Taylor to testify at a hearing in the offices of the Georgia Board of Corrections. Taylor admitted that had he abided by corrections board guidelines, Reece would not have enjoyed so much freedom. Prisoners not approved as trusties were supposed to be supervised at all times, and no one convicted of a sex offense could ever become a trusty. Yet Taylor maintained that the previous warden had trusted Reece to be a road patrol operator and had allowed him to work without much supervision. Outraged at these comments, former warden Bryan disputed Taylor's claims, asserting that he kept the prisoner under heavy guard, working him at the rock quarry in sight of two men armed with shotguns and one with a pistol. The ex-warden asserted that he "allowed him no unsupervised move-
ments. I knew he was a sex offender and he had given me a lot of trouble, so I didn't take any chances with him."

The First Amos Reece Trial

On 23 October 1953, three days after the crime, the Cobb grand jury indicted Reece. Exactly one week later Reece went on trial before Judge James Manning. The October grand jury had completed its work and adjourned the day before the crime. In a possible violation of judicial procedure Judge Manning recalled the jurors for "unfinished business," but failed to name Reece as a suspect against whom an indictment would be sought. The day after the indictment Manning appointed two local attorneys, Gordon Combs and Frank Holcomb, to defend Reece. They had less than six full days to prepare their case. Solicitor Luther Hames, Jr., and special prosecutor Raymond Reed handled the trial for the state.

Reed was on the prosecution team at the request of the victim's family. A member of the Georgia legislature, he frequently found himself at odds with Harold Willingham and the Talmadge faction. Solicitor Hames was a Talmadge man. Reed heard a rumor that his political enemies wanted him appointed to defend Reece. The assumption was that it would hurt him politically to help a black rapist. To avoid that possibility, Reed approached a friend of the victim and offered his free services in representing her interests. The family quickly accepted the "generous" offer."

Before Reece's arraignment, Combs and Holcomb entered a motion to delay the trial until they had time to prepare adequately and until psychiatrists had a chance to make a thorough evaluation of the defendant's sanity. In a hearing on 30 October two Atlanta physicians testified as to Reece's mental state. One raised doubts about his mental stability, but the other declared him sane. Based on this conflicting testimony, the judge overruled the motion for delay. The defense made a further motion that the indictment be quashed on the grounds that no African-American served on the grand jury. This was the issue that ultimately reached the U.S. Supreme Court.

Cobb County had a long history of keeping African-Americans off juries. An otherwise admirable, respected jurist, Judge Manning
reflected the unthinking racism of the era. The jury pool was drawn from the list of property owners in the tax digest. When white citizens went to the courthouse to complete a tax return, they were given a form on white paper. African-Americans filled out a yellow form. The tax receiver tore off a tab that included the taxpayer's name. It was put in a big tin jury box. When it came time to select jury members, the clerk of Superior Court carried the box into the judge's chambers. As the judge pulled out a slip of paper, he called out the name and the clerk wrote it down. Both white and yellow tabs were in the jury box; but when Manning happened to select a yellow form, he "accidentally" dropped it back into the box and reached for another one. Thus, African-Americans were never chosen.

In the pre-trial hearing the clerk of Superior Court, John LeCroy, and the deputy clerk, Tyre Lee Terry, testified that the jury boxes had been revised in 1952, that six African-Americans (and 528 Caucasians) were on the list, and there was no attempt to discriminate or exclude blacks from the grand jury. Yet, on prodding from the defense attorneys, LeCroy and Terry could remember no black person ever being called to serve. Combs and Holcomb argued that blacks constituted 10 percent of Cobb's 1950 population. Moreover, 1,108 property owners were designated as "colored" on the tax books. They noted that many blacks were substantial citizens who would make good prospective jurors. Yet, of the six African-Americans in the pool, one no longer lived in the county and the other five were at least sixty-two years of age. Two were over eighty. Called to testify, the five revealed that they had lived in Cobb County for at least thirty years, but had never been called for grand or petit jury duty. Nor did they know any African-American who had. Unfortunately for Reece, Georgia courts had a long history of relying on all-white juries. As soon as the defense was through, Judge Manning rejected the motion to quash the indictment.

The main prosecution witness was the victim, Doris Nelms Langley. She described the crime and identified Reece as her assailant. Hames and Reed put on the stand one of Reece's former employers, Roy Clackum, who testified that he saw the defendant talking to Mrs. Langley in front of her house just before the crime. As Clackum drove by, he waved at Reece. The defendant did not testify. Combs and Holcomb argued that he was incapable of knowing right from wrong.
After the closing arguments, the jury deliberated four hours, and then returned a verdict of guilty without a recommendation of mercy. Judge Manning set a date of execution for 11 December, and the defense attorneys filed motions for appeal.²¹

The Appeals

The case reached the Georgia Supreme Court the following April. By this point Judge Manning had added Daniel Duke, a future Fulton County Superior Court judge, to the team of Reece’s lawyers. The defense attorneys raised two major objections. First, they pointed out that no African-Americans in memory had served on a Cobb County grand jury. The justices were not impressed with this argument. Associate Justice T. S. Candler, writing for the court, noted that Cobb officials had informed the defendant of his rights at the time he was committed to jail and told him that the grand jury would investigate the charges against him. Under Georgia law Reece had to raise objections to the grand jury’s competency before he was indicted. Candler cited precedent that the rule applied even if the defendant was not represented by counsel before the indictment. So, on this question, the Georgia Supreme Court upheld Judge Manning.

The defense attorneys were more successful on the second grounds of appeal. They argued that Judge Manning had improperly charged the jury. The central issue was the definition of sanity and insanity in state law. In the high court’s opinion Judge Manning began his charge correctly. He told the jury that one should be judged legally sane and accountable for one’s crime if one had the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. Low intelligence was no excuse unless the defendant was too mentally feeble to know that his action was wrong. Unfortunately, the judge went on to say that “the law does not attempt to measure the degree of insanity which renders a man legally responsible for his acts. That is a question for the jury.” Justice Candler wrote that the latter statement was legally incorrect and contradicted the first instruction. He asserted that the jury was left “in such a confused condition of mind that they could not render an intelligent verdict.” With the chief justice, W. H. Duckworth, casting the lone dissent, the Georgia Supreme Court on 11 May 1954 overturned Reece’s con-
tion and remanded the case for another trial.  

Judge Manning presided again when the state retried Reece on 22 June 1954. Just before the trial, attorney Daniel Duke filed another motion to quash the indictment due to the unconstitutional exclusion of blacks from the grand jury. He challenged Justice Candler's reasoning that Reece should have objected to the composition of the grand jury before his original indictment. Arguing that Reece was of low intelligence and illiterate, Duke maintained that his client, without benefit of attorney, could hardly be expected to know his rights. The defense attorney further noted that the court failed to give Reece the names and race of grand jurors and did not inform him that a grand jury from which blacks systematically were excluded was unconstitutional.

Judge Manning again overruled the motion, and the trial went on. Following prosecutor Raymond Reed's opening arguments, Duke filed a motion for a mistrial. He based his objection on the fact that the prosecutor told jurors that they could consider the differences in race and social standing of the defendant and victim in determining the validity of the victim's testimony. Duke argued that the injection of race into the deliberations violated the equal protection clause of both the Georgia and the federal constitution. However, Judge Manning denied the motion, opting merely to instruct the jury to "disabuse your minds of the question of race, or position and social standing."

Once more the jury found the defendant guilty. After it failed to recommend mercy, Manning set a new execution date. In July attorneys Combs and Holcomb asked to be excused from representing Reece, and Duke became his sole attorney. Duke quickly filed a motion for a new trial, challenging the lack of African-Americans on the grand jury and repeating the facts cited at the first trial. Duke argued that the absence of black representation on any grand jury of the last thirty years was evidence of a "systematic and purposeful exclusion" of African-Americans. Duke also asked for a new hearing on the grounds that the judge improperly failed to declare a mistrial over the prosecution's injection of race and class into the hearing. Consistently, the judge overruled the defense motions.

On appeal the case returned to the Georgia Supreme Court, where on 10 January 1955 Chief Justice Duckworth, the one dissenter the previous year, wrote the court's unanimous decision. He reaffirmed
that Reece's failure to object to the grand jury's composition before his indictment eliminated any chance of appeal on this ground. Without providing any other reason for his opinion, Duckworth asserted that the defense had failed to prove the systematic exclusion of blacks from the grand jury. In the court's opinion, the allegations failed "to show any violation of the rights of the movant under either the State or Federal Constitutions." Coming at a time of massive resistance to integration, the state Supreme Court no doubt reflected the opinion of most white Georgians against racial equality. The high court showed its willingness in 1954 to protect Reece's rights on a procedural matter, but not eight months later on grounds that he was denied equal protection.26

That, however, was not the end of the matter. Daniel Duke immediately appealed his client's case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which heard arguments in November 1955. In their brief, Georgia's attorney general, Eugene Cook, and Cobb's solicitor, Luther Hames, Jr., challenged Reece's right to a hearing before the Supreme Court. They argued that Reece made two procedural errors. First, he failed to object to the grand jury before his indictment. Second, he failed to appeal within ninety days of his first hearing before the Georgia Supreme Court in 1954. Although that court overturned the conviction, it rejected the idea that Reece could challenge the make-up of the grand jury. The Georgia attorney general reasoned that Reece's failure to seek a writ of certiorari27 within ninety days of that decision constituted his acceptance of the court's verdict.

In his brief Daniel Duke argued that Reece had been denied equal protection under the fourteenth amendment. The heart of his argument was that due process was denied whenever a court expected a defendant, without benefit of counsel, to understand "the niceties of Georgia procedure" and prepare a written motion within twenty-eight hours of his arrest. He maintained that the opinion of the Georgia courts made the fourteenth amendment "valueless" in protecting personal liberty.

On 5 December 1955 the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the Georgia decision and ordered yet another trial. Written by Associate Justice Tom C. Clark, the court's opinion rejected Georgia's arguments as "clearly without substance." Clark noted that Reece had applied on time for certiorari after the most recent Georgia Supreme Court deci-
sion. Then he cited precedent that the U.S. Supreme Court could examine any federal issue arising at any stage of the appeal process. Pointing out Reece’s limited education and allegedly low intelligence, the jurist argued that it was unrealistic to expect the defendant to challenge the grand jury on short notice following his arrest, when he had no counsel to assist him. Citing Powell v. Alabama (287 US 45), Clark asserted, “The effective assistance of counsel in such a case is a constitutional requirement of due process which no member of the Union may disregard. Georgia should have considered Reece’s motion to quash on its merits.”

A fifty-six year-old Texan, Clark noted that the Supreme Court for the last half-century had regarded proper grand jury selection as a constitutionally protected right. Listing a number of cases from Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, he reasoned that one was denied equal protection when members of one’s own race were systematically excluded from grand juries. Cobb County’s pre-trial hearing in 1953 provided uncontested evidence of systematic exclusion. The large black population and the fact that no blacks had served on juries pointed to discrimination that was “ingenious or ingenuous.” Noting that Georgia officials provided no proof for their claims that they did not discriminate, the nation’s highest court reversed Georgia’s Supreme Court and remanded the case “for further proceedings not inconsistent with this opinion.”

The Final Trial and Execution

The following day the Marietta Daily Journal, edited by Bill Kinney, ran an unsigned editorial, arguing that Cobb had changed since Reece’s first trial. Courthouse officials had revised the jury list, adding more African-American names. During the October 1955 term, two black men served on the grand jury, and several African-Americans had served on trial juries in the past year. Claiming that Cobb was ahead of many Georgia counties, the newspaper offered the opinion that Reece’s “no-Negroes-on-the-jury” argument would not work again.

Before Reece could be re-indicted, the FBI intervened in the case in a manner that created a furor in Cobb and much of Georgia. On 30 December 1955 an agent appeared in Marietta and questioned
county officials about the exclusion of African-Americans from the jury system. The agent refused to reveal his name to the press, but a *Journal* reporter called his boss, James K. Munford, the agent in charge of the FBI's Atlanta office. Munford revealed that the investigation stemmed from the recent Supreme Court decision and had been ordered by an assistant attorney general, Warren Olney III, who headed the criminal division of the Justice Department. Munford added that Olney asked the Atlanta office "to find out the full facts about the composition of jury lists in Cobb Judicial Circuit." In Washington the Justice Department's director of public information, G. F. Mullen, announced that the FBI was trying to determine whether criminal prosecutions should begin against Cobb officials. Fines up to five thousand dollars could be imposed on those who systematically excluded blacks from jury lists. Solicitor Hames charged that the FBI had tried to intimidate him. The unnamed agent who visited Marietta allegedly said, "Well, Mr. Hames, I reckon you won't try the man again." According to Cobb's chief prosecutor, that statement was an attempt to prevent local officials from doing their duty.10

FBI agent Munford vigorously denied that any agent would ask such a question, but a host of Georgia officials jumped to Hames' defense. The seventh district representative, Henderson Lanham, told Jack Nelson of the *Atlanta Constitution* that a number of southern congressmen were incensed by the investigation. He asserted that the "FBI would do well to be investigating some of the radicals out in California where Mr. Olney comes from." On the floor of Congress Lanham denounced the FBI for a "flagrant invasion of the rights of sovereign states." The congressman compared the investigation to "Gestapo proceedings and police state activities" and argued that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover had "bowed his neck" to politically-inspired orders from Republican attorney general Herbert Brownell. By "prostituting" the FBI for political ends, the Eisenhower administration had "lowered the standing of the one organization that stands between the people of the United States and the communist conspiracy." In an age when southern segregationists were almost all Democrats, Lanham alleged that the Republicans were using the Reece case "to try to garner the vote of the NAACP and its followers." He accused the NAACP of engaging in a "frantic and insane effort to wipe out all racial lines in the South in the hope of seeing the blood of the two races mingled in future generations"
Georgia congressmen Paul Brown, James C. Davis, Jack Flynt, and E. L. (Tic) Forrester joined Lanham in leveling harsh criticisms at the Eisenhower administration and the FBI. While prominent Cobb politicians refrained publicly from such overblown rhetoric, they made clear their opposition to the FBI investigation. The *Daily Journal* editorialized that Cobb had become a “whipping boy” for the Republican administration, despite the county’s progressive record in becoming one of the first jurisdictions in Georgia to place blacks on a grand jury. In light of Cobb’s performance during the last two years, the paper found “galling” the Eisenhower administration’s decision to woo the black vote “by kowtowing to the wishes of the NAACP.”

The FBI probe ended with no evidence of criminal wrongdoing, and advocates of equal rights found themselves on the defensive. J. H. Calhoun, the head of the Atlanta NAACP chapter, denied that his organization had anything to do with the investigation. Attorney Dan Duke protested that he was not responsible. Arguing that the FBI made it more difficult for Reece to receive a fair trial, Duke announced, “Cobb County has done more to comply with the spirit of the Constitution than just about any other county in Georgia.”

In February 1956 a grand jury containing three African-Americans indicted Reece on rape charges for the third time. After Judge Manning again appointed Dan Duke to represent Reece, the Atlanta attorney requested and received five hundred dollars from the county for psychiatric examinations of his client. Duke pointed out that he had not been paid by anyone to take the case and had received only nine hundred dollars for his past work in Reece’s behalf. Two African-Americans were in the jury pool, but Solicitor Hames used his strikes to exclude both. After going through four panels of potential jurors, the defense and prosecution agreed on twelve white men. By this time, the victim had moved out of state, but she came back to testify once more against her assailant.

Duke asked the jury to find his client not guilty due to mental incompetence. However, the psychologists and psychiatrist who examined Reece gave little support to his position. They agreed that the defendant had low intelligence (about an eight- to ten-year-old mental level), but they all judged him able to tell right from wrong. Dr. Robert M. Hughes, president of the Georgia Association of
Psychologists, asserted that Reece's mentality was above the minimum level for service in the army during World War II. Some of the scientists' testimony had racist overtones. One psychologist suggested that Reece existed "on the animal level." The psychiatrist claimed that Reece's sexual impulses could be compared to a kleptomaniac. All concluded that he had below average ability to control his impulses.

Attorney Duke condemned the Cobb prison system for failing to keep Reece under proper control. Calling his client a moron and "an accident of nature," he complained, "To let him go about without a guard is the same as turning a hungry lion out of a cage into a field of little lambs." He argued that Reece should be sent to the state mental hospital in Milledgeville and should never be released. But to execute him for a moron's mistake was the same as murder. In contrast, Solicitor Hames insisted that Reece was intelligent enough to operate a road patrol, which prison officials considered a "highly skilled" job. Arguing that Reece may have deliberately made low scores on the mental exam, the prosecutor asserted that Reece's job performance demonstrated judgment above the level of a moron. If Reece were sent to a mental hospital, he warned, he would soon be back on the streets. After closing arguments the jury went out for three hours and fifteen minutes. When they returned, they delivered a verdict of guilt without a recommendation of mercy. So Judge Manning for a third time set a date for execution.

The state returned Reece to the Reidsville prison where he awaited his fate. Lacking a constitutional basis for another Supreme Court appeal, Duke sought a commutation of sentence from the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles. On 5 November 1956 the board denied the request. Governor Marvin Griffin immediately granted a thirty-day reprieve, while a three-member board of psychiatry examined the condemned man. On 23 November this Executive Sanity Commission officially notified the governor that they found Reece to be sane and mentally responsible. With no more appeals possible, Judge Manning set an execution date one last time. Thus, at 10:45 A.M. on 4 January 1957 Reece was electrocuted at the Reidsville prison. Seven minutes later he was pronounced dead. His last words were "I know that I am going to rest—I would have all keep trusting in God—All good comes from Him." His body was returned to Cobb County, where he was buried at his home church, Big Bethel.
Unlike the pre-World War II era, when cases of this type ended in an execution within a month or so, the Reece case involved numerous appeals and went all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court. The fact that the defendant stayed alive for over three years from the date of the crime provides evidence that the federal government was imposing new standards of justice on southern courts. The most positive feature of the case was that it forced Cobb County to begin including African-Americans in the jury pools. Yet the case provides a chilling view of the inequities of the system. If Reece had received a reasonable sentence in his 1945 purse-snatching conviction, he would not have been in prison eight years later. Had there been less corruption and more competence in the prison system, a guard would not have aided the prisoner in buying moonshine and Reece would not have been permitted to travel unsupervised through the county. Clearly, the state bears some of the responsibility for putting temptation in the prisoner's path. Moreover, had Reece not been poor and black and the victim white, the punishment for the crime would have been less severe. In 1957 Cobb County still had a long way to go to be the progressive county racially that it had become in other ways.
Politics and Education in the Mid-1950s: the Ward Administration and the Brown Decision

Election of Rholie Ward

Following the death of John Heck, the ordinary, John T. Dorsey, served as ex-officio commissioner until an election could be held to find a successor. Harold Willingham and other courthouse insiders asked Alice Heck, John’s widow, to announce her candidacy for the rest of her husband’s term. She had worked for years in various offices of county government and would later be the Marietta city clerk during the Howard Atherton administration. There was no doubt that she was well informed about policies and personalities in county government.

The main challengers were seventy-year-old Lost Mountain farmer-lawyer Rholie Ward and former Smyrna mayor J. M. (Hoot) Gibson. Rholie Ward’s campaign manager was a young state legislator, Fred Bentley. Descended from some of Cobb’s earliest residents, Bentley was first elected in 1950 at age twenty-three. He spent only seventy-six dollars on his initial campaign, but benefited from having a large family spread throughout the county. During the campaign he became a bitter enemy of Heck, Willingham, and their machine. The commissioner called Bentley
into his office about two weeks before the election and offered to make as large a campaign contribution as he wanted. According to the candidate, the commissioner "started peeling off $20's, $50's, and $100's. 'Just tell me when to quit,' he said." Bentley replied, "Mr. John, you might as well put your money up, because I've made it this far without you and I think I can make it the rest of the way."
Bentley teamed with former legislator Raymond Reed in finding a candidate to run against the courthouse gang. In the General Assembly they worked with Willingham on such local legislation as the Lake Acworth Authority, but they were on opposite sides of statewide issues. In a one-party era they were all Democrats, but Georgia politics divided between Talmadge supporters and opponents. Willingham was a Herman Talmadge loyalist, while Reed and Bentley were staunch anti-Talmadgites. Bentley and Willingham once engaged in a fistfight at the Capitol after the latter convinced Governor Talmadge to grant a leave of absence from a state agency to a candidate willing to run against Bentley. As Rholie Ward's campaign manager, Bentley arose at 4:00 A.M. and headed for his law office to work briefly on clients' business. From 6:00 to 8:00 he politicked for Ward. Then he sped down to the Capitol at around one hundred miles an hour to attend a special legislative session. Leaving Atlanta at 5:30 P.M., the hardworking representative returned to the law office for an hour's work, before dashing up to Rome, where he was courting his future wife Sara.

Considering it improper to criticize the late commissioner or his widow, Rholie Ward attacked instead Heck's county attorney, Harold Willingham. The Ward campaign made the argument that Heck was too ill toward the end of his life to control county affairs. The Willingham machine allegedly stepped into a vacuum, managing to "receive the fees, control the purchases and distribute the favors in practically every county project." Even his enemies praised Harold Willingham for his adeptness at finding creative solutions to practical problems. They were disturbed, however, by his fondness for backroom chicanery and his propensity to gorge at the public trough.

Ward noted that Willingham had received "thousands of dollars" in legal fees from agencies such as the Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority. The Lost Mountain candidate offered few specific details, but others later revealed that Willingham, having created the water authority, got the job of keeping its financial records. In a clear conflict of interest, his firm audited the books. For his services, the crafty solicitor received 1 percent of the authority's gross revenues. Ward further accused Willingham of sponsoring a bill to eliminate competitive bidding, so that the Kennesaw Stone Company, in which he had an interest, could provide gravel for county road projects. Ward thought it suspicious that the stone company was formed in late February, the act sus-
pending competitive bidding passed in early March, and the county approved a million dollar road bond issue in mid-April. The record was more complex than the Ward campaign admitted, in that all three Cobb representatives (Willingham, Fred Bentley, and Ben Smith) signed the bill altering purchasing practices. An Alice Heck supporter, Ben Smith argued that the bill was an attempt to modernize the purchasing system. Nonetheless, Bentley would sponsor a bill following the election to restore competitive bidding for all purchases over two hundred dollars.⁴

A final complaint about Willingham was that he lied to the planning commissioners, while he served as their attorney. A member of the 1953 General Assembly, Willingham quietly attached to a bill an amendment that zoned for cemetery development a parcel along the Four Lane adjacent to Dobbins Air Base. Willingham moved so stealthily that neither Rep. Bentley nor Smith was aware of his action. The measure took control of the property out of the hands of the Cobb planning commission, but when members asked about it, Willingham told them that no such bill was under consideration. In April 1953 the entire planning commission, headed by H. O. Schilling, wrote a strong letter to Commissioner Heck over the incident. In October, the Ward committee reprinted the letter as part of a political advertisement attacking machine politics.⁵

Grand jury presentments, issued less than a week before the election, added fuel to the Ward campaign's attack on conditions at the county prison camp. The grand jury cleared Warden Davis Taylor of any criminal wrongdoing, but condemned lax practices that contributed to the Amos Reece rape incident. The Reece case, however, was symptomatic of a larger problem of a prison out of control. The jury members called for the removal of Henry L. Hawthorne, the brother-in-law of John and Alice Heck, for trying to act as a “super boss” over every prison department and undermining the authority of the previous warden. They also noted numerous corrupt acts, including private farmers borrowing county equipment to grow crops they sold to the county, fertilizer designated for the camp being dumped on private property, trustees unloading gravel on private driveways for a small fee, and food raised on the county farm disappearing and the prison officials buying the same commodities from area farmers. To Ward supporters, these examples proved their claim that "graft and crime always follow in the
wake of machine politics."

Since the candidates did not differ much on substantive issues, Ward based his election strategy on hard-hitting personal attacks on the Heck machine. Still mourning the loss of her husband, Alice Heck was placed on the defensive. She ran on the Heck administration's record of achievement. The day before the election, the Ward campaign made its most direct assault on Mrs. Heck's qualifications, resorting to a sexist advertisement entitled, "Shall We Remove the Machine? Shall We Give a Man's Job to a Woman?" The Ward committee argued that the next commissioner would have to clean up corruption at the prison farm. To do so, he or she would need to go on inspection tours of the barracks, machine shops, and fields. With murderers and rapists all around, the ad read, that would be "no place for a woman."

The third candidate in the race, Hoot Gibson, tried to take the high road and run on his accomplishments as mayor of Smyrna. Nonetheless, he was about as controversial as Willingham. Gibson grew up on a large farm east of Macon, but he ran away from home when he was only twelve. Stopping school with a fourth-grade education, he worked in Atlanta until he turned sixteen, and then he joined the navy for a few years. Back in Atlanta he became a Talmadge supporter and ran for Congress in 1946. In a crowded field of nineteen candidates he came in a distant ninth, far behind Helen Douglas Mankin, Georgia's first elected congresswoman. A white woman, Mankin campaigned in black neighborhoods and received the backing of African-American leaders. Their support accounted for her margin of victory.

Gibson's headquarters were in the old Henry Grady Hotel. Just after he lost, Gene Talmadge invited him up to his room and, using racist language, told him he should get out of any town where blacks cared more about government than whites. So, less than a decade after the 1938 riot and at a time when the town had no black property owners, Gibson moved his family to Smyrna. In 1948 a Talmadge man asked him to run for mayor. At the time he owned a drive-in movie theater and worked as a conductor on the railroad. He spent almost nothing on his campaign, but in a three-way race won narrowly. Eventually, he served three terms (1949-52 and 1959-60). Despite his racism, he did a number of things that other progressive mayors were doing in that era. He saw to it that Smyrna joined the Cobb-Marietta Water Authority. He paved a number of streets, extended sewer lines, modernized the fire
department, and went to Washington several times to lobby for Lockheed. Sometimes, he overstated his accomplishments. In his campaign advertisements, he claimed to reduce taxes by 23 percent. In truth, a previous city council had provided for the tax reduction when some old general obligation bonds were paid off. Even though Willingham was his city attorney and both men supported the Talmadge machine, Gibson broke with his ally in 1953, when he saw a chance to be elected county commissioner.8

On the day of the election Ward received 6,181 votes to Alice Heck's 5,729. The elderly Lost Mountain attorney did well in the western part of the county, but ran strongest in Marietta, where he received 62 percent of his votes. Heck ran far behind in Marietta, but carried most of the country precincts, where her husband had paved numerous rural roads. Heck backers placed much of the blame for her loss on Hoot Gibson, who received 1,921 votes, mainly in Smyrna and neighboring south Cobb militia districts. While Gibson was a distant third, it is probable that his votes would have gone heavily to Heck in a two-way race. According to kingmaker Bentley: “The election of Rholie Ward cast no reflection on any other candidate. To me it was another victory for the right and certainly a decisive show of the opinion of the people of this county.”

Immediately after taking office, Ward asked George Bryan to serve again as warden of the county prison farm. Guy Roberts replaced Willingham as county attorney. In defeat, Willingham remarked: “John Heck was my best friend. He and I worked together as a team for the best interest of Cobb County during his administration. We are proud of our accomplishments for Cobb County. When his widow, Miss Alice, of her own free will and accord, decided to make the race for his unexpired term, our side fought as hard and cleanly as we could to uphold her hand and candidacy, and lost by only some 400 ballots out of a total vote of approximately 14,000.” Years later the lawyer-politician recalled how difficult it was to elect a female candidate in those days. The morning after Mrs. Heck's defeat, Willingham got dressed to go by the courthouse as usual. His wife Frances asked him how he could go downtown and face the six thousand people who voted against him. He replied, “Well, Sugar, I'm not worried about [those] that voted against us; I'm worried about seeing any of the [people] that I told we were going to win.”
Almost immediately after taking office Rholie Ward found himself in the middle of a natural gas controversy. In February 1953, Commissioner Heck and his advisory board granted Austell a franchise for a gas distribution system. Mayor Strickler and the city council asked the voters to approve $1.8 million in revenue certificates to construct pipelines and mains. A few months later the city endorsed the plan by a lopsided tally of 345 for and only five against. Shortly afterwards, the government of Powder Springs brought its residents into the system. The Austell Gas Board received a monopoly in the two incorporated towns. It planned to compete against other gas companies in unincorporated south Cobb.10

Since 1930 the Atlanta Gas Light Company had served Marietta with an eight-inch main that ran along the old Dixie Highway through Smyrna. In September 1953 the company began building a new natural gas main north from the Chattahoochee River. Running along the Four Lane, it started out at twelve inches, but dropped to ten along the way. Foster V. Yancey, the manager of operations in Cobb County, announced that the project was the largest single expansion of the system in over two decades. It would more than double Marietta’s capacity, increase service to the Smyrna area, and for the first time carry natural gas to the new subdivisions developing northeast of the Four Lane.

On 24 October 1953 Atlanta Gas Light asked the county advisory board for a franchise to lay gas lines throughout the county. Five days later 568 residents of the Howells district in the future Six Flags area of south Cobb took action to make sure that they would be served by Atlanta Gas Light, and not by the Austell Gas Board. To prevent Austell from constructing lines in their area, they filed a petition in Cobb Superior Court, asking that Austell’s $1.8 million in revenue certificates be declared invalid, on the grounds that citizens of Howells had not been consulted. Led by Mrs. C. G. Gorman and R. J. Delay, the petitioners said they had more confidence in Atlanta Gas Light than an embryonic Austell service. They would later withdraw the suit, but Gorman and Delay continued to speak in behalf of Atlanta Gas Light.

The county government first tried to give both companies the right to compete. In the interregnum period between the Heck and Ward administrations, the advisory board on 9 November granted
Atlanta Gas Light a non-exclusive franchise for unincorporated areas, allowing it to construct lines, with the approval of the county engineer. Apparently, this decision did not satisfy the Atlanta giant. On 28 November 1953 the Austell Gas Board began digging ditches with the intention of laying pipe along U.S. 78 in the Lemons militia district, south of Smyrna and not far from Howells. Two days later, without approval from the county engineer, Atlanta Gas Light began work in the same location. The newly elected commissioner, Rholie Ward, on 16 December, concurred with the advisory board in denouncing the Atlanta firm's arrogance. During the board meeting, the county leaders tried to settle their dispute with Atlanta Gas Light, but failing to reach an understanding, they revoked the company's franchise throughout unincorporated Cobb.

Ward told a reporter, "I suppose the matter will now go into the courts. The board's main interest is to get gas service to the people who want it badly. I hope something can be worked out." The next day the cities of Austell and Powder Springs brought suit in Cobb County Superior Court against the Atlanta Gas Light Company, the Concrete Construction Company, and Foster Yancey, the gas company's Marietta manager. The two cities asked for a permanent injunction halting all construction. They claimed that Atlanta Gas Light had refused for years to expand into south Cobb. Now the plaintiffs alleged a "monstrous conspiracy" to destroy Austell's embryonic gas system. According to a report in the Marietta Daily Journal, Austell offered to divide the territory, but the Atlanta firm refused. Atlanta Gas Light maintained that the company could do as it pleased, because the county had no jurisdiction along state highway rights-of-way and because the 9 November franchise constituted an irrevocable contract.

With Harold Willingham representing Austell, attorneys for the two sides ultimately settled their controversy out of court. On 7 January 1954 the Atlanta Gas Light Company agreed not to expand into the militia districts of Austell, Powder Springs, Clarkdale, Howells, and Coxes. The two sides agreed that the rest of the county, including the Lemons district, was open territory for either utility; and Austell would pay Atlanta Gas Light for fifteen hundred feet of gas main the company had already laid in the Austell and Coxes districts. Moreover, the Atlanta firm gained the right to run its lines along the edge of the Howells district, connecting the system from the Chattahoochee to the
Bankhead Highway.

Three days later, on 10 January 1954, Mayor G. L. Strickler received from the bond companies a $1,830,641 check for the Austell Gas Board. According to the mayor, about fifty thousand feet of gas lines had already been laid, under the direction of Merritt and Welker, and the system would initially serve about three thousand customers in south Cobb and adjacent parts of Douglas County. Gradually, the Austell system expanded from its original base through much of southwest Cobb County, spreading by 1956 into all of Macland and Lost Mountain and the southern part of the Oregon district.12

Water, Roads, and Fire Protection

Under Rholie Ward's leadership, the county continued to pave roads and expand the water system. Water lines stretched through rural south Cobb and east of the Four Lane Highway into new subdivisions along Bells Ferry, Canton, Sandy Plains, Roswell, Lower Roswell, and Johnson's Ferry Roads.13 During Ward's three years in office work crews paved such secondary roads in east Cobb as Old Canton, New Providence Church, and Tritt. Similar projects in northwest Cobb included Big Shanty, Mars Hill Church, and Due West-Acworth Roads. South Cobb improvements included parts of Pat Mell, Factory Shoals, Midway, South Hurt, and Hiram and Lithia Springs Roads. In 1954 the county also paved streets around Smyrna's new Belmont Hills Shopping Center.14

Belmont Hills was the creation of developer Bill Ward and was designed to serve the needs of the rapidly developing Smyrna area. According to the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, some nineteen hundred new homes were forecast for this part of the county from mid-1954 to the end of 1955. For the first time, the population within Smyrna's city limits surpassed ten thousand. Noting that the area had been pastureland just a few years earlier, Bill Ward exclaimed in July 1954, "Just look at it now. Hundreds of homes in Belmont Hills, with more being added to the area every day. Our shopping center started with one supermarket. Now we'll have nine businesses. We've just begun our development."
On 18 November 1954 the grand opening took place with dignitaries including Congressman Henderson Lanham; Miss Sweden, Anita Ekberg; and Miss America for 1953, Neva Jane Langley. Original tenants were W. T. Grant, F. W. Woolworth, A&P, Kroger, Dunaway Drugstore, a restaurant, a gasoline service station, and an assortment of shoe stores and specialty shops. Newspaper accounts described the twenty-four acre shopping center as the biggest of its kind in the area with the potential of becoming the largest in the southeast when it expanded to its full potential of thirty or more stores.16

As the population grew, fire protection in unincorporated areas increasingly became a public concern. According to pioneer fireman David Hilton, as late as 1955 rural Cobb “had no fire trucks, no firefighters, no fire departments whatsoever.” In that year Cobb legislators Fred Bentley, Harold Willingham, and Raymond Reed pushed through the General Assembly a plan to address the issue through local initiative.16 The advisory board gained the authority to designate fire prevention districts and schedule referenda on a special tax of up to five mills.17 At least 60 percent of the ballots in any district had to be in the affir-
mative for the measure to pass. The first to go into operation was the South Cobb Fire Prevention District (containing portions of Austell, Coxes, Howells, and Lemons militia districts). On 25 June 1955 the citizens of the district voted 217 to 9 to let the advisory board levy up to five mills for a fire station, equipment, and personnel. The district’s first board consisted of C. Clyde Glore, R. A. Whitfield, F. B. Henson, L. P. Williams, and L. R. Dunn. With Whitfield serving as chairman, the board began by purchasing a new $7005 fire truck.\(^{18}\)

Over the next several years new fire prevention districts were created in Fair Oaks, Lemons-Vinings, Fuller, Powder Springs, Kennesaw, and Acworth. The only time a fire district referendum lost was in December 1963 for northeast Cobb’s Gritters area. Since icy roads discouraged the turnout, the advisory board decided to hold another election in August. At that time, the vote for a Gritters-Post Oak district passed easily, 640 to 41. With the conversion of this last holdout, all parts of the county came under the control of a fire protection body.\(^{19}\)

A graduate of South Cobb High School, David Hilton gained firefighting experience with the Atlanta Fire Department. In 1961 he became chief of the Powder Springs Fire Prevention District. To begin with, the rural fire stations had only one or two paid fire fighters and relied heavily on volunteers. During the late 1950s and 1960s the number of professionals increased through an evolutionary process. By the late 1960s the Georgia Insurance Service Office (ISO) told Cobb County that none of the fire districts was worthy of better than a 7 insurance classification, a poor rating, which meant high insurance rates for property owners. To improve the classification the Board of Commissioners, under Chairman Ernest Barrett, decided to develop a unified system. In 1971 they combined the individual districts into the Cobb County Fire Department. Hilton became the first fire chief, with the other district chiefs becoming his assistants.\(^{20}\)

Georgia’s First Responses to the Brown Decision

During the Ward administration, Cobb and the entire South found itself at the center of a storm over equal access to public education. In the case
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of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954) the U.S. Supreme Court shattered the old "separate but equal" precedent by unanimously ruling that segregated schools were inherently unequal. A year later the high court decreed that schools must desegregate "with all deliberate speed." White southern politicians were almost unanimous in denouncing the verdict. Many advocated "massive resistance." Nonetheless, the segregationists fought little more than a rear-guard action, while steadily retreating. No Georgia public schools integrated during the 1950s, but they all started in that direction in the following decade.

Historian Numan Bartley argues that nearly all white (and some black) Georgians of the 1950s accepted segregation as right and proper. "Like red clay and kudzu," he maintains, "the ubiquitous words 'white' and 'colored'...adorned virtually every public facility from drinking fountains and restrooms to the Bibles used in Georgia courtrooms for administering oaths." Southern liberals of the depressed 1930s had largely ignored segregation, concentrating mainly on economic inequities and the plight of the poor. After World War II their focus shifted to individual rights. According to Bartley, reformers went from thinking of the South as the nation's number one economic problem to seeing it as the number one moral problem. While postwar reformers paid less attention to poverty (black or white), they worked with the federal government to bring about a "Second Reconstruction" in race relations.

During the first Reconstruction of the 1860s and 1870s the Republican Party, backed by Union troops, briefly gained control in Georgia and extended equal political rights to black men. But the northern commitment to civil rights was weak. In the post-Reconstruction era racist attitudes and practices seemed as entrenched in the North as in the South. The federal government looked the other way, while Democrats, aided by terrorist organizations, "redeemed" the South. From Virginia to Texas one-party rule and white supremacy prevailed for the next three-quarters of a century.

World War II helped to change these attitudes. The great conflict against fascist tyranny encouraged Americans to reflect on the differences between their system and that of the enemy. Published a year before the war ended, Gunnar Myrdal's influential book, An American Dilemma (1944), pointed out the contradiction between our cherished values of liberty and democracy and the practices of segregation and disfranchisement. The Cold War against Soviet communism gave Americans added reason
to put their house in order. The contest was a struggle for the hearts and minds of the world's peoples, many just gaining national independence. As they threw off the yoke of colonialism, the new nations made a choice between capitalism and socialism, between democracy and dictatorship. In the late 1940s diplomat George Kennan, an architect of America's containment strategy, argued that the best way for the U.S. to win the Cold War was not through might, but by setting an example that the rest of the world would want to follow. From this perspective, segregation was a national embarrassment, undermining our efforts to win friends in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. So self-interest and morality came together in the quest to solve the country's worst racial problems.

In the second Reconstruction the South found itself challenged once more to conform to national standards. Immediately after the Brown decision, the most influential southern officeholders defended southern tradition. Governor Herman Talmadge authored a book entitled You and Segregation that blasted the Brown decision as an attack on freedom. He argued that the high court had assumed tyrannical powers by ignoring the Tenth Amendment that reserved to the states and the people all powers not delegated to the federal government. Talmadge's successor, Marvin Griffin, claimed that Georgia's most cherished values were segregation and the county unit system. He is perhaps best remembered for his attempt to keep Georgia Tech from playing in the 1956 Sugar Bowl, because Tech's opponent, the University of Pittsburgh, had a black fullback. The next governor, Ernest Vandiver, ran in 1958 on the slogan, "no, not one," meaning that no black child should attend a white school.

The white South, however, was not unanimous in its resentment of northern interference. The civil rights crusade coincided with dramatic economic change, and for the first time since the Civil War the region was making progress in catching up with the North. Some big city mayors and chambers of commerce, anxious to attract Fortune 500 companies, willingly yielded to civil rights demands to avoid bad publicity and northern animosity. In the late 1940s Mayor William B. Hartsfield coined the slogan that Atlanta was a city "too busy to hate." In his mind racial harmony and economic progress were linked together.

Bartley points out Georgia's paradoxical commitment to the past and the future, with politicians striving to improve public education and at the same time contemplating the system's abolition. In defiance of the Supreme Court, Talmadge persuaded Georgians to amend the state con-
stitution, authorizing the governor to close the public schools, if necessary, to prevent integration. Students would be given tuition vouchers to attend private schools, and public school property would be leased to private corporations. The General Assembly decreed that any school district attempting to desegregate on its own would lose all state funding. While the public schools never actually closed in Georgia, they spent over a decade in the crossfire between reactionaries and progressives.

The Local Response to Brown

As a growing county with many newcomers and young professionals, Cobb County reacted to the school crisis much like Atlanta. Political and education leaders were not happy with the Brown decision, but they were determined to keep the public schools open, even if the courts ordered integration. In the aftermath of the 1954 Supreme Court decision, Marietta schools superintendent Shuler Antley promised that he would "try to work out any and every problem as it comes up to the best advantage of everyone concerned." The county superintendent, W. Paul Sprayberry, simply urged the public to stay "calm, patient, and resolute," while elected officials worked to preserve the public school system. Representative Fred Bentley said that he "regretted" the Brown decision, but denounced Talmadge's attempt to privatize the public schools as a course that "would result in utter chaos."

In November 1954, when Georgia voters narrowly favored Governor Talmadge's anti-integration, private school amendment, Cobb County voted against it. Statewide the pro-amendment forces won by less than thirty thousand votes out of about four hundred thousand cast. Rural counties favored the amendment, but urban counties voted overwhelmingly in the negative. In Cobb County the amendment lost by about sixteen hundred votes, with rural and blue-collar precincts, such as Coxes and Clarkdale, voting for it, and city precincts such as Marietta, Acworth, and Austell voting against. In Marietta the amendment lost almost two to one. Representatives Raymond Reed and Fred Bentley immediately vowed "vigorous opposition" if the General Assembly tried to implement the amendment. On the other hand, Talmadge loyalist Harold Willingham took a wait-and-see attitude, speculating that the legislature would act only as a last resort.
As the years advanced and the schools remained segregated, African-Americans grew impatient with the lack of progress. In Atlanta several black parents, represented by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, brought a class action suit in January 1958 against the school board. Known as Calhoun v. Latimer, the case was heard the following year in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia. Bound by the Brown precedent, Judge Frank Hooper on 16 June 1959 found the Atlanta public schools to be unconstitutionally segregated. He gave the school board six months to submit a plan to rectify the situation. Rallying around a concept of “freedom of choice,” the school board in December 1959 proposed that students be allowed to transfer to any school in the system if they could pass a battery of tests to show they were qualified. In the first year eleventh and twelfth graders would be eligible, then in future years the younger students gradually would be included. Even after accepting the plan, however, Judge Hooper was slow to implement it.

Hooper recognized that Georgia law mandated the cessation of state funding to integrated schools. He, therefore, decided to give white Georgians time to accept the inevitability of change. Over the next year and a half, moderates devised a strategy to preserve the essence of segregation while permitting token integration. In 1960 a legislative committee, headed by John A. Sibley, recommended that the state back away from its threat to terminate funding and permit local school districts to decide themselves whether to desegregate. Meanwhile, Judge William A. (Gus) Bootle, in the federal case of Holmes and Hunter v. Danner, ordered the University of Georgia in January 1961 to accept two qualified black students. With the state in retreat, the first nine black students in September 1961 enrolled in previously all-white Atlanta public schools. Thus began the process of achieving full integration of Georgia’s public schools and colleges.

In the 1959-60 academic year Cobb County operated only three elementary schools and no high schools for black children. Named the Acworth Colored School, the Austell Colored School, and Rose Garden Hills (formerly the Smyrna Colored School), the facilities served approximately seven hundred students. At the time, the county operated twenty-five elementary and six high schools for about twenty-one thousand white pupils. Marietta operated two institutions for African-Americans. The Lemon Street Elementary School had 699 students and the Lemon Street High School 344, of which 115 resided outside the city and had
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The old Acworth Colored School, a Rosenwald school (Acworth Society for Historic Preservation)

The new Acworth Colored School, built in 1952 to replace Acworth's Rosenwald school building (named Roberts Elementary School in 1961) (Acworth Society for Historic Preservation)
their tuition paid by Cobb taxpayers. Marietta also operated eight white elementary schools with an enrollment of 3,300 and an all-white Marietta High with 1,150 scholars.50

As Atlanta moved toward token integration, the 150-member Marietta chapter of the NAACP wrote letters in January 1960, asking the Cobb and Marietta school systems to develop desegregation plans. The Rev. Jesse W. Cook, pastor of Zion Baptist Church, served as chairman of the executive committee and spokesman for the organization. The forty-year-old Texan had lived in the Atlanta area since the late 1940s, when he enrolled in Morehouse College. According to church member Hattie Wilson, Cook organized the NAACP chapter after becoming pastor at Zion. One of the accomplishments of the Marietta chapter was to persuade the school board to provide new books for Lemon Street students. In the past, new textbooks went only to white schools, while black students studied from worn and discarded volumes.31

Cook was joined in signing the January 1960 letter by chapter president J. L. Hutson and secretary Elsie Dinsmore. They noted that many black students wanted to attend all-white schools in their neighborhood, but were forced to travel some distance because of Georgia's segregation policies. For example, a number of African-American families lived near Allgood, Park Street, and West Side elementary schools. The local NAACP leaders argued that black teenagers outside Marietta would much prefer to attend county high schools near their homes than travel daily into Marietta.

Reverend Cook acknowledged that the local organization acted entirely on its own and that he had been contacted neither by the Atlanta chapter nor the national headquarters. The letters generated considerable press coverage throughout the state, but the Marietta and Cobb school systems largely ignored the request. The Marietta school board discussed the matter at a special meeting on 6 January 1960, but failed to issue a statement afterwards. In the regular meeting a week later the board turned the letter over to the pupil personnel committee, headed by A. D. McGaughey. The Cobb board sent its copy of the letter to a three-man study committee of H. E. Daniell, Harmon Pitzer, and Dr. W. C. Mitchell. However, the board made clear that the committee would not develop an integration plan and that Cobb would comply with all Georgia laws requiring segregation. Meanwhile, Representative Eugene Holcombe became the first Cobb legislator to support the Fulton and DeKalb delega-
tions in their efforts to pass a pupil placement (desegregation) law that would keep the public schools open.  

**Help Our Public Education (HOPE)**

In March 1960, John Sibley, the chairman of Georgia’s school study commission, began holding public hearings around the state. The first was in Americus on March 3. One week later he invited residents of the seventh congressional district to a meeting at the Bartow County courthouse. Frederick Allen argues that the blue-ribbon commission did not “seek advice or explore alternatives or even try to keep an open mind.” Rather, it tried to generate popular support for token integration as the price the white South had to pay to keep public schools in operation. Griffin Bell, a chief advisor to Governor Vandiver, thought up the idea of the commission as a way to help the governor back down from his “no, not one” campaign pledge. Bell chose the seventy-one-year-old Sibley to head the committee, because of his integrity, his reputation for tact, and his close ties to Atlanta’s business elite. A former general counsel to Coca-Cola and retired chairman of Trust Company of Georgia, Sibley operated a fourteen hundred acre farm near Sope Creek in east Cobb County. Like most of the inner circle around Coca-Cola’s Bob Woodruff, he favored segregation, but placed a higher priority on maintaining Atlanta’s national reputation as a progressive place, where blacks and whites got along together.

Sibley opened the Cartersville meeting by asserting that the commission was trying to determine “if there’s enough statesmanship in Georgia to save its public schools.” As participants rose to speak, the Atlanta businessman required them first to state whether they favored maintaining the status quo at the risk of seeing schools closed or doing whatever was necessary to keep schools open. Several Cobb residents spoke in favor of defending segregation at all costs, but a larger number wanted to save the public schools. For example, Dr. E. P. (Pete) Inglis maintained that physicians and dentists were “nearly unanimously” in favor of a local option plan, where each school district could decide for itself whether to desegregate, without fearing the loss of state funding. Cobb Chamber of Commerce president Campbell Dasher reported that his organization had conducted a poll of its members. Only thirty-three favored privatizing the schools to prevent integration, compared to 176
who championed either a local option or pupil placement plan. Attorney G. Conley Ingram, a future associate justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, spoke for the Marietta Rotary Club in favoring a pupil placement plan if the courts forced the schools to desegregate. Charles Laubacher reported that the Marietta Kiwanis Club was split down the middle between those favoring the local option plan and those wanting to maintain public segregated schools. None of the Kiwanians, however, favored closing the schools.

Representing Marietta’s Hickory Hills PTA, L. W. Lassiter said that 93 percent of the parents voted for the local option plan. Similarly, Earl Blound of the Kennesaw PTA reported his organization’s desire to “do all we can to keep [the schools] open.” Former and future Acworth mayor Mary McCall asked, “Have you ever been shut up with six school-age kids?” She argued that Georgia would lead the nation in juvenile delinquency if the schools closed. Frank M. Wilson of Marietta spoke for the statewide organization HOPE (Help Our Public Education). He said that he did not necessarily favor integration, but he stood for maintaining open schools. The most outspoken proponent of integration was the NAACP’s Rev. Jesse Cook who argued that segregated schools had been unequal for one hundred years and that the best way to improve education was by mixing the races.

On the other hand, O. D. Wilson complained that the Sibley approach of token desegregation would not work, because “the colored people want complete integration.” He claimed to represent seven hundred members of a newly formed group called the Cobb County White Citizens for Segregation. At least one prominent businessman, Bolan Glover, spoke for his workers who wanted to continue school segregation, with grants from the state to support private schools, if necessary. Two local African-Americans also spoke in favor of segregation. The operator of a teenage canteen, Willie Fred Reeves, advocated keeping the schools open, but favored “separate but equal facilities.” Clemon Harris supported the status quo, adding: “God bless the whites and the colored. I pity those who think one is better than the other.”

About a week later the Cobb County White Citizens for Segregation met in east Cobb County at Sedalia Park Elementary School. The organization extended invitations to local politicians, most of whom found excuses not to be present. The most prominent attendees were Sheriff Kermit Sanders and deputy commissioner Cliff White. Chaired by
C. E. Rainey, the group planned to visit area business owners to ask them to support segregation. If they did, the White Citizens for Segregation would give them a sticker to place in their store window with the message: "Trade at the Store with the 'S' on the Door." The group promised to do business exclusively at their establishments.56

The White Citizens ran full-page ads in the Marietta Daily Journal on 24 and 27 March 1960. They claimed to have grown during their eight-week history to a membership of one thousand. Arguing that their supporters included business owners and professionals, the White Citizens asserted that they existed solely "to stop the forces that are trying to mix the races in our schools, churches, theatres, and restaurants." They alleged a survey that showed two-thirds of Cobb's residents for complete segregation. In the same month several White Citizens joined robed Ku Klux Klansmen, who carried Confederate flags and a big cross, as they conducted a one hundred car rally through Cobb County in support of the merchants' boycott.37

Leiter's Department Store was one local business that received threats in the civil rights era. The Leiter family came to Marietta in 1946. Henry Leiter spent a few weeks as an inmate in the Dachau concentration camp in Germany during the late 1930s. Fortunately, his wife Lilo and his father-in-law had enough high-ranking connections to win his release. The Leiters fled Germany as soon as they could legally do so, settling in Columbus, Georgia, then Albany, before moving to Marietta. Their son Edward would later earn a Ph.D. in microbiology. In the late 1950s he was a high school rebel, publicly advocating integration and opposing any attempt to close the public schools. He also opposed Cobb County's prohibition laws. His controversial views provoked rabble-rousers into threatening retaliation. Shortly afterwards, the Leiters' insurance agent visited the store. Sitting down in the shoe department, he told Henry and Lilo Leiter that they needed to control Eddie, because the Klan was threatening to cause trouble. He pointed out that any act of violence against their home or store would cause insurance rates to rise. Eddie was more restrained after the warning, and there were no attacks on the Leiters' property.38

The actions of the Klan and of the White Citizens divided Cobb County. Their intolerant, violent tendencies offended moderates. Marietta resident Ruth Scarr Inglis wrote a strong letter to the editor, carried on the front page of the Daily Journal, against the proposed 1960 seg-
regationist boycott. The wife of a local physician and World War II veteran, Mrs. Inglis asked, “Is this America 1960, or Hitler Germany 1939?” She said she believed in free schools, the rights of all citizens, and compliance with federal laws. Denying that she was an integrationist, she nonetheless considered the boycott to be “evil and insidious,” because it threatened to “turn friend against friend, create strife and dissension, strike fear in the hearts of men, and stir deep antagonisms that will do irreparable damage.” The young mother called on Georgians to obey federal law, so that the public schools could stay open. She concluded by rejecting the White Citizens’ call to “stand up and be counted,” proposing instead that people “kneel down and be humble.”

Inglis’s views seemed to reflect those of Marietta’s business and professional leadership. Despite one correspondent who threatened to change doctors, most people told her they agreed with her position. Harriet Harris, the wife of Lockheed executive Lloyd Harris, wrote from Paris, France, where her husband had gone to sell Lockheed airplanes. Expressing astonishment at the vehemence of the protest, she exclaimed, “I am numb with shock. The ad [of the White Citizens] is – unspeakable, ineffable. Who do they think they are!??!! Can anyone force you to declare which political party you favor, or which church, or which tobacco?? Oh, this is terrible!! Those poor merchants – and the professionals too.” She was mortified that accounts of the Klan rally in Cobb County had appeared in the Paris newspaper France-Soir. After praising Ruth Inglis’ courage, Mrs. Harris offered the opinion that private schools could not educate everybody and that “educating only a few can’t work.”

Editor Robert Fowler seemed to speak for Cobb County’s political and business leadership in taking a stand between the advocates of civil rights and the apostles of total segregation. When the Marietta NAACP chapter asked the school boards to divulge whether they had desegregation plans, Fowler praised the educational leaders for following sound advice in “not being stampeded into any hasty actions.” The Marietta native questioned the motives of the local activists, arguing that their mildly worded letter engendered “harmful racial feelings” and doubting that they reflected the views of most African-Americans in Cobb County.

While Fowler distanced himself from the NAACP, he had even less use for the White Citizens for Segregation. He cited favorably a Ralph McGill column in the Atlanta Constitution arguing that the Klan parade through Cobb County undermined American policy by discrediting our
good name abroad. Suggesting that the boycott was "ill advised and totally unwarranted," the editor found it "difficult to conceive of any measure which could do more damage to the peaceful racial relations that Cobb has enjoyed." Both the NAACP and the Klan stood outside the local power structure, and those accustomed to running the county seemed to resent interference from either organization. If they were forced to accept token integration to keep the schools open, they would do so; but reform pressures had to come from faraway Washington, not from minority advocacy groups. By 1960 people in Cobb County were changing, but they still needed time to become reconciled to new ways of thinking. The integration of schools was a major achievement of the 1960s, but other changes took place that paralleled the accomplishments in civil rights. The next chapter will attempt to explain the efforts of the McCollum administration to continue building an infrastructure worthy of a modern, affluent, suburban county. County government in the late 1950s and early 1960s devoted its major attention to facilitating industrial and mercantile progress, accepting social change as a necessary price to keep schools open and the economy growing."
Start of the McCollum Administration

A septuagenarian, Rholie Ward decided in 1956 it was time to retire. His departure led to a hotly contested race in which Herbert C. McCollum defeated ex-commissioner George McMillan and former Smyrna mayor Hoot Gibson. McCollum’s name had never been on a ballot before, but he was hardly a political novice. His father once served as justice of the peace and city clerk in Smyrna. McCollum enlisted in the Army Air Corps in World War II, and then found a job as county clerk for Commissioner McMillan. Alice Heck and Herbert McCollum grew up in the same neighborhood; so after John Heck’s election in 1949, Herbert asked Alice to put in a good word for him to her husband. After talking to his wife, Commissioner Heck decided to retain McCollum in the clerk’s office. As part of the “courthouse gang,” McCollum gained a thorough education in practical politics. Nonetheless, his astuteness sometimes was suspect. As Heck was dying in 1953, McCollum, hoping to take his spot, managed to alienate both friends and enemies.
After a long hospitalization with heart trouble, Heck became extremely upset, when he heard that McCollum was politicking behind his back to be named interim commissioner, if the position became vacant. Alice Heck told her husband to fire McCollum, if he wanted to. She saw the county clerk's action as a "stab in the back." Before resolving the matter, the commissioner died. Rather than McCollum, the ordinary, John T. Dorsey, became ex-officio commissioner in the weeks between Heck's death and the election to fill the post. McCollum wanted to run in the special election, but Alice Heck's entry blocked his path. Mrs. Heck later
claimed that her husband's closest supporters asked her to run because they did not want McCollum. Neither did the reform faction that backed Rholie Ward. With power brokers such as Harold Willingham in Alice Heck's camp, McCollum had no choice but to support her candidacy. After Ward took office, one of his first actions was to fire McCollum, along with other members of the Heck regime.

McCollum took his removal with grace, viewing it as the inevitable consequence of losing an election. Years later, he remarked that Ward's action was not personal, but strictly political. "If you live by the sword, you die by the sword," he explained. "In politics if you have a political job, and the man goes out, then you should expect to go out with him. No. Mr. Ward and I, as long as he lived, were real friendly."

During the next three years, Herbert McCollum busily mended political fences, preparing for 1956. In the 1940s George McMillan was one of the most popular commissioners in the county's history. But by 1956 he had been out of office for eight years, and many new voters had arrived in Cobb in the interim. Hoot Gibson had a following in Smyrna, but was too eccentric for most people. The campaign strained the friendship between McCollum and McMillan, but they managed to remain on speaking terms. A few weeks before the election, when the former commissioner contracted pneumonia, McCollum visited him in the hospital. McCollum viewed his election as a call for younger leadership, not a repudiation of his old boss, who had been a progressive in his day. McCollum was forty-three when he took office. At the swearing in ceremony, Ward spoke briefly, urging the public to help McCollum "be a good commissioner," joining him in putting aside personal gain and working for the betterment of the county.

With the firm of (Raymond) Reed and (Conley) Ingram replacing Guy Roberts as county attorney, the McCollum administration began on 1 January 1957. Like his predecessors, McCollum successfully pushed road and water bond referenda to keep up with rapid population growth. The commissioner recalled that McMillan paved the main rural roads, "then another batch was paved under John Heck. I wound up with another batch" of several hundred miles of roads, and Ernest Barrett paved the rest. Prior to a million dollar bond election on 13 August 1957, the advisory board announced where the money would be spent, promising to pave such secondary roads as Blue Springs, Moon Station, Milford Church, Paper Mill, Blackwell, Ebenezer, Pebble Brook, Little Willeo, Bob Cox,
Paul Samuel, and Bert Adams roads. By late 1959 about seven hundred miles of Cobb County roads had been paved, compared to only about two hundred at the beginning of the decade. The county economized by spreading the asphalt as far as possible so that more miles could be paved. Raymond Reed described the road surfaces as no thicker than a rabbit skin, so that a farmer would occasionally come down to the courthouse and ask for “one of them rabbit skin roads.” It was cheaper to pave the old roadbeds than to try to straighten out sharp curves. So many of the roads would have to be improved again when the county had more money.

The Cobb County Airport

McCollum and his assistant, Joe A. Sandmann, were responsible for a major transportation improvement, when they succeeded in bringing a new airport to Cobb County. In 1941 Marietta and the county had built Rickenbacker Field as a commercial airport. But after Bell Aircraft and the Army Air Corps took over, the runways were off limits to commercial flights. In the 1950s private pilots had use of two small airfields: Parkaire Field (on the future site of Parkaire Mall) in east Cobb and South Cobb Airport on Austell Road. Local people considered them to be too small and too far from the county’s population centers. Of the fifteen largest counties in Georgia, only Cobb lacked a municipal airport. Airports were critical to economic growth. With the Atlanta airport overcrowded, Fulton and DeKalb counties established airports in the mid-1950s for private planes, including corporate aircraft. Cobb officeholders and Chamber officials viewed a local airport as something to attract businesses that wanted to be near Atlanta without being inside the city limits.

On 23 May 1958 the county government created an airport advisory committee, chaired by Sandmann and including Lloyd W. Harris and Dr. Archie S. Rushton. Harris was the chief pilot for Lockheed and the son of a former publisher for the Marietta Daily Journal. Rushton was director of the Marietta Center of the University of Georgia. One of the committee’s mandates was to research possible federal funding for airport construction.

Later in the year the county chose a 170-acre Kennesaw site on Old U.S. 41, close to the Four Lane Highway. Two decades earlier Lloyd Harris’s father, W. L. Harris, had advocated the construction of an airport
on the same location. Despite neighborhood opposition, the planning commission and advisory board approved a rezoning from Residential-1 to Residential, as required for airport construction. Several landowners, represented by attorney Claud Hicks, appealed to Cobb Superior Court, but in February 1959 Judge James T. Manning upheld the advisory board’s ruling. In June the Georgia Supreme Court confirmed Manning’s decision, opening the way for the airport’s construction.3

For well over a year McCollum and the advisory committee worked to find funding for the project. In January 1958 the commissioner visited Herbert G. Spencer, the Atlanta district airport engineer for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Spencer told him that an airport could not be built, because the county had been left off the national airport plan approved by Congress. Spencer did not like the Kennesaw location because it was near a rock quarry. He feared that granite was too close to the surface, making site preparation costly. Fortunately, McCollum had friends in Washington, notably U.S. Senator Herman Talmadge and the seventh district congressman, Erwin Mitchell. McCollum asked them to help Cobb County gain a sizable federal grant to pay about half the cost of airport construction. In 1959 Talmadge and Mitchell succeeded in putting the funds in the federal budget and placing the county on the national airport plan. In November 1959 Representative Mitchell made the official announcement that Cobb would receive $158,500 of FAA matching funds. By this time the county airport officially became known as McCollum Field, in honor of the commissioner’s vision and hard work.6

With the federal hurdles cleared, the county went to work to build the new field. On 1 December 1959 the advisory board authorized an expenditure of $43,260 to enable the county to qualify for federal assistance. The next month the board appointed Joe Sandmann as the salaried airport construction manager. The costs of construction proved less than originally anticipated. The county purchased the property for $124,000, with half that amount provided by the FAA. Marietta-based C. W. Matthews Company7 gave a $157,495 bid for site preparation, about a third of what the county expected. Again, the county and federal government split the bill. The county committed tax revenues and convict labor to pave the access road to the site.8

On a hot summer Sunday, just eleven days before the Democratic primary, the commissioner, a candidate for reelection, orchestrated the grand opening of Cobb County Airport, McCollum Field. With
McCollum Field, Cobb County Airport (McCollum interview, Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Kennesaw State University)
approximately thirty-five hundred persons in attendance, Senator Talmadge made the main address. Actress Susan Heyward appeared, as did former Miss Cobb and Miss Georgia, Jeanette Ardell Young, who made her first solo flight. The senator mentioned that Herbert McCollum had come to him over two years earlier to seek federal funding. He praised the county for its progress in moving so smoothly from agriculture to industry.  

The county chose Southeast Automotive, Inc., as the first fixed base operator (FBO) to sell fuel, take care of maintenance, operate passenger and pilot lounges, and maintain airport records. Later renamed Air Activities, Inc., the company gradually took on greater functions, handling aircraft storage and sales and maintaining flight and ground schools. As a full service FBO, Air Activities paid an initial rent to the county of at least $150 a month, depending on the volume of business, and two cents a gallon on all fuel sales. Within a year thirty-eight aircraft were based at the airport. From this small beginning, the airport expanded by the end of the century to two full service FBOs, four flight schools, and over three hundred aircraft based at the site.
Construction of a New Courthouse

While McCollum was responsible for a number of progressive reforms, he sometimes achieved his ends by ethically questionable means. Two major examples are the creation of a county-owned recreation club and the construction of a new courthouse. These projects generated much cynicism and anger and caused many residents to lose confidence in the commissioner's leadership abilities. McCollum did not promise a new courthouse in his 1956 campaign, but he came into office realizing that the old building was in "sorry shape." Judges, lawyers, and ordinary citizens often complained that it was too old and too small. Just before taking office the commissioner-elect called on taxpayers to take, as a first step, the construction of a judicial building and five-story parking garage along Waddell Street directly behind the old courthouse.

All four Cobb legislators (Willingham, Reed, Holcombe, and Bentley) endorsed the idea. Senator Fred Bentley said: "I think everyone is aware of the present courthouse's shortcomings. Since it was built 84 years ago the population has increased eightfold so that it does not meet the needs of a modern, progressive, and growing county." Raymond Reed added: "Consolidation of the various county units in one new building would result in much greater efficiency." McCollum's case seemed strengthened when loose bricks started falling from the clock tower onto the pavement below. Citing the threat to public safety, county building inspector Frank C. Goss recommended taking down the tower. McCollum received pleas from a few long-time Mariettans to save the landmark tower, but he concluded it was beyond repair.

McCollum's proposal for a judicial building encountered its first serious obstacle when the city of Marietta announced other plans for the area behind the courthouse. Mayor C. W. Bramlett and city planner Dick Forbes wanted to reserve this valuable property for commercial expansion and parking. They favored the development of a large city-county complex just to the northeast on 8.5 acres bound by Lawrence, Cole, Lemon, and Waddell streets. Early in 1957 the city called a referendum to consider issuing $850,000 of bonds to construct at this location a civic center complex, beginning with new police and fire facilities. Bramlett and Forbes hoped that the county would build a new courthouse adjacent to the city complex, but McCollum and the advisory board complained that the city was too late in making its intentions known. The county had
already purchased nine-tenths of the land for its courthouse expansion, and did not want to have to sell it and move north of what McCollum considered “the exact geographical” center of the county.13

Marietta held its bond referendum on 8 July 1957, while Cobb voted on a two million dollar courthouse plan on 6 August. The former passed easily, but the latter went down to overwhelming defeat. In a public meeting in July former commissioners George McMillan and Rholie Ward and future Superior Court judge Howell Ravan urged voters to reject the McCollum plan. They argued, “The entire project smacks of poor planning, favoritism, lack of leadership and failure to inform the voters in a business-like manner on how the $2 million would be spent.” Ravan complained of the lack of specific details, asking whether anyone would go to a bank with no more than a sketch of a new house and ask the loan officer for a large amount of money. He argued that the current courthouse could be supplemented by an annex built behind it for a quarter the amount that the advisory board was asking. McMillan criticized the lack of architectural drawings, asserting, “If I go to a pig sale, I want them to take the pig out of the poke. I might buy a sow with seven pigs I have to feed.”

Commissioner McCollum defended his call for a new courthouse by arguing that he was responding to the recommendations of ten grand juries during the past two years. He cited the desire of the Marietta Downtown Merchants Association to keep the courthouse near the Square. Nonetheless, every militia district in the county, except tiny Vinings, voted against his plan. In post-election analysis, commentators blamed the defeat on lack of confidence in McCollum’s leadership and the large amount of money involved. A contributing factor was a strike by the International Association of Machinists against the Lockheed Corporation. Judge James T. Manning had recently issued an injunction against certain picketing activities, and union members said they did not want to give the judge a fancy new courtroom to sit in.14

The Marietta project moved more slowly than Mayor Bramlett desired. It took some time to persuade property owners to sell their land at a reasonable price. Nonetheless, the city gradually acquired properties along Lawrence and Haynes Streets, and the groundbreaking for modern fire and police buildings occurred on 10 December 1959, just before Bramlett left office. The architects were Richard Nash for the fire station and William Tapp for the police headquarters and jail.
Edward Daugherty drew up a master plan for the entire complex, including the future city hall. At the groundbreaking ceremony Mayor Bramlett noted with satisfaction the development of a long-range plan centering city governmental functions in one location.15

Herbert McCollum kept trying to gain public approval for a modern courthouse, but the electorate clearly was not interested. In 1964 another bond referendum lost. Determined to proceed anyway, he asked county attorney Raymond Reed to research the possibility of paying for new buildings out of the general revenues. Since he had decided not to run for a third term, McCollum felt free to pursue an unpopular course. After checking with the state attorney general, Reed concluded that the commissioner could do as he pleased, if he had the tax monies to pay for it. So McCollum resolved to take the funds out of general revenues, using convict-labor to cut costs. He reasoned that his successors would have to complete the project, if he started it.16

As soon as McCollum announced his plans, his outraged critics began a petition campaign to have him recalled and sued the county in
a vain effort to stop him. Nonetheless, a large part of the law enforce-
ment and legal fraternities felt a need for better facilities. Arguing that
the courthouse was crumbling and the jail a threat to human life, the
Cobb County Times warned, if construction should be halted, "the blame
for a courthouse or jail disaster would rest on the shoulders of those who
were behind the [recall] movement." The project begun by McCollum
would be completed by his successor, Ernest Barrett. McCollum consid­
ered the modern courthouse complex one of his top achievements and
basked in the praise of downtown businessmen who gave him credit for
keeping the courthouse on the Square.17

The Recreation Authority and the
Pinetree Scandal

Herbert McCollum was committed to expanding county recreation
facilities, but his project became mired in controversy. In a 4 January
1957 speech to the Marietta Rotary Club, the commissioner disclosed
that he had set up a Cities and County Recreation Board to study and
make recommendations on future park development. His first priority
was the construction of an eighteen-hole golf course. On 9 April 1957
the recreation board recommended the Cheney property on Powder
Springs Road as the site for a golf course and clubhouse. The ante-bel­
lum Andrew J. Cheney house was located about a mile south of
Macland Road, halfway between Marietta and Powder Springs.
According to board member and Cobb County Times sports editor,
Horace Crowe, this site had been under consideration since 1955, when
Marietta Mayor C. W. Bramlett had appointed a three-person commit­
tee to find a location for a municipal golf course. The Marietta group
entered into negotiations with the property owner, John H. Mozley of
Marietta, who seemed willing to donate the land in exchange for the
right to develop a housing subdivision around the site.

The proposal fell through almost as soon as it became public. On
2 July 1957 Mozley sent a letter to Commissioner McCollum expressing
his willingness to give the county 160 to 180 acres for a golf course, an
Olympic-sized swimming pool, a clubhouse, and tennis courts. In return
he wanted the county to pave the streets and run the water and gas lines
needed to develop a subdivision on the rest of the 398-acre tract. Mozley's biggest demand was that he wanted the property to revert to him or his heirs if the county failed to maintain it for recreational purposes at anytime in the next twenty years. McCollum and the advisory board did not like the reversion clause and rejected the offer.18

In the next General Assembly the Cobb delegation, with McCollum's blessings, created a more powerful recreation authority. The united delegation included county attorney Raymond Reed, former county attorney Harold Willingham, Representative Gene Holcombe, and Senator Fred Bentley. They worked so quickly that the enabling legislation for the recreation authority was the first act from the 1958 term signed into law by Governor Marvin Griffin. Written by Willingham, the new law was modeled after the Cobb-Marietta Water Authority and permitted the board to borrow money for recreational improvements.

The seven-member body began functioning on 15 March 1958, with the county government and the six municipalities making one appointment each. The authority elected its own chairman, Lockheed executive and Marietta city councilman J. Tom Burdett. The other charter members were Horace W. Crowe, Jr. (appointed by the advisory board), architect William R. Tapp, Jr. (Powder Springs), Harry M. Mitchell, Jr. (Smyrna), Robert A. Bozeman (Kennesaw), Thomas D. Kennedy (Acworth), and Dewitt T. Alexander, Jr. (Austell).19 The authority's mandate was to acquire, build, and operate a recreation center or centers, including, but not limited to, playgrounds, parks, swimming pools, lakes, golf courses, tennis courts, athletic fields, clubhouses, and gymnasiums.20

During the next half year the authority turned its attention to a north Cobb site. Even while the previous board investigated the Mozley property, county officials had their eyes on a large tract off Shiloh and Chalker roads near Kennesaw. In October 1957 the county bought that 275-acre tract from Kennesaw real estate developer Bob Bozeman and several of his partners. Thirteen months later McCollum and the advisory board agreed to sell the land to the recreation authority.21 At the time, they thought that this would be sufficient property for a recreation center. The authority issued one million dollars of revenue bonds to pay for the land purchase and facility improvements. Just before Christmas 1958, Cobb financier Lex Jolly, representing Robinson-Humphrey, delivered
the million-dollar check to Bob Bozeman, the new chairman following
the transfer of Tom Burdett to Lockheed's California office. Authority
attorney Harold Willingham claimed that he and the county had spent
eighteen months working out the details of the financing plan.

The county advisory board chose O. C. Hubert, Charles C.
Wilson, and Earl G. Medford as appraisers to determine a reasonable
purchase price for the 275 acres. Since the only structures on the prop­
erty were several worthless tenant houses, these veteran real estate
appraisers estimated a market value of fifty-seven thousand dollars.

Over the next several months, the authority decided it wanted addi­
tional lands for the county recreation center and purchased several
other tracts, the largest belonging to former Marietta grocer Steve Frey
and his children.

When the Freys moved to their 321-acre farm just after World
War II, the area lacked paved roads or other utilities and the population
of that part of the county was sparse. Steve Frey's son John recalled that
his first trip to the farm in 1946 took so long that he thought he was
going to Chattanooga. He had trouble understanding why his father
wanted to move so far out of Marietta. John bought a jeep to navigate
the poor roads. When his father's new pickup truck got stuck in the
numerous mud holes on Big Shanty and Chastain roads, John used his
jeep to pull it out. On the east side of the property, where Kennesaw
State University is now located, a sharecropper worked on halves, grow­
ing about twenty bales of cotton and a large quantity of butterbeans,
peas, turnip greens, and squash. Among their various business enter­
prises, the Freys operated a cotton gin in Kennesaw, the last in the
county when it closed in 1958.

By the time that the recreation authority grew interested, Frey
had divided the land into four equal parts, one for each of his three chil­
dren and one for himself. Bordered to the south by Chastain Road, the
estate ran westward from a short distance east of Frey Road to just
beyond the future Pinetree clubhouse. On 28 February 1959 the two
generations of Freys sold for seventy thousand dollars Frey Lake and the
lands where the county would build a swimming pool, clubhouse, driv­
ing range, and several holes of the golf course. The authority agreed to
divide into residential lots another 125 acres of Frey lands, splitting the
profits fifty-fifty with the family when the lots were sold.

The groundbreaking for the new clubhouse occurred on 9 May
1959. Designed by Marietta architect Cleveland Cail, the modern structure was built on a knoll near the center of the park. Charles (Chic) Adams designed the golf course in conformity with Professional Golfers Association standards. Adjacent to the clubhouse the county constructed an Olympic-sized swimming pool and a wading pool. On the nearby, twenty-two-acre Bozeman Lake the recreation authority planned boat docks and picnic facilities.27

Later in 1959 Harold Willingham, the attorney for the authority and the city of Kennesaw, worked out a deal to provide water and sewerage for the clubhouse and the new homes to be built around the golf course. Kennesaw was in the process of building a modern sewerage system with a $150,000 federal grant and $750,000 of sewerage revenue bonds. The county lent the city another $90,000 for the installation of sewerage collection lines to the recreation center. The recreation authority agreed to pay the county $1,750 a month for water and sewerage plus the cost of water consumed at the recreation park.28

From Willingham's perspective, the project was a good deal for the people of Cobb County. The county bought the property at fair market prices, the state paid for road paving, and the Rural Electrification Administration put in streetlights, the only "white way" the REA ever constructed. A little over a year after the groundbreaking, the clubhouse and swimming pool opened to the public with an enthusiastic crowd of more than ten thousand attending the first day's ceremonies. The public golf course became available in October 1960, when golf celebrities Arnold Palmer and Sammy Snead appeared for the dedication.29

By then, however, the project had become a divisive issue in the 1960 election. Commissioner McCollum ran for reelection against former agricultural extension agent John H. "Boll Weevil" Henderson, who ran full-page newspaper advertisements of a cancelled check, signed by McCollum, that took money from the road bond sinking fund to finance the recreation center. Henderson saw the use of the sinking fund as evidence that the commissioner had violated his pledge not to obligate the taxpayers directly or indirectly for the Pinetree project. Henderson feared that the public facility was not self-supporting and would require tax money to be completed. He pointed out that the authority was able to sell bonds only after the county pledged a rent payment of $69,500 a year through 1987.30

McCollum and the recreation authority strenuously denied these
charges. They pointed out that the road bond sinking fund was used to pay bills only because the recreation center was not yet making money. When the golf course opened and lots around the golf course were sold, the road bond fund would be replenished. Attorney Willingham maintained that the expensive homes that would be built on residential lots would generate thousands of dollars in tax revenues annually and more than repay county expenditures. Nonetheless, the dispute over the county's obligation contributed to the closeness of the balloting. With some 73 percent of registered voters participating in the Democratic primary, McCollum prevailed by less than six hundred votes (11,821 to 11,235).31

Public anger reached a peak two years later when the recreation authority, without public notice, sold everything to private investors. According to Harold Willingham, federal court decisions opening public facilities to African-Americans doomed the recreation center. In 1956 the U.S. Supreme Court had ordered the integration of Atlanta's public golf courses. It was only a matter of time until someone sued Cobb County for equal access. Willingham alleged that the county "couldn't sell high-priced lots if just anybody could chase golf balls around your yard.... The court decisions kind of threw a monkey wrench into our plans. The county was going to have to operate the whole facility at a substantial loss, since we couldn't sell the lots like we planned. So we decided to sell the whole thing."32

Recreation authority member William R. Tapp, Jr., cast the lone vote against Willingham's plan to unload the center, but even Tapp agreed that residential lot sales had suffered from the fears of prospective buyers that blacks would try to "get into the recreation center and use the pool and all that. That was before it was popular for that to happen." Tapp frequently dissented when the board's actions seemed "political or self-serving." In this case he put his objections in a memorandum to fellow authority members, dated 6 November 1962. Tapp argued that the county would lose money in selling the property, while adjacent property holders were guaranteed a profit. The respected architect conceded that the county had a contractual obligation to protect the interests of the Freys and one other property owner, P. B. Latimer. But he saw no reason why adjacent property owners should be favored. In his letter, Tapp did not criticize anyone by name, because he could not prove at the time that Willingham and authority chairman Bob Bozeman, the deal negotiators, were profiting personally from the sale. Having insist-
ed that they record his "no" votes in the minutes, Tapp became the only authority member excused from testifying before a Cobb County grand jury, when charges of corruption surfaced.  

Willingham maintained that the county privatized the property through just two deals with Pinetree Corporation of Atlanta—one for the developable lots, the other for the golf course, clubhouse, and swimming pool. For the recreation facilities Pinetree Corporation put nothing down, merely assuming the county’s one million dollar, thirty-year bonds at the excellent rate of 5 percent interest. The investors immediately converted the developed facilities into the private Pinetree Country Club. For the building lots the corporation made a down payment to the county of $260,000 and agreed eventually to pay a total of $435,000. In addition, Pinetree paid $80,000 to the Frey family for the 125 acres of their property destined for residential development; $100,000 to Cobb Developers, Inc. for several tracts; and $16,500 to R. D. Ayers for 16.5 acres.  

Willingham claimed that the county came out ahead in the deal; but a 1963 grand jury, an Atlanta investigative reporter, and numerous citizens believed otherwise. Marietta attorney Fred Bentley compared the Pinetree affair to the "Yazoo fraud," calling it "the worst boondoggle that Cobb County ever had." Atlanta Journal reporter John Pennington expressed concern that the state had contributed $156,000 for street paving and the county $645,000 for the center’s development and operation, yet the taxpayers would no longer be able to use the golf course or swimming pool. The Cobb County grand jury expressed alarm at the extent of Willingham and Bozeman’s involvement in private real estate purchases in the recreation area. They were partners in Cobb Developers, Inc., chartered in 1959 and headed by a Willingham associate, J. Douglas Henderson, who also performed a title search for Pinetree Corporation as part of the package deal.  

Cobb Developers existed for the sole purpose of buying and selling land adjacent to the recreation center. On the day of the package deal, 15 November 1962, Cobb Developers made a thirty-seven thousand dollar profit. Afterward, they gave up their charter and ceased to do business. Willingham made additional income from the fact that he had recently owned the tract that R. D. Ayers sold to Pinetree. The attorney bought the land originally for eight thousand dollars. He sold it to Ayers for fifteen thousand, and then Ayers sold it to Pinetree for
$16,500. Willingham also benefited from a decision of the authority in July 1959 to extend Timber Lake Drive through a fifteen-acre tract that he had purchased the previous month from G. R. Davis.16

One of the grand jury members was Howard Ector, a former football star at Georgia Tech and Trust Company of Georgia executive. As Marietta’s representative since 1961 on the Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority, Ector had become increasingly critical of Willingham’s role as attorney. Relying on an outside audit by Arthur Anderson and Company, Ector argued that the attorney had exercised too much power, handling all receipts and disbursements, keeping the books, and belonging to the firm that had conducted the audits in the past. Ector denounced as “ridiculous” the water authority’s willingness to pay Willingham 1 percent of gross revenues as his fee. Over an eleven-year period Willingham had collected about seventy-five thousand dollars. In October 1962 Ector and fellow board member Campbell Dasher forced Willingham to resign, after the attorney was caught in a conflict of interest when he tried to represent the city of Woodstock, a water customer, in a dispute against the water authority.

Ector believed that the integration issue was just a subterfuge to hide Willingham’s real goal of making a profit at the county’s expense. The civic leader asserted, “Harold had more ability and more brains and more know-how than anybody I’ve ever known, but I’m sorry to say I don’t think he used them for the best interests of the county.” On the grand jury Ector helped author a report which concluded: “While no criminal statute has been violated, it is the forceful opinion of the Grand Jury that the intent of the law has been twisted and circumvented in violation of all reasonable moral conduct in these transactions. There has been ample evidence presented to this committee that members and employees, while acting in behalf of the CCRA [Cobb County Recreation Authority], profited personally from the sale of their interest in Cobb Developers, Inc., while at the same time the interests of the people of Cobb County were not given the same consideration.”17

Willingham fought back with a personal attack on Ector, charging that the businessman had always been his enemy and had opposed him in all eight of his legislative campaigns, even serving as campaign manager for his 1954 opponent. He argued that Ector was biased and not capable of a fair judgment. For decades Willingham remained angry over the grand jury report, asserting that political enemies and “do-
gooders” were out to get him even though he “hadn’t done anything wrong.” According to Willingham: “Phil Malonson [the grand jury foreman] was the ring leader of the ones that tried to indict me. He was exactly like his partner, Campbell Dasher—nothing but a mouth and a back end. Anyway, Mr. Malonson—I don’t know where he’s from, [but] not around here with that name. Probably up north somewhere, Massachusetts.” Despite Willingham’s strong words, Ector and the other critics conceded that the attorney deserved much credit for the growth of modern Cobb County. What they found offensive was his tendency to put private interests above the public good. Willingham obviously believed that he had a right to take a profit for himself when he was doing so much to increase the wealth of the county. But that tendency has kept him from being ranked in the upper tier of great leaders of twentieth-century Cobb County.

The Pinetree fiasco damaged McCollum’s reputation as well as Willingham’s. By this time a growing number of Cobb countians were sick of the favoritism and corruption that seemed endemic in the one-man commission system. They wanted it replaced with something more responsive to the people. Major change came in 1964 when the voters approved a five-commissioner system. The first commission chairman, Ernest Barrett, took the lead in replacing the old recreation authority with a recreation board of less power but larger vision. Despite the shortcomings of the chummy group that ran the county in the 1950s and early 1960s, they had some remarkable achievements. Perhaps nowhere were they more effective than in bringing higher education to Cobb. That story is the subject of the next chapter.
Creation of Colleges and an Elected County School Board

Origins of Southern Technical Institute

By 1960 Cobb, with a population of 114,174, was the seventh largest county in Georgia and the biggest county that lacked a public or private college. In 1951 the University of Georgia had established an off-campus Marietta Center, one of ten around the state. But local leaders wanted more than a branch campus that lacked its own identity. One option was to convert the Marietta Center into a junior college, making it a separate unit of the University System of Georgia. An attractive alternative was to take advantage of Lockheed-Georgia's presence by building an engineering technology school. In the late 1950s Commissioner Herbert McCollum, the Cobb legislative delegation, and the Marietta Kiwanis Club set to work to bring to the area a liberal arts college, a technical institute, or both.

When the University of Georgia opened the Marietta Center in 1951, Shuler Antley, the superintendent of Marietta public schools, offered office and classroom space at Marietta High School. In the beginning the center had a full-time staff of five and offered only night courses. In 1957 the UGA branch began offering day classes in four designated
classrooms at Banberry School, east of the Four Lane Highway, after popu-
lation shifts inside the city freed up that much space. With four hundred
students by 1958, the Marietta Center obtained additional rooms at Pine
Forest Elementary School.1

In 1957 Dr. Archie S. Rushton, the director of the Marietta Center,
got before the Marietta Kiwanis Club’s Public and Business Affairs
Committee and pled his case for better facilities. This powerful civic com-
mittee was chaired by newspaperman Bill Kinney and included such dis-
tinguished local leaders as Representative Harold Willingham, Lockheed
general manager Carl Kotchian, Judge James T. Manning, John King,
Emmett Hobbs, Bill Hardy, and Claud Hicks. The Kiwanians made an
appointment with Commissioner McCollum and gained his enthusiastic
support. The county advisory board had already decided to sell the old
almshouse on Fairground Street. In October 1957 the county offered the
eight-acre site to the Marietta Center. The commissioner noted that forty
acres of county-owned land behind the almshouse were available for future
expansion.2

The committee next contacted architect Bill Tapp to design the
site. With his architectural drawings in hand, a local delegation of legisla-
tors, Kiwanians, and McCollum went to see the governor. In October
1957 Governor Marvin Griffin supported their plan in principle, claiming
that it fit his vision of more junior colleges. The governor, however, did
not commit any money at this time. One of the Public and Business Affairs
committee members, John King, was Governor Griffin’s personal pilot.
Several months later, during a monthly committee meeting at his home,
he told his fellow Kiwanians, “I know how we can get our off-campus cen-
ter housing here, if you boys will just handle yourselves right. You won’t
believe what all [Governor Griffin] is offering the boys upstairs to vote for
[his rural roads] bill! He’ll call [Willingham and the other representatives]
down in a day or two, and you just trade with him for our project.”

Shortly afterward, the governor invited to his office Willingham,
Raymond Reed, and Gene Holcombe, Cobb’s three lower-house represen-
tatives. Griffin told them that he needed their support for his roads bill.
Willingham said, “Governor, we aren’t much for it. We don’t need none
of those rural roads up there in Cobb County.” Griffin responded, “Who
said I’m going to build them where they’re needed?” The Cobb leaders
reminded the governor that he had not yet delivered on his promised off-
campus facility. When Griffin asked how much the center needed,
Willingham said eight hundred thousand dollars. The chief executive went into a rage, stomping, kicking his desk, and climbing on top. As the shocked local delegation started retreating, Willingham cut the figure to six hundred thousand. The governor then sat down and said, "Well, that's a lot better.... If you all will vote for my rural roads bill, I'll build your off-campus center, and transfer the money for same to the Board of Regents immediately." As they left, Griffin shouted that two hundred thousand dollars a legislator was "a damned sight more than I'm used to paying for legislative votes, but I've got to have the bill."

Governor Griffin was willing to bargain so generously because his fifty million dollar road bill faced strong opposition from Lt. Governor Ernest Vandiver, the Atlanta newspapers, and most urban legislators, including Cobb's lone senator, Fred Bentley. In 1958 Griffin was nearing the end of his term, and Vandiver had already emerged as heir apparent. The future governor denounced the bill as "pork-barrel" legislation that would force a tax increase. According to Willingham, fellow legislator Raymond Reed, hearing strong criticism from constituents, almost voted against it. Fearing a possible defection, Willingham called Herbert McCollum, who phoned county attorney Reed, summoning him off the House floor. When the Smyrna legislator returned about ten minutes later, he exclaimed, "Ya'll know what? I can vote for that rural road bill. I didn't quite understand it, [but] Herbert McCollum just explained it to me, and we'll be all right." Despite the support of the three Cobb countians, the bill went down to defeat, 106-95. Local citizens would not have to pay for somebody else's roads.4

Historians Kenneth Coleman and Charles Stephen Gurr describe the Griffin administration as one "marred by corruption in the Highway Department and the Purchasing Department" with several henchmen convicted of graft. Griffin biographer Robert W. Dubay concludes that Griffin had many progressive accomplishments, including the paving of twelve thousand miles of roads, but criticizes the overuse of a special governor's contingency fund for special initiatives, such as the proposed Marietta Center project. In 1960 the Georgia attorney general sought to indict Griffin for receiving kickbacks from contractors in exchange for rigged bids on state purchases. While the grand jury failed to indict, enough evidence became public to sully the ex-governor's reputation. Dubay calls Griffin's term of office "one of the most corrupt, amoral, mismanaged, and inefficient administrations in Georgia history."
Despite his flaws, Griffin kept his word to Cobb’s legislators, although he switched the funds from the off-campus center to another educational project. A few days after the vote, Willingham received an invitation from Freeman Strickland, the vice-chairman of the Board of Regents. At a Capitol Club luncheon in downtown Atlanta, Strickland related the university system’s fear that all the other branch centers would lobby for new buildings if Marietta received one. Instead, the board wanted to move Southern Technical Institute (STI) to Cobb County. In a 20 March 1958 address to the Marietta Kiwanis Club, Governor Griffin announced that the promised six hundred thousand dollars would be used to bring Southern Tech to Marietta.6

Since 1948 Southern Tech had offered classes in World War II military barracks at the Atlanta Naval Air Station in Chamblee. The state created the two-year school to train engineering technicians to translate plans of research and design engineers into practical instructions for assembly line workers. Under the supervision of Georgia Tech, STI filled a vital niche in Georgia’s booming, postwar industrial economy. Unfortunately, the old barracks were not designed to handle the weight of numerous students and heavy shop and lab equipment. As maintenance costs rose, director Lawrence V. Johnson began seeking a new campus. When the DeKalb County government seemed reluctant to provide an upgraded facility, Johnson and the chancellor of the university system began looking elsewhere.7

In April 1958 a delegation of regents visited Cobb to examine three possible locations. During lunch at the Marietta Country Club, Vice-Chairman Strickland expressed a preference for property on the south side of Clay Street close to the Four Lane and only about a mile from the Lockheed plant, where many Southern Tech students were likely to co-op and eventually find employment. Strickland promised: “You get us that site, and we’ll just move [Southern Tech] up here as soon as possible.”8

Commissioner McCollum and the advisory board immediately went to work to acquire the ninety-three acre tract. The Marietta Housing Authority already had an option to buy it for $150,000 from Mrs. Grace B. Housely and William Augustus Housely. The authority, however, had a greater interest in owning nearby Marietta Place, where temporary housing units had been constructed in the 1940s for Bell Aircraft workers. The county owned the property and leased it to the city for public housing. On 6 May 1958 the county and the Marietta Housing Authority swapped real
Creation of Colleges and an Elected County School Board

estate, with the former receiving the Housely property and the latter all of Marietta Place except a ballpark (Heck Field). With the completion of this deal, McCollum offered the campus free of charge to the Board of Regents. 9

Realizing they were about to lose their college, the DeKalb County government put together a 108-page brochure, explaining why the regents should leave the campus near Chamblee. But the officials failed to make a concrete offer. Before the May 1958 board meeting, Willingham, McCollum, and Kiwanis committee chairman Bill Kinney drew up an eight-page statement telling specifically what Cobb would offer. The regents were impressed, but deferred to a DeKalb request to delay action for one month. Afraid they might be outbid, the Cobb legislative delegation, along with Lockheed general manager Kotchian, went back to Governor Griffin and persuaded him to give Cobb more money. In a generous mood, the governor released to the university system two million dollars from his contingency fund with the provision that the revenues could only be spent to build a campus for Southern Tech in Cobb County.

Cobb’s leaders thought that they had done all the chancellor’s staff expected. A short while later, however, J. Hubert Dewberry, the university system’s director of plant and business operations, announced that Governor Griffin’s two-million-dollar grant would barely cover the cost of classroom and administrative buildings. Cobb would have to put in utilities and roads, or else there would be no campus. Willingham called a courthouse meeting of local leaders, in which the Marietta and Cobb County governments agreed to divide about one hundred thousand dollars of work. The county graded and paved the streets and parking lots. Marietta provided curbs and sidewalks.

The Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority put in water lines, and the Marietta Board of Lights and Water provided electricity and sewerage. Finally, the Marietta Housing Authority agreed to furnish dormitory rooms. The last was crucial for a unique institution that would draw students from throughout the South. Hubert Dewberry argued that there were no state funds to build dormitories, and without such facilities Southern Tech could not be relocated to Marietta.10 With the complete plan in place, Representative Willingham sent Dewberry a detailed letter, which became the “bible” for all future college development. According to the innovative attorney, “The regents found out that they could charge for what they had been giving away. From then on, the elected local govern-
On 5 June 1958 a Board of Regents sub-committee met with Georgia Tech President Edwin D. Harrison, to whom the STI administration reported. With Harrison’s blessings, the sub-committee recommended Cobb County. On 11 June 1958 the full board voted unanimously to move the technical school north of the Chattahoochee. With the transfer approved, a Cobb delegation of McCollum, Willingham, Reed, Holcombe, and John King met with Governor Griffin in August and made a formal presentation of the ninety-three acre campus. Griffin quickly handed the deed to Chancellor Harmon W. Caldwell.

STI director Larry Johnson was enthusiastic about the move to Marietta. In a column written for the Marietta Daily Journal he noted that the school would contribute immensely to Cobb County. It would help young people become productive citizens. It would attract faculty who would buy homes and spend income in the Marietta area. And it would bring in educated people who would provide leadership for churches, industries, and civic clubs. When it opened, the new school initially pumped an estimated two million dollars annually into the Cobb County economy.
The chancellor chose architect Bill Tapp to design the campus. The groundbreaking occurred on a chilly day in December 1958. Marvin Griffin took the controls of a bulldozer and turned a small amount of turf. That night the Kiwanis committee held an appreciation program for the Board of Regents at the Larry Bell Center. Griffin got up and told the gathering that he once told Cobb’s representatives, “I am not used to paying $200,000 a piece for votes upstairs [in the legislative chambers], but damned if it didn’t cost me $666,666 each before I got through.”

In July 1959 Larry Johnson became director of Georgia Tech’s engineering extension division. At the same time Hoyt L. McClure, a Southern Tech faculty member since 1951, became acting director. Two
years later he became the permanent director, in time for the opening of the Marietta campus on 2 October 1961. A fifty-four member, close-knit faculty pulled together to provide a smooth transition. Between fifty and sixty thousand pieces of equipment and furniture were labeled, numbered, and moved in the month between the end of summer and beginning of fall quarter. Yet fall classes were delayed only a few weeks. The initial enrollment for the two-year school was 894. Since STI classes took place mainly in the daytime, the institution was able to designate four classrooms at night for the UGA off-campus branch. So the Marietta Center received a new campus after all.16

Origins of the Marietta-Cobb Area Vocational-Technical School (forerunner of Chattahoochee Technical College)

Southern Tech became the first tax-supported institution of higher education in the seventh congressional district. Almost simultaneously the county gained a new vocational technical school. Governor Griffin had a policy of using his reserve funds to match local taxpayer contributions for new trade schools in large population areas. In 1958 the Marietta and Cobb County school systems applied jointly. Commissioner Herbert McCollum and the two superintendents, Paul Sprayberry and Shuler Antley, went to see George I. Martin, the state director of vocational education, and stayed “till they gave it to us.” On 17 September 1958 Martin formally notified Sprayberry and Antley that the state would provide $150,000 if the community would put up an equal amount. At the time Sprayberry remarked that Georgia Tech could provide engineers, Southern Tech would furnish technicians and foremen, and the vocational-technical school would provide trained laborers to actually perform the work.17

For the next two and a half years the school remained in the planning stage. It was officially chartered as the Marietta-Cobb Area Vocational-Technical School in April 1961. The school was a cooperative effort of the Georgia Board of Education and the Marietta and
Cobb school systems, with the state providing the largest share of the budget and Cobb providing the least. By mutual agreement, the Marietta school board was designated as the governing body and that month began searching for a director. The city had already agreed to designate classroom and office space at Banberry Elementary School, and in September 1961 the first three programs (electronics, electricity, and drafting) got under way. During the next two years a permanent campus was built at 980 South Cobb Drive, south of Marietta, not far from the Lockheed plant. When the original building opened on 3 September 1963 the school had grown to twelve programs and 120 students. In spring 1964 Marietta-Cobb Area Vocational-Technical School held its first commencement for thirty-one graduates.

For the last thirty-five years of the twentieth century the institution had only two heads. In 1965 LeVerne Lee Leverette became director. A retired navy chief petty officer, he was a hunting buddy of commission chair Ernest Barrett. After becoming director, he maintained an active community presence, serving at various times on the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Cobb County—Marietta Water Authority. He took a no-nonsense, no-frills approach to education, viewing the school’s mission as preparing individuals for work, whether they were young people who were not interested in college or adults in the labor force who needed more marketable skills. Leverette was at his best in keeping at-risk individuals in school until they were prepared for meaningful employment. In 1971 he worked with Marietta High School to establish a “Senior Plan” where MHS students could take their last year entirely on the Marietta-Cobb Area campus, acquiring trade skills and a high school diploma simultaneously. He focused the vocational-technical school almost exclusively on skilled trades such as welding, automotive technology, and air conditioning, and he resisted efforts to add associate degree programs in more advanced technological fields.

While Lee Leverette concentrated on practical education and not academics, he was flexible enough to make one exception, joining with Kennesaw Junior College in the early 1970s to start cooperative programs in fields such as accounting and secretarial science. The joint enrollment option allowed students to take a year of skills classes at the vocational school, and then a year of English, history, and other academic courses at KJC. Upon completion of the second year, graduates
Lee Leverette (Chattahoochee Technical College)

earned an associate degree from Kennesaw. The cooperative programs, however, served only a handful of applicants and did not divert Leverette from his fundamental emphasis on practical education. In his eighteen-year tenure from 1965-83 the vocational-technical institute grew to a little over a thousand full-time students. Additional buildings were added to the modest twelve-acre campus in 1967 and 1976. Upon Leverette's retirement in 1983, Dr. Harlon D. Crimm took his place. As
we will see later, Crimm headed the institution for the rest of the century and led the effort to elevate the vocational-technical school into Chattahoochee Technical College.

Creation of Kennesaw Junior College

Following the formation of the private Pinetree Country Club, the eastern part of the old Frey estate entered public hands again in 1964 as the home of a new junior college. The story of the creation of Kennesaw Junior College demonstrates the same degree of civic involvement and aggressiveness that was first displayed in the Southern Tech fight. For over a decade following World War II, the Board of Regents relied on off-campus centers of the University of Georgia to spread higher education into growing communities. By 1959, however, the university system had come to favor separate junior and senior colleges. Savannah, Augusta, and Brunswick received the first junior colleges under the new policy. Anxious
to phase out the off-campus centers, the board in fall 1959 ruled that students graduating from the University of Georgia could earn no more than a fourth of their credits at one of the branches.20

Harold Willingham attended the dedication of a new junior college in Glynn County. While there he lobbied the regents in Cobb County’s behalf. Despite the efforts of Willingham and others, Governor Ernest Vandiver had little interest in a new school north of the Chattahoochee. When Carl Sanders ran for governor in 1962, he campaigned on the need for public colleges within commuting distance of practically every Georgian. However, he promised Bartow County that any new college in the seventh congressional district would be built in Cartersville. At Sanders’ urging, Cartersville’s mayor, Charles Cowan, accumulated some two thousand acres as a potential campus site. Harold Willingham supported Sanders’ opponent, former governor Marvin Griffin. After the election, when he visited the victorious Sanders, he found him still strongly committed to Bartow.

The governor, however, lacks direct control over university system policy. The Board of Regents is a constitutional entity that, theoretically, can spend state appropriations as it pleases. The chief executive appoints board members for seven-year staggered terms. Unless several board members resign, a governor has to wait to nearly the end of his four-year term before he can appoint a majority loyal to him. Needing to move fast, Cobb civic leaders created a twenty-eight-person steering committee, chaired by Marietta Daily Journal editor and Cobb County native Robert Fowler. The citizen’s group contained some of the most important names among Cobb’s white educational, political, and civic leadership. Commissioner Herbert McCollum headed the list of office holders. Former and present mayors included J. B. “Jake” Ables (Smyrna), James “Johnny” Adams (Kennesaw), L. Howard Atherton (Marietta), Dr. Luke G. Garrett (Austell), George Kreeger (Smyrna), Mary B. McCall (Acworth), and Sam J. Welsch (Marietta). Current and past legislators included Cy Chapman, Robert E. Flournoy, Edward S. Kendrick, E. W. (Bill) Teague, Joe Mack Wilson, Harold Willingham, and Kyle Yancey. Ex-ordinary J. J. Daniell concluded the list of officeholders. Representing the educational community were Marietta Center director Dr. Archie Rushton; Marietta school board chairman Dempsey Medford and superintendent Henry Kemp; and Cobb board chairman Dr. W. C. Mitchell, superintendent Jasper M. Griffin, deputy superintendent T. C. Cantrell, and
former Cobb superintendent W. P. Sprayberry. Other community representatives included R. H. Lindley, A. D. Little, Richard L. Sims, and Elizabeth Tomlinson.21

Having learned their lesson well in the Southern Tech fight, the committee aggressively lobbied the governor and the Board of Regents. In an April 1963 application to the board, they argued that Cobb was one of the largest counties in the state without a liberal arts college. They promised to donate the land for the campus, sell bonds to construct the buildings, pay for the landscaping, and provide roads and all utilities. In the Southern Tech fight a few years earlier, the local leadership had relied on Governor Griffin to provide the funds for building construction. This time they pledged to pay for buildings and virtually all start-up costs. Wanting a liberal arts school badly, the Cobb activists offered more than any community had ever provided.22

During the next half year the need for new junior colleges became a major subject of discussion, first by the chancellor's staff, then by a special task force, and finally by Governor Sanders' Commission on Higher Education. Recognizing Cobb's tremendous population growth, the governor's commission and Chancellor Harmon Caldwell ultimately recommended acceptance of the Marietta-Cobb application. When the Cartersville and Bartow County schools seemed slow in offering a counter proposal, the regents decided to go along with the chancellor and the commission's recommendation. Meeting in the Sanford Library of West Georgia College, the board unanimously passed a resolution on 9 October 1963, calling for the creation of a junior college in Cobb County at a site to be approved by the board.23

The steering committee had one more task to perform. The governments of Marietta and Cobb County decided to pay for the new college by selling bonds: $425,000 issued by Marietta and $1,925,000 by the Cobb County Board of Education. Before they could increase indebtedness, they had to submit the question to the voters in a referendum. So the steering committee went to work to persuade the electorate. The election was held on 22 April 1964. With no organized opposition and overwhelming public support, the bonds were easily approved. Combining the city and county totals, a lopsided 88 percent voted in the affirmative (6,305 for to only 871 against). Every Marietta ward and county election district supported the issue.24

The chancellor's staff considered a number of sites including a
location adjacent to Southern Tech, county farm property on Callaway Road in southwest Cobb, an east Cobb site, three properties north of Marietta along U.S. 41, and the former farm of Steve Frey, now owned by Pinetree Corporation. Herbert McCollum and other local leaders took the committee members to lunch at the Gold House Restaurant on the Four Lane. Afterwards, they carried them to the former recreation center where they got “full of red bugs and mosquitoes.” Harold Willingham pushed hard for the Pinetree site. The delegation stopped at the five-way Big Shanty-Ben King-McCollum Parkway entrance to the country club. Hubert Dewberry, the university system’s head of business operations, asked where all the roads went. Willingham responded that one led to Kennesaw and Dallas, a second to Acworth and Cartersville, a third to Roswell and Alpharetta, a fourth to Marietta and Atlanta, and the last to Canton and Ellijay. Dewberry turned to Robert Fowler, the head of the local steering committee, and asked, “Bob, is that right? Do all those roads go to all those places Harold said?” Fowler thought for a while, then responded, “I guess you could get where he said on all of them.”

Dewberry and his fellow staff members were persuaded that the north Cobb location was the preferred site. The land was affordable, and it was located almost half way between Marietta and Cartersville. While Governor Sanders failed to keep his campaign pledge to Bartow County, he could at least say that he was constructing a junior college within commuting distance. Pinetree Corporation originally offered only about one hundred acres for one thousand dollars an acre. The university system insisted on an additional fifty at the same price. Pinetree had already staked out lots along the east side of Frey Lake Road that were worth more than the regents wanted to pay. But Willingham told his friends in the corporation that they were going to have to give in, and they reluctantly did so. The total purchase for the junior college campus was 152 acres. Some time later, Willingham took his realtor friend O. C. Hubert on a tour of the site. Known for driving hard, shrewd bargains, Hubert remarked, “That’s a beautiful piece of property. How much did the college pay?” When Willingham told him, Hubert was astounded. Recognizing a bargain when he saw one, the astute entrepreneur exclaimed, “Hell, I’d give that much for it.”

The biggest complication in the purchase was that one of the three owners of Pinetree Corporation, Jesse Draper, was a regent.
Horace W. Sturgis (Kennesaw State University)
However, Hubert Dewberry, the staff member most responsible for site selections, insisted that he always made his choices before he asked who owned them. Draper avoided a conflict of interest by publicly disclosing his ownership and abstaining from voting on the property deal. Marietta and Cobb County bought the land from Pinetree and officially donated it and two million dollars to the university system on 31 July 1964. The rest of the bond money was used for grading and paving roads and putting in utilities.  

The groundbreaking occurred on a cold, drizzly November afternoon. Governor Sanders arrived about an hour late, claiming he got stuck in traffic. Some thought that perhaps he was still upset over failing to deliver the college to Bartow County. Nonetheless, he made a nice speech in which he paid tribute to Cobb's leadership. Sanders remarked, “The example set by the local citizens here in laying the groundwork for this college should and, I am sure, will be followed by those in other areas of Georgia.... In order for a community to receive state help in creating a junior college, they must put up at least $1 million in locally subscribed funds. Cobb and Marietta, however, voluntarily doubled this amount in local financial outlay—a feat not equaled by any other community in Georgia.” By this time, the first of the baby boom generation were entering college. Referring to them, Sanders added: “I believe that one of the most important things that our state, local and federal governments can do is to take action upon this school population explosion.”  

The first employee of the new college was Dr. Horace W. Sturgis, formerly associate registrar at Georgia Tech. In the fall of 1964 a member of the chancellor's staff contacted the Pennsylvania native about possible junior college presidencies. Hearing that a groundbreaking had recently occurred in Cobb County, Sturgis and his wife Sue decided to seek out the location. The couple drove out on a December day with snow beginning to fall. After stopping several times for directions, they located Frey Lake Road. On a hillside thick with trees, they saw a little eighteen-inch sign in front of where the first administration building would be constructed. It merely said “Future Site of Junior College.” As Sturgis looked around he saw cattle grazing in the fields of a nearby pasture. The next May the Board of Regents made him the charter president. On 1 July 1965 he assumed his duties at a college lacking faculty, students, books, and buildings. The institution did not even have a
Governor Carl Sanders delivering an address at the groundbreaking for Kennesaw Junior College, with Commissioner Herbert McCollum holding umbrella (McCollum interview, Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Kennesaw State University)
View of the Kennesaw Junior College campus from the old library (Pilcher Building) before landscaping in 1967 (Kennesaw State University)
name. The local press occasionally referred to Kennesaw Mountain Junior College, but the regents had approved no official appellation.

While ordering stationery, Sturgis decided to put "Marietta College" on the letterhead, reasoning that system institutions such as Columbus College and Augusta College were named after nearby cities. It occurred to him that people outside the area might never have heard of Cobb County, but perhaps knew of Marietta as the home of Lockheed. An outsider to local turf battles, he innocently assumed that all citizens of Cobb identified with the county seat. Such was not the case.

The North Cobb News printed a strong editorial against the proposed name. Soon a delegation of officials from throughout the county descended on Sturgis's office with one of the mayors, Mary B. McCall of Acworth, telling him, "I don't know where you came from, but I don't like what you're doing." A native of Griffin, Georgia, Mary McCall moved to Acworth in 1940 with her physician husband Moses Nathaniel McCall. While rearing six children, she helped Dr. McCall run his medical practice and became certified in emergency aid, even prescribing drugs. After a year on the city council, she became Acworth's first woman mayor, serving a one-year term in 1956. Later, she completed three terms of two years each, holding office from the start of 1961 to the end of 1966. Her accomplishments included bringing natural gas lines to the city, establishing toll-free phone service between Acworth and Marietta, incorporating the Acworth library into the county system, starting a street light program, and running sewer lines to all houses within the city limits. A person of strong opinions, she sometimes clashed with city council members when she thought they were encroaching on her authority. Abrasive on occasion, she still managed to be an effective leader.

When McCall and the other delegation members confronted Sturgis, the new president realized that the only way to dispel tension was to reconsider his position. He did not like the name Cobb College, and he thought Kennesaw Mountain Junior College was too wordy. But the mountain, a site of an important Civil War battle, seemed the one prominent landmark that everyone in the county claimed. So Sturgis suggested simply Kennesaw Junior College. That name satisfied McCall and the others and was soon approved by the Board of Regents.

Campus construction was marred by one labor dispute after
McCall family gathering during World War II (left to right: Mary's brother Arthur Bolton, later Attorney General of Georgia; Arthur's girl friend; Mary B. McCall; and Mary's husband, Dr. Moses N. McCall (McCall family collection)
another. Strikes between September 1965 and November 1966 kept employees idle for eleven weeks and slowed work for thirteen more. A major cause of the unrest was that Thompson and Street Company, the primary contractor, hired union labor to construct the buildings, while Cobb County used nonunion subcontractors to put in roads, sewers, and utilities. The ironworkers were the first to strike, followed by plumbers, carpenters, and sheet metal workers. One of the work stoppages
occurred when the county used W. S. Pruitt and Company to run sewer lines on campus. The Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 72, AFL-CIO, became upset because Pruitt was a nonunion operation. So the plumbers set up a picket line. Thompson and Street’s union employees refused to cross it, bringing work to a halt.

In defense of the county, commission chairman Ernest Barrett, who replaced McCollum in 1965, argued that Cobb was required by law to contract with the low bidder, union or nonunion. Nonetheless, President Sturgis and Hubert Dewberry, who oversaw the project for the Board of Regents, were relieved when Cobb awarded the electrical contract to Marable-Pirkle, a company that employed only union labor. The delays prevented the institution from opening on schedule in September 1966. Still, Kennesaw Junior College benefited financially from the construction slowdowns. When contractors and subcontractors failed to complete their tasks on time, they were not paid on schedule. Thus, the college had longer to leave the bond money in the bank, drawing thousands of dollars of interest income. This unexpected windfall was used to purchase state of the art equipment such as microscopes and audio-visual supplies.13

With construction behind schedule, Kennesaw opened in Fall Quarter, 1966, on the campus of Southern Tech, using the four classrooms previously designated for the off-campus center. A number of administrative offices were located at Banberry Elementary School, while the developmental studies staff was housed in the recreation center at Marietta Place. A total of 1,014 students registered for Kennesaw’s first quarter—not quite as many as expected, but a respectable number for a school that lacked its own campus. Southern Tech proved to be an ideal host, yet space was tight. Madeline Miles worked as secretary for two division chairs (humanities and social sciences) in a room the three shared with the registrar and his secretary. Despite the cramped quarters, English professor David Jones enjoyed the camaraderie that came from knowing many of the students and everyone on the faculty and staff. Lacking a personal office, he held conferences with students in his automobile. The Shoney’s restaurant on the Four Lane near Southern Tech was a favorite spot for meetings with colleagues. The stay at STI lasted only one quarter. With several buildings still unfinished, Kennesaw Junior College began holding classes on 9 January 1967 at the new campus on Frey Lake Road. Almost immediately, the administration began planning for ultimate conversion to four-year status, a story that will be told later.14
Growth and Modernization of the Cobb County School System

While Cobb County built two colleges and a vocational school, it coped with a population explosion that required additional classroom space at the elementary and secondary level. In the early 1950s the county school board had provided two new high schools for the southern part of the county (Campbell and South Cobb) and one for east Cobb (Sprayberry). It also planned a new North Cobb High School for the Kennesaw-Acworth area, but that institution was delayed by the inability of the two communities to agree upon a common site. For many years the Acworth School included both elementary and secondary departments. Once the modern new high school was finished, the old Acworth School would lose its higher grades. Town pride was at stake, and Acworth residents insisted that the new North Cobb High School be located inside the city limits. Kennesaw was not so demanding. Its citizens favored the Tom Fowler property on the Dixie Highway between the two cities. In June 1951 the board concluded it was “impossible” to reach a harmonious agreement. At the time Kennesaw lacked enough students to operate a high school program. After the controversy over the new school location, the elected trustees of the Kennesaw School decided they no longer wanted Kennesaw youth traveling north to Acworth to earn their high school diplomas. Thus, they gained approval from the county school board to assign all graduates of Kennesaw Elementary to the new Sprayberry High School, about the same distance from Kennesaw to the south on Allgood Road at the Four Lane.11

In time the Acworth community became reconciled to the fact that the new North Cobb High School would be built outside of town. In February 1957 the Cobb school board met separately with the trustees of the Acworth and Kennesaw schools, and both bodies accepted the Fowler property, the site originally proposed by Kennesaw. With this agreement the board ordered architectural drawings and specifications. The groundbreaking took place in fall 1957 and, after almost a decade of frustration, the building opened in 1959. T. C. Cantrell, Jr., formerly the principal of Acworth School, became the first head of North Cobb High.16
At the same time, the school board supplied badly needed elementary schools. On 9 January 1957 county voters approved a bond referendum that provided an additional $1.75 million for new construction. By then county school enrollment had risen to 16,750. Elementary schools constructed in the 1950s included Powers Ferry, Belmont Hills, Milford, Kings Springs, LaBelle, Sedalia Park, Due West, Fair Oaks, Hawthorne, and Sky View, all for white students. The number of black schools stayed the same, but Rose Garden Hills replaced the Smyrna Colored School.\(^7\)

After sixteen years in office, Superintendent Paul Sprayberry decided in 1960 not to run for reelection. Three high school principals battled for his position: Jasper M. Griffin of Campbell High School, W. O. Smitha of South Cobb, and T. C. Cantrell of North Cobb. Each was the only principal in the short history of his institution. A World War II veteran, Griffin possessed a master’s degree from the University of Georgia and course work toward a doctorate at Columbia University. He pledged equal treatment for all parts of the county and stressed the need for expanded vocational facilities in the high schools, a post-secondary vocational-technical school, a better-financed county library program, and greater attention to the needs of the mentally and physically handicapped. Smitha and Cantrell also had master’s degrees in education, long tenure in the Cobb school system, and a desire to provide more programs for vocational and special-needs students. In their campaign advertisements, none of the candidates mentioned the integration crisis that was brewing throughout the country. They apparently saw no need to do anything until they were forced to, despite the fact that the Atlanta system had already lost a lawsuit brought by black parents and would begin a freedom of choice plan in 1961.

When the election results came in, Griffin emerged victorious with 6,962 votes, a third of them from his hometown Smyrna box. Smitha placed second with 4,570, and Cantrell was close behind with 4,516, each leading the voting in the polling places nearest his high school. At the next board meeting, Sprayberry offered his resignation, allowing Griffin to be sworn in on 1 November 1960. He would hold the county’s top educational post for the next seven years. The Griffin administration started on a positive note on 11 January 1961 when voters approved a $2.5 million bond referendum that he championed. Following Griffin’s recommendation, the board in 1964 made T. C.
Cantrell the first occupant of a new post as deputy superintendent. Griffin was less generous to his other 1960 opponent. In a controversial move, he recommended in 1962 that Smitha's contract not be renewed and his post as principal of South Cobb High School be declared vacant.¹⁸

Smitha was one of the most popular principals in the county. In fact, some people in southwest Cobb admitted they selfishly voted
against him for superintendent so they could keep him as principal. Orphaned at an early age, Smitha had a special affection for children who grew up without both parents. He was a strict disciplinarian who made liberal use of the paddle, but his generosity to students in need was legendary. South Cobb High drew from the Mableton, Austell, and Powder Springs areas. While some were affluent suburbanites, others came from relatively poor farm families. Often when children needed shoes, school clothes, lunch money, athletic equipment, or fees for a typing class, Smitha paid the bills out of his own pocket.

After a term in the Georgia legislature from Carroll County, he came to Cobb in 1943 as principal of Fitzhugh Lee School. In 1950 the school board made him principal in Austell. Smitha was an advocate of consolidation, believing that pupils would benefit from larger institutions with greater course variety and more extracurricular activities. He visited an Austell landowner, Clyde Clay, and helped persuade him to give part of his hog farm for the new South Cobb High School. The institution was strategically located at crossroads leading to the communities it served, but for years local wags called it the school in the hog wallow. The charter principal (1952), Smitha was not above mowing the grass and personally doing whatever it took to spruce up the grounds. In 1953 he and several school boosters took out a twenty thousand dollar loan to build a football stadium. Totally committed to the institution and its students, Smitha was respected by the overwhelming majority of teachers, students, and parents.

Jasper Griffin’s motive for firing Smitha is unclear. His critics accused him of retaliating against a political rival, but Griffin argued that he acted only after Smitha failed to keep accurate financial records involving the South Cobb Sports Club, a school booster group. The matter arose when Smitha refused to allow publisher J. Sid Williams of the Austell Enterprise to see the financial data. Williams suspected that Smitha had something to hide. Smitha viewed Williams as a muckraking, irresponsible journalist who wanted to stir up trouble. The principal’s position was that the records did not involve tax money and, thus, were not open to public inspection. Since Williams had never contributed to the booster fund, he had no right to see how the money was spent. Denied access, Williams placed his hands on Smitha and possibly hit him. Several of the principal’s friends complained to the county solicitor, Luther Hames, who had Williams thrown in jail overnight. No
further action was taken after his release.

Williams carried his open records case to Cobb County Superior Court, where Judge Manning sided with Smitha and the school system that booster club financial data were not public records under Georgia law. Williams lost appeals to the county and state school boards, but won a partial victory when a Cobb grand jury called for an open records policy regarding all financial information. In the process of its investigation, the grand jury discovered that record keeping at South Cobb High left much to be desired and that some of the records that Smitha refused to turn over possibly did not exist. Even Smitha's closest allies admitted that his record keeping was somewhat informal. He kept everything in a large leather-bound book in his office. It was difficult to tell when expenditures were made with tax money and when they came from the booster club or admissions fees from sporting events. The total amount of non-tax money amounted to about one thousand dollars. The chairman of the school board, Dr. W. C. Mitchell, became upset when he learned that records might be missing, and he publicly denounced Smitha for letting the board defend in court the privacy of such documents.40

When the school board held a public hearing on the Smitha situation, his numerous friends and supporters came to his defense. The board was besieged by hundreds of angry people who wrote letters, signed petitions, and attended board meetings in the embattled principal's behalf. Fifty teachers at South Cobb High signed a petition expressing confidence in Smitha and asking the school board to terminate its investigation. Board members said they thought that about 90 percent of the people in southwest Cobb supported the principal.

Nonetheless, Jasper Griffin had made up his mind that Smitha must go. When he sent the board a list of principal recommendations for the following school year, he deliberately left vacant the post at South Cobb High. To protect board members from public wrath, Griffin announced that the board had no choice but to back him, since to do otherwise would risk losing accreditation, under Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) guidelines. At the time he said, "I've searched my heart and soul for the right decision; if I'm wrong it's a mistake of the head and not the heart."

Responding to the loud outcry of community sentiment, the board voted three to two on 13 April 1962 to turn down Griffin's recommendation, even at the risk of offending
SACS. Herman Daniell, H. W. Pitner, and Robert L. Dickerson voted to keep Smitha, while Mitchell and John Strother sided with Griffin. A three-to-two majority, however, was not enough. Under board guidelines, a three-fourths majority was needed to overturn a superintendent's recommendation on a principal position. So Smitha lost his job.\(^{41}\)

In June the board announced that the position had been filled, but then was embarrassed when the successful applicant backed out of the politically polarized situation. A few weeks before school reopened, the superintendent was able to persuade Robert E. Lee to become the new South Cobb principal. Smitha found a position as principal of Turner Middle School in Douglas County. Grace Smitha, the principal's wife, gave up her position as an English teacher at South Cobb and moved to Marietta High School. In 1968, a year after Jasper Griffin resigned as superintendent, Smitha returned to Cobb as the school system's transportation head. In 1972 he was elected to the first of two terms on the school board, where he played a maverick's role, opposing superintendents and fellow board members on a host of policy and personnel issues.\(^{42}\)

During the 1960s the county school system grew dramatically in size and, amid great controversy, gradually developed a more professional and sophisticated administrative system. Local voters facilitated school expansion by supporting a number of school bond referenda. In addition to the $2.5 million bond issue in 1961, the electorate approved three million dollars in 1962 and four million in 1964. Counting the two successful bond referenda of the 1950s and the 1964 vote to create Kennesaw Junior College, the people of Cobb County had agreed in a decade and a half to some $14,675,000 of school indebtedness, far surpassing anything they had done before. With the county growing at a phenomenal rate, the need for infrastructure improvements seemed obvious, and the school system enjoyed solid public support for new building programs.\(^{43}\)

The bond money of the 1960s paid for the construction of three new high schools. In the southern part of the county Pebblebrook opened in 1963 as a junior high and was converted into a high school two years later when Frank P. Lindley Junior High opened nearby. Named for the Depression and World War II era superintendent, Francis T. Wills High opened in 1965 to further serve the needs of south Cobb. In burgeoning east Cobb Joseph Wheeler High opened in 1965.
Public High Schools in Marietta and Cobb County School Districts (prepared by Mark Patterson, based on 2002 Cobb County Geographic Information System data)
In October 1962 the school board established a 6-3-3 system throughout the county. Many elementary schools in the past had included the seventh and eighth grades. Now they stopped with the sixth. Junior highs served grades seven through nine and high schools covered the last three years. New junior highs constructed in the 1960s included Bernard Awtrey in the northern part of the county; Richard R. Nash, Floyd, and Lindley in the south; and J. J. Daniell and East Cobb Junior High School in the east. As we will see in chapter 14, all built before the fall of 1965 served only white students when they first opened, but went through the process of desegregation in the late 1960s.

By the 1960s few parts of Cobb County were fully rural. As well-educated suburbanites moved into the area, they demanded a more accountable school board. In an era of poor communications, the people seemed well served by a grand-jury appointed board that provided overall supervision, while locally elected trustees made many decisions regarding the maintenance of their neighborhood schools. The early 1960s marked the end of that era. In 1962 Cobb voters, perhaps soured by the Smitha incident and wanting a more responsive school board, endorsed a constitutional amendment that made the board an elected seven-member body with power to appoint a superintendent. The new system took effect in 1964, the same year that county government converted from a one-man to a five-member commission.

By 1964 the Cobb County Republican Party had begun to offer a slate of county officers, but its school board candidates did not do very well. The first elected members of the Board of Education were all Democrats. None had served on the previous board. Harry Holliday won election in district one (Smyrna) and south Cobb dairyman Sollie C. Cole in district two. Dr. J. W. “Bill” Cooper, a pharmacist from Powder Springs, captured the district three seat by winning a primary runoff victory over ex-principal Bill Smitha. Tom R. Wootten narrowly captured the post in district four (northwest Cobb) by outpolling future board member Lloyd M. Perry. Former Marietta policeman and county juvenile officer Gene Housley won district five (east Cobb). Joseph S. Bird took district six (Fullers, Vinings), and L. F. Daniell won district seven (Fair Oaks and unincorporated Marietta).

The new board organized itself at the 13 January 1965 meeting by selecting Joe Bird as chairman and Sollie Cole as vice-chair. Harold Willingham continued as board attorney. By a six to one vote, the body
chose to extend the contract of Superintendent Griffin for another two and a half years. In contract discussions, however, Griffin came under attack from Tom Wootten, who cast the lone negative tally. For the next two years Wootten continued to oppose Griffin's leadership, gradually winning other board members to his side. The Griffin controversy was symptomatic of the problems superintendents would face under the new system. During the late twentieth century, one superintendent after another fell victim to the whims of a divided board. Prior to 1964, when superintendents ran for election and board members were appointed, the superintendents had the upper hand. While school boards did not automatically go along with everything superintendents wanted, they generally fell in line. After 1965, when elected boards gained the power to hire and fire a chief executive officer, power struggles between policy-makers and policy-implementers became endemic.

Jasper Griffin's demise as superintendent occurred in 1967. At the January board meeting, Gene Housley made the motion that Griffin's contract be extended another two years. The former policeman complimented the superintendent's leadership and fiscal responsibility, particularly his role in keeping the budget in balance. The previous year Griffin had written a brief report for the board where he took credit for reorganizing the administration, dividing the workload into five divisions under the leadership of directors of instruction, personnel, business administration, school plant services, and transportation. The superintendent's supporters and critics disagreed as to who deserved the credit, but the administration clearly was becoming more modern. For the first time the school board hired a purchasing agent, developed a comprehensive insurance plan, conducted an independent audit, put libraries and librarians in all elementary schools, and made other changes to place business operations on a professional basis.

Yet Griffin had created enemies with the firing of Bill Smitha and in the routine decisions of his office. A dairy owner in the Six Flags area, board member Sollie Cole apparently believed that the superintendent had become corrupted by power. By 1964 Griffin had received so many nasty calls and letters that he purchased a 38-caliber pistol for protection. Cole complained to the board that Griffin had shown him the permit to carry the gun and that it was dated just before the school board election. He marveled at the timing and wondered if the superintendent bought the gun to protect himself from the board. Cole
claimed that Griffin supporters threatened to harm him if he failed to follow the superintendent’s lead. Attempting to inject levity into the meeting, Griffin asked the dairyman whether they threatened him with a gun or merely tried to make him drink his own milk. Cole retorted, “If we had a school boy carrying [a gun] around on the school ground we would throw him out of school.”

Joe Bird offered more substantive criticisms, claiming that Griffin had failed to provide adequate long-range planning for a twenty-seven million dollar annual operation serving thirty-seven thousand students. Particularly, he criticized the lack of meaningful job descriptions for supervisory personnel, inequities in expenditures among the different parts of the county, and an abnormally large number of resignations of key administrators, with at least seven top positions in the central office standing vacant. A constant complaint of Griffin’s opponents was that the superintendent failed to keep the board and the public adequately informed about budgetary matters.

After an extended debate, the board voted four to three to extend Griffin’s contract for two years, with Cooper, Housley, Daniell, and Holliday voting in the affirmative, and Bird, Cole, and Wootten opposing the motion. The victory for the superintendent was temporary, however. In early May board members almost came to blows over Griffin’s recommendation that the body approve the contracts of four counselors. Facing intense opposition, Griffin withdrew his proposal, threatening the board that the four individuals might appeal their case to the state education board and that Cobb could be embarrassed if SACS withdrew the system’s accreditation for failing to maintain a counselor for every five hundred students. On 22 May 1967, after a long executive session in which the superintendent and the board negotiated a settlement, the board chairman announced that Griffin would cease his duties as superintendent at the end of the month, but would keep the same salary as a consultant until 30 June 1968. While Griffin became the first victim of the new system, he would not be the last. Indeed, most of the superintendents of the next thirty-two years would retire early or seek other employment after a majority of the board turned against them.47

No matter how emotional, fights over personnel paled in comparison to struggles in the 1960s over school desegregation. A decade after the Brown decision, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
finally forced local educational leaders to take seriously the Constitution's equal protection clause. The next two chapters will turn to the struggle for civil rights and the first positive steps toward public school integration.
The 1964 Civil Rights Act and the End of Jim Crow

Desegregation at Lockheed

During the Civil Rights era, Lockheed played a dominating role in the local economy, and its labor practices tended to set the standard for other industries. Like Bell Aircraft before it, the Burbank-based manufacturer initially conformed to southern racial folkways; but by the early 1960s it took the lead in adopting national norms. The company's shift to more enlightened policies resulted, in part, from a California influence, where the parent plant was fully integrated; however, a larger factor was the pressure applied by the federal government whenever aircraft contracts were at stake. As an industrial giant, Lockheed's transition from segregation to integration affected many people and is one of the most important stories of the struggle for equal rights in Georgia.

When Lockheed's Georgia Division opened in 1951, the company transferred from California a number of top executives and engineers who brought with them values and viewpoints of west coast suburban-
ites. After going to Texas to select the B-29s for the initial renovation project, Sherman Martin moved to Marietta as part of the Lockheed management team. A native of Montana, Martin enjoyed the cosmopolitan, sophisticated life style of southern California and missed the cultural opportunities that Los Angeles afforded. Nonetheless, he found St. Joseph’s School in Marietta to be equal if not superior to those his sons attended in the west. As a Roman Catholic, Martin was shocked at encountering the “pointy heads” of the Ku Klux Klan parading and passing out literature along U.S. 41. The sight of Klansmen “hollering and preaching” was at once humorous and sobering. No one bothered him personally, but Martin was disturbed to find that anti-Catholic views were widespread in the culture and the work force.¹

Lockheed adhered to Jim Crow policies in Georgia for about a decade. The first general manager, James V. Carmichael, continued the segregationist practices he helped to institute at Bell Bomber. In a mass meeting before some 5,500 workers Carmichael asserted that Lockheed would follow southern tradition in hiring qualified blacks, but only for separate assembly lines. When the plant opened, Sherman Martin found strange the “whites only” and “colored only” signs over water fountains and bathrooms. The corporate heads instructed managers not to criticize deeply entrenched southern customs. Lockheed wanted to gain public trust and maintain peace and productivity. It did not want to appear a “know-it-all.” According to Martin, “We had to understand [the white southern point of view], and we did understand it.”

While the company refrained from criticizing Jim Crow folkways, it always intended to abandon segregation when the time was right. From the beginning, assistant general manager Dan Haughton, an Alabama product, told the California transplants, “You’ll have to put up with it at least for awhile. It should go away.... We are a military organization here.” Even in the 1950s modest changes took place inside the plant. Carmichael was never a liberal on racial matters, but neither did he tolerate Talmadge-style racist demagogues. An economic progressive and racial moderate, he received most of the black vote during his 1946 run for governor. As Lockheed general manager, he met on several occasions with black leaders. In exchange for their cooperation, Carmichael agreed to select and train African-American assembly line and fabrication workers. They worked in segregated parts of the plant, but some of the black departments had black supervisors.³
During the B-47 project in the early 1950s, Lockheed assigned about nine hundred black laborers to the aft section. When the section failed to meet its production goals, top management asked Harold Mintz, a veteran white manager, to take charge and put the section back on schedule. With years of experience at both Bell and Lockheed, Mintz realized that the work had to be done on time, or else the company would subcontract it outside the plant. After leveling with the workers and providing them proper training, he was pleased to see them rise to the challenge. With production back on schedule, the company scrapped its plans to send the work elsewhere.

From the earliest days a number of African-American workers had college degrees. They typically lacked practical experience in aircraft work, but often had more formal education than their white supervisors. Unhappy taking orders from white bosses who had not been to college, several black college men in the early 1950s filed a discrimination complaint. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sent down from New York their labor specialist, Herbert Hill. The protest accomplished little, but at least it put Lockheed on notice that black workers expected to be treated equally.

From Presidents Roosevelt through Eisenhower, executive orders called for fair employment opportunities. However, none of the agencies created to carry out the orders had enforcement powers. Eisenhower's federal contract compliance representative, Vince Suitt, was a black man who had to use considerable powers of persuasion and good will to accomplish anything. In the 1950s Lockheed wanted to give the appearance of conforming to southern ways, but was willing to make changes as part of federal requirements. If contracts with the Pentagon required progress in desegregation, then Lockheed could tell traditionalists that it had to make changes to protect the jobs of all workers.

Longtime employees provide anecdotal evidence that segregated practices gradually broke down over time. For instance, a large rack of machine parts divided white and black workers in one of Harold Mintz's C-130 departments. Since this division hampered productivity, Mintz started at night moving a few bins at a time to the edge of the workspace. Before anybody knew it, blacks and whites were working together without complaint. When Dan Haughton realized what had happened, his only remark was "My Lord!!"
By 1961 the Georgia Division had begun to eliminate separate water fountains, bathrooms, and cafeterias. According to historian Walter Boyne, President Gross told Dan Haughton and the plant’s general manager, Dick Pulver, to comply with federal laws encouraging desegregation. Pulver made no public announcements, but he stealthily began to undermine tradition. Over several weeks, the “whites” and “colored” signs over water fountains disappeared, and a large stack of cups was placed next to each. Then the company began remodeling bathrooms, closing one after another for repairs. When they reopened, the segregation signs were gone. After a year of remodeling, the bathrooms were much more modern, and the workers sometimes forgot which ones were originally white and black.

Previously, the company had operated one black and several white cafeterias. To end segregation, management closed all the cafeterias, replacing them with canteens in the work sections on the main floor. Lockheed pioneered fast food production in the process, cooking the meals in a million-dollar kitchen, then rushing them to the canteen areas in special vans with “pigtails” that hooked up to overhead outlets to keep the food warm or cold. While this system effectively ended segregated dining, the company justified the innovation on the grounds that the workers had only thirty minutes for lunch, and the canteens were more efficient. A major step toward integrating the work force occurred during the influenza season one year. When employees called in sick, Lockheed encouraged them to take as much time as necessary to recover. As a result, foremen had to find substitute workers. When blacks arrived as replacements, some whites grumbled; but knowing that their bonuses were at stake, they accepted anyone who helped get the work done on time. Gradually, the labor force became more integrated without any official acknowledgment that the company had changed its policies.

Lockheed’s billion dollar C-141 StarLifter contract proved to be the decisive event in ending the Jim Crow system. On 13 March 1961 the Kennedy administration announced that Lockheed had bested three competitors with its proposed design for the new plane. The C-141 contract was badly needed at a plant where employment had fallen from a peak of nineteen thousand in 1956 to just over ten thousand five years later. The initial contract called for 132 StarLifters for the Military Air Transport Service. The new plane was designed to fly faster
than five hundred miles per hour and carry loads up to ninety-six thousand pounds. It was roughly twice the size of the C-130, which the Georgia Division would continue to produce. According to President Robert Gross, the two cargo planes promised to "transform Marietta into the airlift capital of the world."

No sooner had the announcement been made than the NAACP demanded the cancellation of the contract on grounds that Lockheed discriminated against blacks. The civil rights organization's labor specialist, Herbert Hill, delivered some thirty-one complaints to Jerry A. Holleman, the executive director of Kennedy's newly created Committee on Equal Job Opportunities. Hill also asked the committee to investigate segregationist practices at other southern defense contractors. Holleman responded that his staff would check out the complaints and "where the employer continues to insist on discrimination practices, the committee would recommend cancellation." A few days later Vice President Lyndon Johnson, the chairman of the job opportunity committee, asserted that the Kennedy administration intended to
end segregation at the Marietta plant. LBJ added that director Holleman had contacted Lockheed officials and was working with them to implement change.\textsuperscript{10}

Burbank vice president Jim Lydon participated in the discussions in Washington, along with Robert Troutman, an Atlanta lawyer and classmate of President Kennedy’s brother Joseph. A Committee on Equal Job Opportunities member asked Lydon, “Well, Jim, you have a desegregated plant in California; why can’t you do that in Georgia?” Lydon responded, “We’re just going to need a plan to get that kind of progress going.” From this statement the label, “Plan for Progress,” became attached to the ultimate agreement between the government and the corporation. On 25 May 1961 Lockheed’s Courtlandt Gross went to the White House to sign with President Kennedy the nation’s first Plan for Progress. JFK called the agreement “a milestone in the history of civil rights” and praised the corporation for its “positive, constructive step toward elimination of discrimination.” Lockheed completed the integration of its assembly lines and became the pilot plant in the South in testing Kennedy’s equal opportunity policy. Over the next several years some three hundred major companies, hiring over eight million employees, signed similar Plan for Progress pacts with the federal government. According to longtime Lockheed personnel official Hugh L. Gordon, the Plan for Progress probably did more than any other program to bring about the end of segregation in the workplace.\textsuperscript{11}

Lockheed agreed to increase its efforts in recruiting and training black managers. The corporation told its executives to look strictly at ability and potential in hiring. On occasion Sherman Martin had to chastise one of his employees over an improper comment, warning him to “treat the guy next to you [according to] how he does his job, not what color he is.” Hugh Gordon shared a desk with a black personnel representative whose job was to go into Atlanta and recruit African-Americans. Lockheed maintained an employment office at 34 West Peachtree, across from the Biltmore Hotel. The recruiter was necessary, because many blacks were reluctant to apply for jobs where they thought they were not wanted.

A World War II Army Air Corps pilot, Hugh Gordon spent over a year in the Pacific, where he survived fifty-two combat missions. Just after receiving a master’s degree from Georgia Tech, he went to work at
Lockheed in 1951. He rose quickly through the ranks to become director of personnel. From 1959 until his retirement in 1988, he was responsible for staffing every program the company implemented. Prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he was personally in charge of ensuring equal employment opportunities.

Under the Plan for Progress, a national Community Relations Committee was created to encourage businesses to form local merit employment councils. Gordon served as Lockheed's representative. Headquartered in Washington, it had ten members, each responsible for a particular geographic area. Gordon worked at setting up merit employment councils in eight southern states. In 1965 he brought together nine major employers in the Atlanta area to sponsor a two-week seminar for guidance counselors, principals, and teachers from predominantly African-American high schools. The purpose of the Vocational Guidance Institute was to alert educators to expanding opportunities for blacks in local businesses and to give them a better understanding of the skills needed to qualify for these jobs. The institute was one of the first such partnerships between southern businesses and black schools.

Lockheed played the leadership role the following year in creating a metro-Atlanta area Merit Employers Association to encourage similar guidance efforts. With Gordon as the first president, the MEA within a decade enrolled some eighty-seven major firms from the Atlanta area. According to Gordon, the MEA is the "oldest functioning business-education partnership of its kind in the country." Within a few years the MEA's Career Guidance Institute served five metropolitan Atlanta public schools systems. Along with the National Alliance of Business, the MEA co-sponsored a Youth Motivation Task Force that sent speakers from the business world into classrooms and school assemblies to encourage students to stay in school and prepare for professional and managerial careers.

In addition to Gordon, J. H. (Pat) Patterson played a pivotal role in spearheading Lockheed's community effort. The youth motivation program by the year 2000 had reached about a million students. MEA companies also provided scholarships to needy black students in business education and clerical programs at local technical schools. The MEA sponsored a study conducted by Olivia M. Boggs of Atlanta University to determine the effectiveness of its programs. This Negro
Employment Breakthrough Survey (1968) found 451 jobs in 53 MEA firms opened for the first time to African-Americans during the first two years of the organization's existence. It seems probable that these efforts by Atlanta companies played a role in sparing the Georgia capital the destructive rioting that divided many big cities during the late 1960s.14

Violence, Protest, and Reform during the Early 1960s

In 1960 African-Americans constituted only 7 percent of Cobb's population, down from 10 percent a decade earlier. Since the start of World War II the total number of blacks had grown modestly, while the number of whites had expanded faster than ever before. People from all over the country were flocking to the metropolitan Atlanta suburbs, but in the age of segregation the good jobs went mainly to Caucasians, and unincorporated Cobb's new residential areas were almost exclusively white. With blacks virtually invisible outside a few traditional black neighborhoods, Cobb County, not surprisingly, experienced few civil rights demonstrations and remained relatively calm throughout the era of change.

Yet the raw emotions of extremists sometimes led to violence. In the winter of 1961 telephone threats and bombings racked the Mableton area in south Cobb. The victims were African-Americans or whites who rented houses to blacks. The worst of the incidents occurred on 26 February 1961 at the home of George Washington (Wash) Daniel on Old Alabama Road. The Daniel family had been plagued with suspicious phone calls for several days before the attack. On Sunday evening at about 8:30 Daniel and his wife were sitting in their living room when a bomb fell three feet from the front window. It went off with a loud explosion, creating a crater in the yard, ripping shingles from the building, and doing minor damage to two rooms. Daniel rushed outside, armed with a shotgun, but saw no one. The police could not explain why Daniel was singled out. He had lived in the same house for fifteen years, was unfailingly respectful of white people, and had always been a law-abiding citizen. The only apparent reason for the bombing was that Daniel was black.
This was the third attack in four weeks on an African-American resident or white landlord in the Mableton vicinity. In one incident, terrorists tossed firebombs into the house of a black family where children were sleeping. Wash Daniel immediately announced his intentions of moving. In March 1961 Judge James Manning charged a Cobb County grand jury with investigating the attacks, telling the jurors that he wanted the court to take a stand on “how we feel about this type condition.” However, the foreman reported two weeks later that the study would have to remain incomplete until the criminals were caught. The following year Marietta experienced a similar incident. In September 1962 a gang of about ten white youths burned a cross on the front lawn of the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Shannell. The couple had lived on South Fairground Street for over fifty years. The Daniels and the Shannells obviously did nothing to provoke the attacks. But they lived in places where most of their neighbors were white, and they seemed convenient targets for a few angry people determined to register their opposition to change.15

Despite the risks involved, some local African-Americans joined the struggle for equal rights. On several occasions in 1963 young people and adults, sponsored by the Marietta chapter of the NAACP, staged sit-in demonstrations at lunch counters around the Square. The adult advisor of the NAACP’s youth council, Rev. Jesse Cook, called on Marietta’s “peace-loving citizens” to support the youth. One of the teenage participants was Charlemagne Bullock [Lockett], who watched over the younger demonstrators. Librarian Hattie Wilson’s children were involved. On 17 May 1963 sit-ins occurred at Atherton’s and Dunaway’s drugstores and McLellan’s ten-cent store. None of the demonstrations were successful in the short run. At McLellan’s an African-American man and woman sat at the lunch counter. According to police officer J. R. Carter, a crowd of whites gathered to stare at them, but everyone behaved properly. The store manager talked to the couple, but refused to serve them. After about ten minutes they left of their own accord. Dr. L. H. Atherton reported a similar encounter at his establishment around 12:30 P.M. When two teenaged young men conducted a sit-in at Dunaway’s, store manager Wade Strickland announced that the lunch counter was closed. They left peacefully after about ten minutes.16

Dr. William Horace Dunaway had operated a store on the
Marietta Square since 1943. His son, William Burns Dunaway, was a senior at the University of Georgia at the time that Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes integrated that institution in January 1961. With the approval of Dean William Tate, Dunaway and about twenty other student leaders infiltrated the crowds that gathered wherever the black students went on campus. Their role was to be a positive influence, talking people out of throwing rocks or shouting epithets. Sometimes Dunaway was so outspoken that he found himself in fist-fights with bystanders. Due to his efforts as a peacemaker, someone shot the windows out of his house and automobile and ripped the top of his convertible. When a riot broke out near Charlayne Hunter's dormitory, he had to flee into the Episcopal Student Center to avoid bodily harm.

Back in Marietta, Dunaway Drugs lost at least twenty accounts when customers wrote to protest “Little Bill's” social activism. Nonetheless, Dr. Dunaway never complained about the loss of business, and Lenore Burns Dunaway, who worked for years to improve race relations, expressed pride in her son's activities. Mrs. Dunaway publicly supported the Sibley Committee's plan to desegregate public schools and was president of the local chapter of Church Women United when it first included black church leaders. Her daughter, Joyce Dunaway Parker, would later head a women’s rights group, E.R.A. Georgia. It seems clear that the children acquired their liberal views from their mother.

In contrast to Lenore, W. H. Dunaway supported the old ways, and the drugstore remained segregated in the early 1960s. African-Americans stood at the end of the soda fountain, because they were prohibited from sitting down. William Burns Dunaway was attending Harvard Business School at the time of the May 1963 sit-in. After his return, another sit-in occurred on a Sunday. He was enjoying an afternoon at the lake when he received a phone call that a young pharmacist had panicked and closed the store. Returning immediately in casual attire, he reopened, claiming, “Nobody was ever going to close down Dunaway Drug Company.” He told the demonstrators that the company would eventually integrate, but not under force. W. H. Dunaway did not want to be the first in Marietta to integrate. After McLellan’s, a national chain, did so, he was happy to be next. Dunaway Drugs proved to be the first locally owned retail store to desegregate. Before the policy changed, the younger Dunaway visited all the Dunaway stores in
North Georgia and talked to the staff. He announced that the following Monday morning the store would begin extending the same service to blacks and whites. Employees who refused to treat everyone the same were encouraged to quit before they were fired. He advised them that if they felt uncomfortable around blacks, they should give them fast service, so that they would be gone quicker. A few workers quit, but most stayed, and the transition went smoothly. At the time, black employees worked only with stock or delivery, but within a few years Dunaways became Cobb’s first drugstore to have a black cashier and a black pharmacist and the first drug chain anywhere to have a black buyer. From the beginning the pay scale for blacks and whites was the same, and the company happily opened its books to civil rights investigators.18

While Dunaway’s desegregated shortly before they had to, all businesses were required to integrate a few months later with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a measure that outlawed segregation in all public accommodations. This momentous change occurred at most places with surprising ease, but some proprietors and customers resisted federal “dictation.” The most publicized incident in the Atlanta area occurred when Pickrick restaurateur Lester Maddox drove black customers away with a pistol and passed out pick-ax handles to white patrons. Under a court order, he closed his establishment rather than serve African-Americans. Just to the north of Cobb County in neighboring Canton, the desegregation of a movie theater led to mob violence. A crowd of some seven hundred demonstrators pelted the integration party with eggs, tomatoes, bottles, and rocks as it departed from the theater. A car was overturned and another damaged. After police declared an 8:00 P.M. curfew, rowdy teenagers marched downtown in defiance. Five young white men were arrested for violating the curfew and cursing police officers. Later than night, seven or eight carloads of young white males cruised through a black neighborhood, firing on a filling station operated by Ralph F. Freeman, Jr., one of the theater integrationists. African-Americans at the service station tired back, hitting one of the teenagers with a shotgun blast that damaged an eye.19

Compared to these incidents, Cobb County remained quiet. Nonetheless, a few storeowners temporarily refused service to African-Americans. William L. Summerour and Lanny Frasier told a Marietta Daily Journal reporter that they worked in the area and had patronized
the Dunkin Donut chain on Roswell Street on several occasions in the last month. However, on 20 August 1964, after a waitress served them politely, the manager came out, cursed them, and ordered them to leave. When the newspaper contacted the manager, he denied using a racial epithet but admitted to demanding the black men's departure while he attempted to "get things straightened out." After contacting company headquarters in Massachusetts, the manager announced that he would comply with the new civil rights law.20

In December similar incidents occurred when the management refused service to five African-Americans at Ravan's Barbecue and Grill and Lea's Drive-In on the Four Lane Highway. The group identified themselves as members of Marietta Freedom Marchers. A spokesman for Ravan's claimed that they had turned away potential black customers on six or seven occasions since the new law went into effect and would continue to do so in the future. Lea's manager stated that no African-Americans had ever visited his restaurant before, and he had not made up his mind what he would do on the next occasion.21

The Integration of St. Joseph's Catholic School

As controversies raged over public schools and public accommodations, St. Joseph's Catholic School in Marietta became the first local school to integrate. Before the turn of the century, the few Catholics in Cobb County were part of the parish of Atlanta's Sacred Heart Church. Soon Marist priests began conducting services in private homes, and in 1906 Sacred Heart purchased the old Methodist Church/Opera House building on Atlanta Street. Later the congregation moved to a little sanctuary on Church Street where the North Loop goes through today. As Bell and Lockheed attracted newcomers to the region, the parish grew in size. In 1952 the church moved a few blocks away to Lacy Street. The following September the grammar school opened with Sister Mary Gerald serving as principal and two other nuns of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondolet helping her teach classes. By 1962 the school operated through the eighth grade and served 420 students.22

Catholics in Cobb County shared a bond of empathy with
African-Americans because both groups tended to be victims of misunderstanding and prejudice, and organizations such as the Klan directed their wrath at both. The author's wife, Kathleen Sherlock [Scott], was sometimes harassed as she rode her bicycle to school at St. Joseph’s in the late 1950s. The two older Sherlock sisters rode on the outside to shield their younger twin sisters from anti-Catholic boys, who taunted and threw rocks at them. The children stood out because they were Catholic, wore school uniforms, and did not attend the public schools with other neighborhood children. Kathy was also denied the privilege of checking out books at the Clarke library for a school project, apparently because the library system received funding from the public school systems and the county government, but not from St. Joseph’s.

One of the Catholic parents, Dora Sheleney, grew up a Protestant. When she announced her engagement to a Catholic, well-meaning friends besieged her with anti-Catholic myths. She sent her son to St. Joseph’s to shield him from such prejudices in the public schools. For Catholics who moved to Cobb around mid-century, the sight of robed Klansmen passing out literature on street corners is a vivid memory of the closed society they had entered. For those who had not experienced segregation and religious bigotry from birth, the folkways of the South seemed strange. Thus, it was relatively easy for the newly arrived Catholics to identify with the plight of African-Americans.

When Kathy Sherlock attended St. Joseph’s in the 1950s, the student body included children from one Catholic family of color, although as a child she paid little attention to whether their brown skins denoted African or Asian ethnicity. The father was stationed at a local military base. The school did not officially accept black children until 1962. In that year Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan of Atlanta announced that Catholic schools throughout North Georgia would begin to admit students without regard to race. In a pastoral letter read in all churches on Pentecost Sunday, the archbishop made clear that the archdiocese would tolerate neither segregation nor token integration. He declared, “Catholic children, regardless of race or color, will be admitted to Catholic schools of the archdiocese as of September 1, 1962. The same norms of admission, registration, transfer, residence, tuition and academic qualification apply to everyone.” At the time the archdiocese operated two white and one black high school. The church
gave rising ninth graders from the eighteen Catholic elementary schools permission to go to any of the high schools they chose. All six African-American students who asked to go to formerly all-white St. Joseph or St. Pius X high schools were accepted.23

*Atlanta Constitution* editor Ralph McGill, the South’s leading liberal voice, wrote in his column that the Catholic Church, as a minority in a Protestant region, had frequently been a target of the KKK, along with blacks and Jews. But since World War II the church had grown dramatically and had become the institution “most strongly and most intelligently on the move in the sociological jungle of racist prejudice where the agents of the White Citizens Councils roam with poison darts of slander and abuse, and the demagogues beat their breasts like Tarzans and deliver heated speeches.” He lauded Hallinan’s pastoral letter for reminding parishioners of the spirit of Pentecost, when “the disciples put away fear of mobs and terror, prejudices and violence [and] came forth, inspired with the fervor of the gift of the spirit, to preach and convert.” According to McGill, “The Archbishop was saying to his flock, that they, too, must put aside prejudices and stand for Christian morality.” The *Constitution* columnist concluded that Protestant churches and schools needed to follow the Catholic example in doing the morally correct thing.24

At St. Joseph’s Church in Marietta, Father Andrew Walls enthusiastically supported the decision, telling parishioners that it was the right thing to do and that he did not want to hear any complaints. The co-president of the Home and School Association, Mrs. Wilbur E. Baker, Jr., told *MDJ* reporter Larry Irby: “I totally agree with what the archbishop has written.” A local physician and association vice-president, Dr. Webster A. Sherrer, told the *Daily Journal*, “We can’t morally deny any individual the right to equal educational opportunities. For the Archbishop to take any other stand would be inconsistent with religious principle.” Sherrer recalled one family who pulled their children from the school, but returned them, sheepishly, after a few days. According to Sister Rose Margaret, the nuns who taught in the school considered it their moral duty to make integration work, recognizing that all students were God’s children.25

On 3 September 1962 three Catholic African-American students enrolled without incident at St. Joseph’s School. At the same time five other previously all-white Catholic schools in North Georgia registered
black students. Archbishop Hallinan issued a statement that they were attending school “not as Negroes but as American Catholic children.” He added that the schools existed to provide a good Christian education and that all students would win acceptance by hard work and good conduct. The archbishop praised the priests, teachers, parents, and students for proving “themselves good citizens and good Christians, good members of the mature, progressive community in which we live.” The editorial staff of the *Daily Journal* took satisfaction in the peaceful desegregation of the Marietta school, labeling it “a sensible moment” in the city’s history. Thus began the process of school integration in Cobb County.26

**First Step Toward Desegregation of Public Schools**

For ten years after the *Brown* decision, Marietta and Cobb County made no plans to integrate the public schools.27 Marietta superintendent Shuler Antley recalled years later that black and white schools were never equal, and community leaders realized that integration was coming. He noted that “there was a lot of discussion and a lot of thought given to it,” but the school boards did nothing. In 1959 Antley retired after over thirty in the system to become headmaster at the newly formed St. James [Episcopal] Day School, now known as the Walker School.28 Former assistant superintendent George Griffin believed that Antley always opposed desegregation. The same was true of his successor, Henry Kemp, who resigned in 1965, in part due to the integration controversy. Like Antley, Griffin remembered that the city school board held frequent conversations about the desegregation problem, but the official minutes contain nothing on the topic before September 1963, when an African-American delegation petitioned the board to comply with the *Brown* decision. After that, the minutes again become silent until January 1965, when the board’s attorney, Bob McDuff, apprised the members of their obligations under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.29

Josetta Walker, who in the 1980s became the first black female administrator in the Marietta system, argues that black parents in the
1960s were concerned that a disproportionate number of tax dollars went to white schools. Lemon Street High School became accredited for the first time at the start of the decade, but the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools threatened to revoke the accreditation in 1963 if the school board did not upgrade facilities. For this reason, and possibly also to delay integration, the board of education appropriated funds that year to the black high school for extra classrooms, laboratory space and equipment, and a football field. Racial separation was so total that the board denied Lemon Street's request in fall 1963 to hold an African-American state football championship game at Northcutt Stadium (Marietta High School). Instead, the board rented Herndon Stadium in Atlanta for the occasion.10

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 accelerated the process of school desegregation. Signed by President Johnson on 2 July, the measure permitted African-Americans to appeal directly to the Attorney General, if they were denied enrollment in white schools. The nation's chief law enforcement officer was given the power to file lawsuits against school boards in non-compliance. Under the new law, the Johnson administration had the authority to cut off federal funds to schools that failed to desegregate. During the 1964-65 fiscal year Marietta schools received almost a tenth of their budget ($160,000) from the federal government. Even before the act was signed, a biracial group met in Marietta to support two black pupils, Daphne Delk and Treville Grady, who wanted to apply for admission to Marietta High School.

The two were levelheaded students with good grades and cheerful personalities. Treville’s mother, Mrs. Katherine Grady, participated in the committee discussions. The self-employed hairdresser wanted her daughter to attend Marietta High School, because it was “time for somebody to do something.” A housekeeper for a white family, Daphne Delk’s mother was less enthusiastic, but she agreed when she realized how important it was to her daughter. Daphne Delk later recalled that her decision to attend the white school resulted from “pure faith” that it was the right thing to do. She claims that former Lemon Street principal M. J. Woods was against the idea, because he thought it might lessen the school board’s desire to improve the black schools. In May 1964 the citizens’ committee sent
a letter asking Superintendent Kemp to admit Delk and Grady. For three months the superintendent failed to reply. Although the board’s minutes give no hint that the matter was ever discussed, the passage of the Civil Rights Act seems crucial to its decision-making. Apparently to avoid federal lawsuits, Superintendent Kemp announced on 15 August 1964 that the board had accepted the applications from the Grady and Delk families.31

Prior to the opening of school on 27 August 1964, administrators, police officers, and the black parents held secret meetings to plan for the girls’ protection. On the first morning the girls met at 7:00 A.M. with their pastor for prayer. For the first three days, Mrs. Grady drove the young women at 8:00 A.M. to the side entrance on McCord Street, where they were ushered into the auditorium and then escorted to their classes by senior boys. The two black students received the same schedule and sat together in classes of English, history, biology, geometry, and physical education. Several uniformed policemen guarded the campus to prevent violence. Fortunately, there were no incidents. On opening day Principal Loyd Cox told a Daily Journal reporter that he had never seen a calmer beginning of school. After three days, he telephoned Mrs. Grady and asked her henceforth to take a normal route, dropping the young ladies off at the front entrance. Superintendent Kemp congratulated the white students and staff for accepting the new students and “living up to the fine reputation Marietta High School has.” Thus, the integration of the public schools of Marietta began peacefully.32

Treville Grady transferred after a few months and graduated from another school system. Daphne Delk continued as the only black student at Marietta High. Long before his service as chairman of the Cobb County commission, Philip L. Secrist taught history at Marietta High School. He recalls that Ms. Delk was one of his students in the period just before lunchtime. She did not like to eat in the cafeteria; so she sought permission to bring lunch from home and eat in his empty classroom. Secrist thought that she was an excellent student, and he enjoyed talking to her. On one occasion, while eating Oreo cookies, she gave him one, asking him to share an “integrated” lunch with her. A few years later the high school community showed her their respect by giving her a standing ovation at the commencement ceremonies when she graduated with honors.33
In the years prior to the landmark Brown decision, the Cobb County school board devoted little thought or money to black schools. With roughly half of Cobb's black children living in Marietta, the separate county school system in 1952 enrolled only 611 African-American students. Black schools tended to be poorly equipped and maintained. In 1952 the board agreed to build a new Acworth Negro Elementary School (later named Roberts) at a bargain price of $62,100. The following year the school system authorized a $99,523 Austell Colored Elementary School (eventually renamed Washington Street). By this time the county operated only three African-American schools, the two above and Smyrna Colored School, replaced in the late 1950s by a more modern Rose Garden Hills Elementary, just outside the Smyrna city limits. Edith B. Murray, the principal of the Austell Colored School, was the only woman principal of any county school, black or white. In 1961 the board appointed Mrs. Murray to the position of instructional supervisor for the black schools, with her salary coming jointly from the Georgia Department of Education and Cobb County. After integration, she held the post of general supervisor in the elementary department.

While elementary schools remained separate and unequal, black Cobb County high schools did not exist at all. The school board preferred paying tuition for black student to attend Marietta's Lemon Street High School. By the early 1950s, the Marietta board of education, struggling with overcrowded classrooms, became impatient with this arrangement. Believing that the county should take care of its own students, the board instructed Superintendent Antley to stop non-resident enrollments at Lemon Street, beginning with the 1954-55 school year. The city backed down from this position after the county begged for reconsideration and agreed to shoulder a greater financial responsibility. In 1955 the Cobb school board helped pay for additional classrooms and restrooms at Lemon Street. The two systems signed a contract that went into effect prior to the 1956-57 school year that obligated the county, among other things, to pay all transportation costs of sending black students to Marietta and to give the city all state funds received to educate black high school students. After a modern new building was constructed at Lemon Street High School, the county board in 1964 sent $104,000 to the Marietta board of education as its half in paying for facilities improvements. 34
In 1965 the county took its first steps toward desegregation. At February meetings attorney Willingham attempted to educate the Cobb school board to the implications of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Several parents had written the board asking the system to comply with the federal act, and one state education official warned that the county could lose federal funding if it did not change its practices. Southern school boards did not have to integrate all schools and grades immediately, but at a minimum they had to adopt freedom of choice plans, where students and their parents could choose the school they wanted to attend. In late February the Marietta school board approved a resolution of compliance with the Civil Rights Act. Cobb County did the same on 1 March 1965, two days before a deadline imposed on all school systems by Washington. The story of the transition from freedom of choice to full desegregation will be a subject of the next chapter.
Progress Toward Full Integration

**Freedom of Choice, 1965-67**

Under pressure from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), the Cobb County Board of Education on 1 March 1965 formally agreed to desegregate by a vote of five to one. Gene Housley of east Cobb cast the lone nay and Bill Cooper was absent. In Cobb and throughout the South, the first step toward complying with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act was to adopt a freedom of choice plan. The school board had to send a letter to parents, notifying them that they could leave their children where they were or enroll them in the nearest school that had sufficient classroom space. The initial proposal submitted to HEW was so cautious that only first and twelfth graders would have been given a choice for 1965-66. Two additional grades would have been included a year until all grades were covered by 1970. HEW immediately rejected the timetable, forcing Cobb to desegregate faster. A second plan on 13 May 1965 was turned down because it also moved too slowly.

At that point Chairman Joe Bird called HEW in Washington to find out exactly what it would accept. At the next school board meeting
on 18 May, he introduced the pre-approved proposal. Some on the board members vented their wrath at un-elected Washington bureaucrats. Dr. Cooper, for instance, read a statement expressing his chagrin that school officials were being coerced into moving more rapidly than they thought prudent. But the board approved Bird’s recommendation, desegregating half the grades (the first, seventh, and ninth through twelfth) during 1965-66 and the rest during the next academic year.¹

To try to head off integration, Marietta attempted in the late 1950s and early 1960s to upgrade black school buildings, making them closer in quality to comparable white institutions. In 1962 the city built a second black elementary school on Wright Street. But the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made all such efforts futile. By 1965 the city school board realized that it had to go beyond its ad hoc decision of the previous year to admit two black students to Marietta High School. After HEW rejected several desegregation plans, the city board developed a modified version of the county timetable, agreeing to freedom of choice in 1965-66 for grades one through three, eight, eleven, and twelve; and all grades the following year.

The major difference between the two systems was that Cobb had never operated a black high school and wanted to continue paying tuition for county African-Americans to attend Marietta’s Lemon Street High School, while the city wanted Cobb to take care of its own blacks. With the beginning of classes approaching, the superintendents, Jasper Griffin of Cobb and Loyd Cox of Marietta, traveled to Washington in late August 1965 to confer with HEW in person. In conference with the federal agency, the two local systems worked out a compromise. Black county high school students could exercise their freedom-of-choice to attend a formerly all-white Cobb senior high, or they could go to Lemon Street for one more year. But the city would no longer accept county students after school let out in spring 1966.²

When county schools opened on 7 September 1965 over fifty African-American students opted to attend previously all-white institutions. Most were high school students enrolling at Campbell, McEachern, or North Cobb. A few went to Awtrey and Nash Junior High Schools, and one first-grader enrolled at Hawthorne Elementary. The transition took place without incident, and the vast majority stuck out the year at their new schools. In March 1966 Superintendent Griffin reported that fifty-three black students were attending formerly
all-white institutions, 230 county teenagers were going to Lemon Street, and 1,056 children remained enrolled at the three black elementary schools.¹

In Marietta thirty-eight African-American students started the 1965-66-school year in previously all-Caucasian institutions, up from the two in 1964. Eleven attended Marietta High, eighteen Allgood Elementary, five Park Street, three Keith, and one Waterman Street.⁴ Gaynell Walker, who handled transfers for the Cobb school system, claimed that transportation problems and convenience seemed to explain most decisions to switch schools. Freedom of choice gave new opportunities to blacks, but it also benefited whites. Several Caucasian parents exercised the option of moving their children away from overcrowded institutions on split sessions to other nearby white facilities operating a normal school day.⁵

As the county completed its first freedom-of-choice year, Superintendent Griffin in April 1966 asked the board to approve a new agreement (HEW Form 441-B), designed to speed up student, faculty, and staff integration. Division within the board was apparent in the narrow four to three decision to comply with federal guidelines. Bird, Cole, Holliday, and Daniell gave their consent; but Wootten, Housley, and Cooper refused to do so. Speaking for the majority, board member Harry Holliday of Smyrna favored signing HEW Form 441-B, because to do otherwise risked losing $2,500,000 of federal assistance and potentially seeing taxes double to the 40-mill range.

In a dissenting statement Wootten, representing northwest Cobb, denounced HEW's desegregation requirements as "unreasonable" and "unlawful." He said that he was not against integration, but was opposed to dictation from Washington bureaucrats who wanted to make locally elected boards "jump at their commands in order to get a little Federal assistance." Arguing that HEW regulations went beyond the law, he insisted that the citizens of Cobb were being "blackmailed" by bureaucrats who did not "consider us capable of governing ourselves." "Nor do they intend to give us the opportunity," he concluded. "We have acted in good faith—why can't they?"

Pointing out that the Lyndon Johnson administration had forced the county to pay $3,350 for postage, Wootten suggested that HEW be billed for the cost of mailing "Choice of School Forms" to the parents of each child. Wootten thought that the mass mailing was a waste of
money since teachers could easily hand out the forms in their class­
rooms and instruct the students to carry them home to their parents.
Wootten won at least a moral victory when the board voted unani­
mously to ask the Georgia congressional delegation to sponsor legisla­
tion allowing school systems a franking privilege for federally mandated
mailings. However, nothing came of the free-postage suggestion.6

Despite their complaints, the board members realized they had no
choice but to conform to the demands of the Johnson administration.
In May 1966 they hired Charles Florida as Cobb’s first coordinator of
federal relations and research. With a full-time staff person dealing with
HEW, the county seemed determined to handle the integration crisis
more professionally in the future. In August 1966 Griffin, several mem­
ers of his staff, and two school board members met with a team of
HEW officials visiting Atlanta. The Cobb educators returned home
with a report that student desegregation was on pace, but more needed
to be done to integrate faculties.7

When Cobb schools opened on 29 August 1966, eleven of the
fifty-six schools had both black and white instructors. The board
assigned two black teachers to McEachern High and one each to
Campbell High and North Cobb High. Also receiving one black
teacher each were three junior high schools (Nash, Awtrey, and
Daniell) and four elementary schools (Hawthorne, Austell, Bells Ferry,
and Argyle). Three white teachers went to predominantly black Rose
Garden Hills Elementary School. A black curriculum director, art
teacher, and physical education instructor had offices at the Board of
Education and circulated through the schools, as did a number of white
speech therapists and other visiting instructors. Thus, the Cobb school
system made its first tenuous steps toward faculty desegregation.8

Louis C. Walker was in the first group of African-American faculty
members to be assigned to Marietta High School. Just out of college, he
began teaching industrial arts at Lemon Street High School in 1965. He
found that, despite the lack of adequate facilities, the school served as the
“gathering point for the black community,” maintaining a family-like
atmosphere. As the one black high school anywhere in Cobb, “everybody
[from all parts of the county] knew everybody.” S. A. (Willie) Hill had just
come on board as principal in 1965, and Walker was impressed with his
ability to impart a sense of calmness and self-discipline to the entire staff.
The twenty-two year old novice teacher discovered a superior faculty at
Lemon Street that nurtured and sheltered students from the harshness of a segregated society. Remembering those days three decades later, Walker reflected, “You just look at so many of those young people and see them now at reunions... Somebody had to care for them and provide the best education they could, for them to have been as successful as they were.” His wife, Josetta Walker, added, “One thing that we found both in growing up and in our early years in education was that you had caring people to work with you in the schools. You knew that they cared about you. They did not accept mediocrity, if they knew that you could do better. That shows that they cared... I think that’s the way it was at Lemon Street. When you are smaller you have more of an opportunity to develop that family type of an environment... The black community holds a homecoming every other year. Just to hear people talk about the past, they talk about it very lovingly. I know sometimes we look through rose-colored glasses the farther away from it we get, but they credit people with helping them along and extending themselves for them.”

In the spring of 1966 Superintendent Loyd Cox, MHS Principal George Griffin, and Lemon Street Principal Willie Hill worked out a plan to desegregate the MHS faculty. To Louis Walker, Cox was a man of common sense who did much to make integration work in Marietta. The three administrators picked Walker and an English teacher, Dorothy Dyer, to go to the white high school on a full-time basis, and Ruby Williams to teach home economics at MHS part time, starting with the opening of school in September 1966. At the same time the first three white teachers went to predominantly black Wright Street Elementary School and a white guidance counselor went to Lemon Street High. These education pioneers were chosen because they were excellent teachers and knew how to get along with people. Walker discovered that most of the faculty at Marietta High School treated him pleasantly and professionally. He particularly received support from fellow industrial arts teachers Carl Etter and Neal Ramer. A few faculty members would not speak to him at first; so he went out of his way to be courteous, addressing them by name whenever he passed them in the hall. To avoid embarrassment, they soon spoke back. Walker recalls that the few who could not adjust soon left teaching.

Born in 1911, Jessie Mae Spears Taylor was a veteran African-American teacher by the time that school integration occurred. Her
first experience in a predominantly white school came when she was assigned to teach special education at Milford Elementary in south Cobb. The school had no black students, faculty, or custodians. She recalled being "THE black." On her first day, she spotted a group of teachers huddled in the hall. In response to her, "Good morning," they just mumbled. When she asked, "Where is the office, please?" they merely gestured. The principal, however, was polite and helpful.

In her first year she got along well with all the pupils, except one little boy who refused to learn. One day he shouted a racial slur at her, and she popped him. He screamed and ran out of the room. The principal supported her, telling her not to worry because the child would be back. She had been buying groceries from the fruit stand of the child's father. That evening she went by to tell the man what had happened. He said, "Did he call you that?" When she replied in the affirmative, he said that she should have knocked him down. Mrs. Taylor said, "I never knocked anybody down in my life." The father vowed to take care of the situation, and apparently he did. From then on, the child became cooperative, started to learn, and brought apples to his teacher.

Taylor tried to teach her students that "it's what's on the inside of a person that counts" and that we are all human beings and should be treated the same. Nonetheless, African-American students at predominantly white schools found it difficult to fit in. Most experienced occasional name-calling, pushing, and shoving. To survive in an uncertain environment, Taylor believed, they had to be strong and shrewd.

Steps Toward Full Integration, 1967-70

Under the agreement reached by the city and county in 1965, black county secondary students could not attend Lemon Street High during the 1966-67 school year. Thus, the Cobb Board of Education had no choice but to order a complete integration of grades ten through twelve. In that year an increasing number of black elementary and junior high students exercised their freedom of choice by going to previously all-white schools. As a result, the three black elementary schools (Roberts, Washington Street, and Rose Garden Hills) experienced a sharp enrollment decline. Despite suggestions to the contrary from HEW, the county school board left those institutions open for several years, transport-
ing across the county a number of African-American youth who did not want to attend predominantly white schools. By the end of the 1967-68 academic year, however, black-school enrollment was only half what it had been two years earlier. From over a thousand students in 1966 attendance by April 1968 was down to 110 at Roberts, 218 at Washington Street, and 200 at Rose Garden Hills.

According to the 1970 census, Cobb's population was 96 percent white and only 4 percent black. African-American political influence was slight. African-Americans wanted to keep the black schools open as integrated institutions, but the school boards had no interest in doing so. In June 1968 the Inter-Racial Council of Cobb County appeared before the Cobb Board of Education to request that Rose Garden Hills remain in operation as a neighborhood school. Council spokespersons Emmett Key and Rev. A. L. Miesel argued that three area schools, Rose Garden, Hawthorne, and Argyle, be zoned into transportation areas with pupils assigned to the school nearest their homes. The school board rejected that sensible suggestion, reasoning that Rose Garden Hills had sub-par facilities, and white parents would not tolerate sending their children there. Located just outside the Smyrna city limits, the school was still on a septic tank, and the county did not want to absorb the costs of running sewer lines to the property. Consequently, the board sent the Rose Garden children to Hawthorne and Argyle. The board also closed Roberts School in June 1968 and sent its population to Acworth Elementary. When Washington Street in Austell shut down at the end of the 1968-69 school year, county schools were completely integrated with all the black children at white-majority facilities. The system had taken the first step toward creating true equality of opportunity. Under federal prodding, it would devote much attention in years to come to achieving affirmative action goals for minorities and women.12

With the loss of over two hundred county students, Lemon Street High School's enrollment dropped in 1966-67 to only about 350. The all-white Marietta school board concluded that the institution was too small to operate efficiently. An integration option would have been to send all students living east of the Square to Lemon Street and all those west of downtown to Marietta High School. That idea, however, was unthinkable to many white students and parents. Consequently, the board in April 1967 decided to close down Lemon Street and send the
black students in fall 1967 to Marietta High.

Even that proposal was controversial. Board chairman J. F. Shaw, Jr. had to cast a tie-breaking vote to kill a motion to table the measure made by Albert Rambo and Harry Lassiter. Shaw claimed that he voted to integrate, because he "knew it was coming." Marietta wanted to solve the problem before the courts took over the school system. Moreover, he thought that segregation had become too expensive. After building Lemon Street a ball field and upgrading the academic facilities, the chairman believed the system had gone "so far [to equalize the separate facilities], it was costing too much money" and Marietta "just couldn’t afford to [continue operating a dual system]." With the delay motion defeated, board member David Hester proposed that the black high school be closed. In a prepared statement he insisted, "It is crystal clear that the day of the dual school system is over and a thing of the past." Citing the next year's estimated per capita cost at Lemon Street of $771, he urged a uniform system where the expenditure would drop to just $392. After Superintendent Cox and curriculum director George Griffin endorsed Hester's proposal, Rambo and Lassiter changed their position and made the vote for integration unanimous.

For the 1967-68 school year formerly black Wright Street and previously white Keith and Park Street schools were designated as junior high centers with parents free to send their children to the school of their choice. In 1968 Wright Street was temporarily renamed Marietta Junior High School and made an integrated school for grades seven and eight. The Lemon Street Elementary School, located near the Fort Hill public housing project, also experienced changes in name and mission. In 1968 it was called Eastside School, then in 1969 Central Elementary, when it became a center for sixth-grade pupils.

In 1971 a new Marietta Junior High School, large enough to serve the whole city, opened on Aviation Drive. At that point the school board tried to close Central and Wright Street, the only schools in predominantly black neighborhoods. The board chairman, Dave Hester, announced that the decision was "a matter of economics—we don’t need them." African-Americans were outraged. Led by Walter Moon and others, they organized the Concerned Citizens of Marietta. In May 1971 about seventy-five blacks walked out of a meeting with the city council and held a rally until late at night to protest the school closings.

The school board asked a biracial committee to propose a solu-
tion. It suggested leaving Wright Street open for neighborhood children in grades one through five, but closing Central. When the board accepted that compromise the crisis ended. The black community’s partial victory, however, proved to be short-lived. At the end of the 1976-77 school year, the board shut down Wright Street too. The elimination of educational institutions in black neighborhoods was a blow to these communities. Yet members of the school board seemed determined to pacify white parents who opposed sending their children to schools in predominantly black parts of town.

In 1967 the integrated Marietta High School added two new assistant principals, one of them Willie Hill, formerly the head of Lemon Street High. Praising MHS for its high academic standards, Hill said, “I trust that the students and faculty will work together this year to make Marietta an even better school.” While desegregation went fairly smoothly, the merger of the two senior highs caused a number of problems. Hill, Louis Walker, Coach Ben Wilkins, and others put in many hours trying to make integration work. It seems apparent that white officials were happier with the results of integration than were black leaders. After all, blacks lost their high school, while whites kept theirs. In her study of the integration process, Josetta Walker, the first black female administrator in the Marietta system, concluded that some African-Americans viewed the closing of black schools as worse than segregation, because black students lost their identities in white-majority institutions. Black parents and teachers also experienced a reduced status. A number of black teachers left Marietta, fearing that they were unwelcome in the white schools and that whites did not regard them as sufficiently competent to teach their children. Consequently, their cultural and economic contributions were lost to the black community and the entire city.

Kenneth Carter was part of the first generation of black teachers to go to integrated schools. A 1952 graduate of Lemon Street High School, Coach Carter praised Marietta’s black schools for playing a leading role in instilling morals and values into their pupils. In his view, the “teachers were good role models” and “caring individuals” who helped produce a close-knit community. In contrast, integration took away pride from the black community. Carter believed that integration led to the deterioration of families, as black parents lost control of the schools and white teachers, fearing criticism, failed to discipline black
Josetta O. Walker (Walker family collection)
students. The holder of a master's degree from Indiana University and a six-year certificate from Jacksonville State, Carter taught at Lemon Street and Wright Street before desegregation. Then he taught sixth grade at Park Street Elementary when the school had five hundred white students and only thirty-five blacks.17

Some black teachers had a positive experience. Amanda Weems taught fifth-grade math and science at West Side Elementary. The winner of several teaching awards, she claimed that she always felt accepted by teachers, administrators, and the community. Others were less glowing in describing their treatment. The first black teachers in previously all-white schools had to be on guard at all times, because they were constantly being observed by everybody. Later a member of the school board, Jeanie Carter was a first-grade teacher in 1967, assigned to the previously all-white Hickory Hills Elementary School. The wife of fellow teacher Kenneth Carter, she received strong support from the principal and her fellow first-grade teachers. But the rest of the faculty was slow to accept her. Some parents went to the Board of Education to oppose having an African-American teaching their children. Consequently, the principal reorganized the teaching assignments, so that no child was in the same classroom all day. The pupils rotated among the various first-grade teachers, with each responsible for a specific subject. The board soon adopted this model for all elementary schools. After one year Mrs. Carter left Hickory Hills to pursue an advanced degree. She earned a M.Ed. from Emory University and became a junior high math teacher.18

Charles Ferguson, a respected PTA leader at Lemon Street High, discovered that he “was no longer someone who everybody listened to” at Marietta High School. After going to a few PTA meetings, he realized that decisions were made in committees, not in the general meetings. But “blacks were not placed on committees and most felt uncomfortable volunteering, so they felt left out and usually did not participate.” Gradually, most quit going to the monthly meetings at all. Ferguson, however, persisted and ultimately became a PTA vice-president at MHS.19

The president of the Band Parents Organization at Lemon Street, Hattie Wilson, felt unwanted at Marietta High where her leadership skills were ignored. Whenever she was invited to a meeting, she made an effort to attend, even when she thought that the invitation was just
“an obligatory gesture.” Despite volunteering much of her time, she was never asked to chair a committee. Like Ferguson, however, she was determined to persevere even when most African-American parents dropped out. Black parents told Ferguson that the closure of black schools sent a message that whites did not want blacks involved. Wilson’s son Dwight was a senior in 1967. At first, he was unhappy with the band at Marietta High School because they played more classical music than had been the case at Lemon Street. The tempo was different, as the white students failed to jazz up the music the way black students did. When he wanted to quit, his mother told him that the only way to change things was to be involved and if he did not stick it out she would “come over and march with” the band. A number of band members with less commitment or less parental support dropped out of the program. It was difficult for them to go to school out of their neighborhoods without the nurturing support of black teachers.  

Future city council member Hugh Grogan graduated from Lemon Street High School in 1955, after the Brown decision, but long before Marietta’s schools were integrated. In his day, students had only second-hand books and athletic equipment, passed down from the white school. But Professor M. J. Woods and Coach S. R. Ruff, a future principal, turned his life around and encouraged him to succeed academically. Grogan’s favorite elementary school teacher was Louella Patterson, a veteran educator who also taught his parents. Her motto was “you should not stray away from hard work.” All the teachers were strict disciplinarians, who expected him to do his best. They tried to impart to their students the message that “when you start late in a race, you must run twice as fast.” When he turned eighteen in 1955, Grogan went to a courthouse annex on Washington Avenue to register to vote. Back then, Georgia required a literacy test, and the registrar pulled out a copy of the Georgia constitution and asked him to read a page. The official was surprised that he could read it, and registered him as soon as he finished.

Grogan lived away from Marietta for the next fifteen years, returning in 1970. By that time the schools had integrated, but serious problems remained. In his childhood, the police had questioned any youth, black or white, they found on the streets during school hours. But three years after integration, a sizable group of youngsters of both races seemed to have dropped out. A major cause was the loss of the
neighborhood school concept. After Lemon Street High School closed, black teenagers had to leave their neighborhood and go across town to school. For Grogan, Lemon Street High had instilled “a concept of morality and dignity—love—because Lemon Street brought together all of the higher elements of our community. Erasing that made for some very mixed feelings.”

Harold Brinson was a sophomore in 1967 when he transferred from Lemon Street to Marietta High School. A running back, he starred on the football team his junior and senior year. His experience was generally positive, and he claimed never to hear a racial slur from the students at MHS. He thought that Coach French Johnson was a great motivator who “treated everybody with the same respect.” Johnson insisted that everyone subordinate his ego for the good of the team. All dressed alike and received equal treatment. On one occasion, Brinson ran the ball on three straight plays following the kick off, advancing all the way to the five-yard line. Then Johnson inserted the second-string running back, a white boy whom Brinson had beaten out of the starting job. When the substitute scored a touchdown, Brinson got so angry that he threw his helmet to the ground, bouncing it up into the bleachers. A number of blacks in the grandstands became agitated as well, thinking the coach wanted the white athletes to hog all the glory. At half time Coach Johnson took Brinson aside and explained that football was a team game. He told him that Brinson was faster and a better long-yardage runner, but the substitute was bigger and would be the short-yardage runner, when the team intended to slam the ball up the middle. He assured Brinson that he would have plenty of opportunities to score touchdowns, and indeed in the second half he crossed the end zone several times. From that point he accepted the fact that the coach made his decisions for the good of the team. As MHS won game after game he learned that it took a team effort to win and that all were performing the roles that best suited their abilities.

Josetta Walker concluded that school desegregation was complicated by the fact that blacks and whites approached integration from different perspectives. Some whites favored segregation, because they believed in it and were uninformed or indifferent to the lack of funding for black schools. Most African-Americans understood that their children had been victimized by inadequate facilities in the days of “separate but equal.” They wanted the best for black students, but
believed that African-American children learned better in predominantly black schools.²³

When integration became a reality, many people, black and white, gave their best efforts to make the system work. But integration occurred on the white leadership's terms. Principals such as Willie Hill became assistant principals in the integrated schools. Coaches such as Ben Wilkins became assistant coaches. No white teachers lost jobs, but many black teachers did. The white students kept their schools, but black pupils had to travel across town into white neighborhoods. With the closing of black schools, African-American communities lost precious cultural resources. Black parents lost the respect and authority they once had at PTA and booster meetings. In time many of these problems were resolved, but the losses as well as the gains were immense.

**Black Business Owners**

While white proprietors grappled with integration, black businesses also experienced an impact from the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In the days of segregation African-American entrepreneurs typically catered to the black community and benefited from the fact that their customers had nowhere else to go. Because they had trouble borrowing from local banks, they were often under-financed and at a competitive disadvantage when their clientele could do business with larger white-owned establishments. During the last four decades of the twentieth century, Winston Strickland was one of the leading black business owners in downtown Marietta. Although he lived in Cartersville, he found employment in Marietta fresh out of barber school in 1962. After working briefly for someone else, he started his own business on Cole Street, cutting hair and driving a cab on the side. After a few years the barbershop did so well that he let the cab business go. He began to envision his own little shopping center. Realizing that an unwritten code confined black-owned businesses to certain parts of town, he searched for a location in a black neighborhood. Finding an empty lot at the corner of Hunt and Lemon Street, he planned to build a barbershop, washeteria, and grill. Walter Moon served as contractor for the construction project. In the meantime the black landlord of his Cole Street barbershop got angry that he was moving and raised the rent to an exorbitant level.
Strickland was forced to the edge of bankruptcy as he struggled to meet the rent one place while he paid building costs at his new site. At this point the young entrepreneur learned valuable lessons about small-town banking. Turned down by a leading Marietta savings and loan, he sought out the chairman of Cartersville Federal, whom he had known since he was a child. The Cartersville institution gave him the thirty thousand dollar loan that he desperately needed. Reflecting back from the perspective of the early 1990s, the successful businessman concluded, “Even today, if [African-Americans] don’t know somebody on the board, [they become victims of] red-lining in a lot of these banks.”

Strickland never aspired to run for office, but he spent much time trying to gain a seat “around the table” for himself and other African-Americans. Over the years he supported a host of Democratic Party candidates from Governor Joe Frank Harris to Roy Barnes. He helped organize the minority-owned First Southern Bank in Lithonia, and he did his best to bring African-American professionals to Marietta. The city had not had a black physician for some time when Dr. James Fisher, just out of medical school, visited his barbershop in the early 1980s. Fisher was on a vacation trip to the area. Strickland immediately left his shop and took him to Shillings for lunch. The young internist seemed uninterested in a county with such a tiny minority population (about 4 percent at the time), but Strickland promised him enough patients to be a millionaire in a few years. By this time Charles Ferguson was on the Kennestone Hospital board. When Strickland called, Ferguson came over in five minutes and escorted the new prospect to the hospital to meet the chief administrators. Soon local bankers and school officials joined the recruitment effort and persuaded Fisher to set up practice in Marietta. As Strickland had predicted, Fisher soon had a flourishing practice. Through such networking the black community took care of its own and provided needed services for the people of Cobb County.²⁴

Kathryn Woods and the Civil Rights Movement

A one-time school teacher and wife of principal M. J. Woods, Kathryn Roberson Woods was the heart and soul of the civil rights movement in
Progress Toward Full Integration

Kathryn R. Woods (Woods family collection)
Cobb County. Born in 1908, she organized the Cobb County Council of Colored Parents and Teachers and served as its president in the 1930s. Later, she served two terms as national membership chair of the National Association of Colored Parents and Teachers. As a community activist she forged a Marietta alliance with Atlanta's Butler Street YMCA and in 1944 helped persuade Marietta's leadership to build a public swimming pool for black youth. A member of Cole Street Baptist Church, she became in 1962 the first African-American member of Cobb County Church Women United. A decade later she served as president of that organization and in 1980 was named its Valiant Woman of the Year. Woods' work in the field of civil rights included many years of service as a member of the Cobb NAACP and as chairwoman of the Cobb chapter of the Georgia Human Relations Council.25

According to her friend Lillian Corrigan, Kathryn Woods was “always in the forefront of everything...a leader, my mentor.” In the mid-1960s, she tried to register for a ceramics class at the Cobb County Young Women's Christian Association, shortly after the “Y” moved to a new facility in Marietta on Henderson Street. The woman at the desk became flustered and stammered that the YWCA did not accept Negroes. A person of great dignity, Woods exclaimed, “And you call yourself a Christian organization!” Then she walked out. The incident did not reflect the views of the board or executive director Monte Whitaker. The YWCA had been active in Cobb County since 1917. When the Henderson Street building opened in 1965, it boasted the county's first public indoor swimming pool. The mission of the “Y” was to help women become more self-sufficient and to promote peace and justice. The next day Mrs. Woods received a call, asking her to come back. Shortly after, the organization asked her to serve on the board. Thus, the “Y” became integrated. When Woods told the story to Corrigan, the latter asked, “Kathryn, how can you let people use you like that?” Woods replied, “Lil, I don’t mind being used when I know I’m being used and it’s for the good of my people.” Through her board membership she helped to organize the biracial Women to Serve All People, which recruited low-income girls to participate without charge in YWCA programs.

A World War II navy veteran, Lillian Corrigan was a white woman married to a Lockheed engineer. From the late 1940s to the 1960s she was busy rearing a family. She credited Pope John XXIII and
the Second Vatican Council with turning her into an activist, making her realize that “God was not up there, but God was here with all of us.” Her first introduction to black Atlanta came through the Community of Christ Our Brother, started by a Jesuit priest at Christ the King Cathedral. The group worked with the Mechanicsville community, doing what they could to be supportive. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. proved a turning point for Corrigan, making her realize that she had to stand up publicly for what she believed.

Despite King’s death, his followers carried out the Poor People’s March in 1968 that he had planned. Corrigan worked under the leadership of Kathryn Woods in soliciting food donations for the marchers when they came through Atlanta on their way to Washington, D.C. Woods and Corrigan took a carload of food down to the Atlanta University complex and helped to serve the caravan of marchers. After talking to the demonstrators, Corrigan decided to join them on the next leg of the journey, taking a group of young people in her Chevrolet station wagon to the next destination at Social Circle. That small central Georgia community was experiencing considerable racial unrest at the time. Corrigan’s son Mike was home on leave between tours of duty in Vietnam. He had never been involved in civil rights activities, but he decided to go along to protect his mother. In his military uniform, Mike drove the car, while his mother and four black teenagers sang civil rights songs. At Social Circle they found a large mob of segregationists gathered to taunt the Poor People’s marchers. A sullen group of state troopers kept the white racists away as the marchers proceeded to a black church. Mike later told his father that he had not witnessed such hatred even in two tours of Vietnam.

The Corrigans left the caravan in Social Circle. But Mrs. Corrigan, concerned about her new friends, traveled to Washington with fellow Mariettan Mary Ann Clark, later a Benedictine nun. After participating in Solidarity Day in the nation’s capital, Corrigan wrote a letter to the Marietta Daily Journal, arguing that the newspaper had not told the true story of the Poor People’s Campaign. The paper unwisely included her address when they printed the letter. By 8:00 A.M. her phone started ringing constantly with one nasty call after another, many of them including profanity and racial slurs.

For a long time Corrigan participated with Kathryn Woods in the Georgia Council of Human Relations, one of the first groups in
Cobb County where blacks and whites worked together on a basis of equality. As black and white members labored for integration, they developed strong friendships. Woods was a forceful leader with the self-esteem to go wherever she needed to go. Of her many honors, perhaps the most prestigious was a 1981 WXIA-TV Atlanta community service award. After her death in September 1987 her friends and admirers created the Kathryn R. Woods Committee to keep alive the numerous activities in which she engaged. The group was renamed the Friends of M. J. and Kathryn Woods Committee after Mr. Woods' death in 1992. One of its main activities was the granting of college scholarships in their memory.26

One Person, One Vote

In June 1961 the City of Marietta announced a special election in Ward Five to replace a councilman convicted of bribery. Lockheed employee Bertie Lewis Blackman announced for the post, becoming the first African-American to run for office in Cobb County since the 1870s.27 At the time the fifth ward contained 1,027 white and 470 black voters. When the election was held, Blackman came in second in a five-man field. Pharmacist Howard (Red) Atherton won the seat with 375 votes, all but two cast in the white box. Blackman received 290 votes in the black and 10 in the white box for a total of 300. Claude Anderson came in third with 252, followed by Luther Burton (76) and Republican Bayard Cole (25). The last three finishers received all but nine of their ballots from the white box. A few months later the Marietta city council voted to amend the charter to elect all seven council posts citywide. The Marietta Daily Journal suggested that a factor in the change was the fear that an African-American might win office some day from the fifth or sixth ward, where the black population was concentrated. Upon complaints from white constituents throughout the city, however, the elected leaders reversed themselves the next week. The people of the various wards considered local control a higher priority than preserving a lily-white council.28

Two years following Blackman's campaign, another African-American candidate, D. H. (Derry) Holmes received a respectable 474 votes in a Ward Six council race. Shortly after the new council was
installed, it redrew the ward lines on 8 February 1964 in a manner that
diluted black voting strength. Prior to the reapportionment, Holmes' Ward Six was 50 percent black, afterward, only 19 percent. Meanwhile, the black percentage in Ward Four rose from 3 to 25. Blackman's Ward Five stayed unchanged at 26 percent, and Ward Two dropped only one percentage point from 19 to 18. The other three wards had only a handful of blacks. The council devised the new ward lines without regard to the U.S. Supreme Court's *Baker v. Carr* decision (1962) that established the principle of one person, one vote. By 1970 the wards varied in size from a low of 3,116 in Ward Four to a high of 5,433 in Ward Seven. Yet no attempt was made after the 1970 census to equalize ward sizes.59

On 10 October 1973 African-American community activist Hugh Grogan came in third in a Ward Five city council race won by Robert (Bo) Reed, Sr. Two months later Grogan and several other African-Americans filed a complaint in U.S. District Court, claiming racial discrimination in the composition of ward boundaries. The plaintiffs asked for help from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in New York City. Staff members were impressed with the research the Marietta men had done and presented them with a list of civil rights attorneys from across the country. They selected a young lawyer just out of Howard University Law School named Donald P. Edwards. He joined with Elizabeth Renscroft in handling the case.

The plaintiffs and their attorneys had two schools of thought about the issues they wanted to present in court. They could challenge Marietta's election laws under the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that prohibited local governments from making electoral changes that diluted black voting strength or they could employ the Supreme Court's "one person, one vote" ruling that required wards to be approximately equal in size. Grogan feared that it might take years for President Nixon's Justice Department to consider their case under the Voting Rights Act; so he decided to sue under the *Baker v. Carr* verdict. The plaintiffs also argued that their constitutional rights had been violated under the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments that prohibit governments from depriving citizens of the vote on the basis of race.60

In December 1973 the plaintiffs entered their case in the federal district court in Atlanta. They were less than happy when Judge Charles Moye, Jr. was assigned the case because he seemed one of the least sympathetic judges on the federal bench. But the plaintiffs' case
was so strong that Moye eventually ruled in their favor. Recognizing that they were on shaky grounds, the Marietta City Council in 1974 drew up new boundary lines designed to equalize the number of voters in each ward. On 7 October 1974 city attorney Lynn A. Downey submitted the new plan in federal court. While the city's proposal conformed more to the "one person, one vote" mandate, it did little to redress the plaintiffs' concern over diluted black voting strength. Grogan and his associates presented their alternatives, designed to create a majority black district.\footnote{31}

Attorney Edwards produced a witness who reported a conversation he had with then Mayor Howard Atherton shortly following the 1964 redistricting. Atherton allegedly told him that the wards had been gerrymandered to prevent African-Americans from being elected. The plaintiffs called attention to a letter from the current mayor, Dana Eastham, dated 5 October 1973, admitting that the council in 1964 had "split the black community to prevent a black from being elected to office." In the hearing a year later, however, Eastham denied that he meant to say what the letter apparently stipulated. On 17 June 1975 Judge Moye issued his decision. Noting that the city recognized the unconstitutionality of the ward boundaries, the judge sided with the plaintiffs. However, he rejected both the defendants' 1974 revised boundary map and the plaintiffs' proposed alternative. The judge ruled that the former did not change the boundaries sufficiently, and the latter went too far in trying to create a majority black district. Instead, he called on both sides to submit the name of an expert in urban affairs to serve as a court consultant in drawing up a new plan. Moye would choose the most qualified candidate, who would draw new lines in harmony with the one person, one vote principle. The special master could consider the racial composition of the various wards "so as not to minimize or cancel the voting strength of racial elements in the voting population." Lines would be drawn without regard to where current council members lived.\footnote{12}

The decision could have been worse for the Marietta government. Judge Moye might have thrown out the 1973 election results and ordered new elections, but he stopped short of doing that. City officials, nonetheless, seemed "stunned" that the judge did not accept their revised ward lines. Council members expressed concern they would be thrown in the same ward as another incumbent. Bo Read of
Ward Five admitted that the decision was a "victory for the blacks to a certain extent." In 1977 he decided not to seek reelection. A Legal Defense Fund attorney, John Meyer, summarized the decision as a victory where the plaintiffs "got what we wanted because essentially the court agreed with us that the city did discriminate in 1964 against the black community."

Judge Moye originally ruled that both sides would divide the costs equally for the special master. However, the plaintiffs, arguing that half the cost would be too great a financial burden, asked the judge to make the city pay the full amount. City attorney Downey countered with a reply brief that unwittingly revealed the racial bias that created the problem in the first place. He denounced the "many unearned 'handouts' given the blacks by the federal bureaucracies" and condemned African-Americans who "shirk their responsibility in paying even a minimal share of the burden" of public services such as free schools. Downey added sarcastically that the plaintiffs and other blacks believed that they were owed special benefits and "for them to obtain responsible jobs and pay income and other taxes is unthinkable." Arguing that blacks made only a "token contribution" to the costs of government, Downey concluded that for the court to excuse the plaintiffs from paying consultant fees would merely encourage them to continue their "irresponsible course." Years later, Grogan recalled how painful it was to be the victim of a "character assassination," when city officials referred to him as "a troublemaker and an activist." He argued, "They did not deal specifically with the inequity of the law." Lacking a defense, they merely stalled as long as they could. As city expenses mounted, the cost of the trial and the consultant became a public issue. After Marietta wasted over twenty thousand dollars fighting the case, the public demanded its resolution.

By October 1975 the two sides agreed to a compromise settlement that made Ward Five approximately 50 percent black. Mayor Dana Eastham promised that the city council would adopt the new plan and send the map to Judge Moye. The Daily Journal reported that six council members met privately in attorney Downey's office. Claiming that they "were not breaking any covenants by not having the press there," the mayor indicated that four of the council members accepted the plan. Eastham revealed that the increase in black residents in Ward Five meant fewer blacks in the fourth and sixth. The
rest would maintain essentially the same racial composition, although the numbers would be adjusted to comply with the “one person, one vote” concept. The negotiators managed to align the boundaries so that no ward contained two current council members. Eastham refused to tell the press which councilmen supported the change, but he revealed that Ward Five councilman Bo Read missed the meeting due to illness. A few days later the newspaper learned that the council was divided four to three with Paul Fields, Bill Peek, Tom Holland, and Felmer Cummins supporting the plan and Bo Read, George Garriss, and Harold Brannen opposed. The third ward representative, Brannen, complained, “We just gave them a black ward is all we did. And that’s exactly what they have us in court for is gerrymandering. I just don’t think it’s right.”

Judge Moye approved a final map in 1976. The city ended up paying all the court costs, including $6,938.20 of attorney fees for the plaintiffs’ attorneys. The following year Grogan ran for the fifth ward council seat being vacated by Bo Read. His supporters sponsored a voter registration drive to sign up “everyone who was crawling, walking or rolling and eighteen years old.” Grogan based his campaign on the need for better communications between the people and city hall and on bringing federal dollars to Marietta. On election night he came in second in a three-way race, making a runoff against Frank Meaders, a white businessman and husband of a future mayor. In the 26 October 1977 runoff, Grogan emerged victorious with 56 percent of the vote, becoming the first African-American ever elected to office in Cobb County. With the revised ward boundaries, Marietta also elected the first councilwoman, Vicki Chastain, who won decisively in Ward Four against George McGill and Philip Goldstein.

Three-fourths of the way through the twentieth-century, Cobb County was hardly a color-blind society. On occasion blacks continued to be harassed when they moved into all-white neighborhoods or found jobs in areas from which blacks were previously excluded. A few racist organizations continued to operate within the county. But Cobb was clearly a different place by the mid-1970s than it had been at the end of World War II. More minorities participated in the political process. Jim Crow laws mandating segregation were a thing of the past. By the late 1970s a new generation of school children approached adulthood with no memory of segregated schools, water fountains, motels, or
restaurants. Opportunities were still far from equal, but compared to the practices of the not so distant past, Cobb had moved with a minimum of violence and disorder toward a greater respect for diversity and equal rights for all citizens.
Start of the Ernest Barrett Era

Creation of the Five-Member Commission

The year 1964 was a turning point in Cobb County. The Civil Rights Act ended the Jim Crow system and forced public schools to desegregate. As we will see later, the 1964 fall elections brought the first Republican victories since Reconstruction. At the same time the people elected a five-member county commission to replace the old one-man commissioner and advisory board. With over 130,000 people, Cobb County was ready for a more representative form of government that could balance the needs of newcomers and old-timers, suburbanites, city dwellers, and a dwindling number of rural residents. It took a while to develop a proposal that both the elected officials and the public could endorse. In 1963 the legislative delegation began debating alternative plans. Representative Joe Mack Wilson proposed five elected part-time commissioners to set policy and an appointed county manager to run the various administrative departments. Senator Kyle Yancey agreed with the idea of a five-member commission, but wanted the chairman to work full time as the administrative
head of government.

As the 1963 session moved toward a close, freshman representative Bob Flournoy suggested a compromise of a three-member commission without a county manager for the time being. The delegation seemed lukewarm about the compromise, but pushed it through the general assembly, believing that voters should have an opportunity to decide on something. The referendum was set for January 1964. In an extremely light turnout Cobb countians rejected the three-man plan by almost two to one. In analyzing the lopsided defeat, local leaders concluded that the people disliked the three-member concept, but would support a larger commission. So the Cobb legislators returned to the five-member setup and tried to find a way to satisfy both Yancey and Wilson.

As the only attorney in the delegation, Flournoy again had the honor of drawing up a bill. He had practiced law in Cobb County for less than a decade, having entered into partnership in 1957 with Raymond Reed and Conley Ingram. Reed was Herbert McCollum’s county attorney; so Flournoy and his partners were chief advisors to the last one-man commissioner. Flournoy knew that McCollum had no plans to run for reelection, but as a courtesy he asked his advice on the multiple-commission proposals. McCollum said he could not object to any plan that was decided by the people in a referendum. Modeling the proposal on the DeKalb County system, Flournoy recommended four part-time district commissioners and a full-time chairman who would serve as chief executive officer, with the assistance of a full-time elected deputy. Terms of office were set at four years with one eastern and one western commissioner initially elected for two years to provide staggered terms.

As was the case the previous year, Joe Mack Wilson’s championship of a county-manager system proved to be the greatest obstacle to unity. The General Assembly seldom passed local legislation unless the entire county delegation was in agreement. By standing firmly against the rest of Cobb’s legislators, Wilson seemed determined to prevent any change from occurring. The Marietta jeweler’s motives were complex. Some people suspected his real objective in 1964 was to delay reform so he could run for Herbert McCollum’s post as a one-man commissioner. However, Wilson always claimed he was committed to the multiple commission idea as a way to reduce political manipulation by powerful interest groups. He argued that he favored employing a professional
county manager to make county government operate more efficiently. Although he failed to persuade his colleagues in 1964, he was able almost twenty years later to push through the General Assembly a bill setting up Cobb’s first county manager system.
Whether he was motivated by principle, self-interest, or both, Wilson discovered, as the 1964 legislative session progressed, that constituents were irritated by his obstinacy. They “cussed” him in letters and private conversations until he gave up his opposition to the Flournoy proposal. One evening Wilson and his political ally Ben Smith showed up unannounced at Flournoy’s front door and asked to come in. Sitting in the young representative’s living room, they admitted that their strategy had backfired and that Wilson would sign Flournoy’s bill the next day. “But,” they said, “we don’t want Kyle Yancey to get any credit for it. We want you to get the credit.” Flournoy told them he would be glad to take the credit. So the next day Wilson provided the last signature to make the bill pass.5

In June 1964 the five-member commission plan sailed through the legislature and was signed into law by Governor Carl Sanders. The next month Cobb County voters overwhelmingly implemented the proposal by a vote of 7,297 to 2,791. Now on board with the new arrangement, Wilson announced his candidacy for commission chairman. Other factions were also forming and ready to battle for the new top county post.6

A crowded field of five strong aspirants vied for commission chair in the September Democratic primary. Joining Wilson were Representative Bill Teague, realtor O. C. Hubert, veterinarian Jack Henderson, and laundryman Ernest Barrett.7 One of Cobb’s most successful real estate professionals, Hubert claimed to run as a “businessman and not a politician.” Thirty-two year-old Jack Henderson was the son of a popular former extension agent, J. H. “Boll Weevil” Henderson. The elder Henderson came close to defeating Herbert McCollum for commissioner four years earlier. Young Jack managed his father’s campaign and had been a vocal and persistent critic of the McCollum administration ever since.8

At age forty-two, Ernest Barrett was the owner of Fair Oaks Cleaning and Laundry, Inc. Through the Junior Chamber of Commerce he was active in a group known as the “Young Turks” that challenged the leadership of old-school politicians such as Herbert McCollum and Harold Willingham. Members of this informal organization included attorney and former legislator Fred Bentley, funeral home director Bill Bullard, banker W. Wyman Pilcher, Sr., and poultry company executive Chet Austin. The “Young Turks” played a central role in persuad-
ing Barrett to run. Other civic leaders approached the dry cleaning entrepreneur at about the same time. One day, the prospective candidate called his uncle, O. E. Barrett, and revealed that he had been asked to run by several businessmen and community activists, notably Sidney Clotfelter, Romeo Hudgins, and Parks Rusk. The potential candidate told his uncle that he felt an obligation to run. O. E. offered his support, telling him that since Fair Oaks Cleaners was doing well, he
should go ahead.\textsuperscript{10}

All five candidates distanced themselves from the McCollum administration due to the Pinetree fiasco and other instances of favoritism. Barrett attacked McCollum indirectly when he pledged a “new day in Cobb County” where efficient, businesslike leaders would replace the “debt-ridden and shoddy” government and “self-serving politicians” of the past. Promising public audits and competitive bidding, the political newcomer vowed to drive from “the public trough” those who had profited too long from their under-the-table dealings.\textsuperscript{11}

The five contestants shared a common vision that county government act in a fair, honest, and businesslike manner. All promised to complete the job started by their predecessors in paving the county’s roads. All agreed that Cobb’s quality of life depended on developing a parks system and running sewer lines to every county subdivision and industrial site. Selby McCash, who wrote a series entitled “Profiles of Candidates” for the Marietta \textit{Daily Journal}, concluded that the candidates were saying much the same thing and that, in the end, the election would be “an old-fashioned personality contest.”\textsuperscript{12}

Barrett told McCash that the most important issue was fiscal reform. He claimed that his leading asset was his success in building a profitable dry cleaning business that taught him the value of a dollar. He wanted the county to put its financial affairs in order, and then ask the voters to approve the bonded indebtedness needed to expand essential public services.\textsuperscript{13} When the primary election results came in, Barrett and deputy commissioner running mate Bob Austin led the field with a substantial 8,377 votes. Jack Henderson came in second with 5,644, followed by Joe Mack Wilson with 4,373. Bill Teague (3,691) and O. C Hubert (1,855) brought up the rear. As one would expect, Barrett received a huge majority in his home base of Fair Oaks and led the voting in most of the precincts in the Marietta, Smyrna, and other southern militia districts. Henderson did best in the western part of the county, leading the voting in the towns and villages of Acworth, Kennesaw, Austell, Elizabeth, and Clarkdale and carrying several rural militia districts.\textsuperscript{14}

Joe Mack Wilson would return to the legislature the following year and serve there for over two decades. Late in his career he ran successfully for mayor of Marietta, dying in office in May 1993 near the end of his term. Following his legislative career, he looked back on the 1964
race for commission chairman as the only time he had ever been “cheated, or rooked, or tricked...in politics, to the extent that it almost made me ashamed of my abilities.” He blamed his defeat on the implementation of new Shoupe voting machines in Cobb County, where voters pushed down a lever in a clockwise fashion rather than filling out a paper ballot. If the new machines were not confusing enough, the election officials listed the candidates horizontally across the top rather than vertically down the page.

The lever that one was supposed to turn was to the right of the candidate’s name, but some people unwittingly turned the one to the left. According to Wilson, the victorious candidate, Ernest Barrett, did so well because he was first on the ballot. He received the tallies of everyone who intended to vote for him and an undetermined number of confused people who thought they were voting for Jack Henderson, the second candidate across the ballot. While Barrett no doubt received some votes meant for Henderson, the veterinarian probably picked up some unmerited ballots from O. C. Hubert, the third name across the page. Wilson, the candidate on the far right of the column, was penalized the most. Those who became confused and pulled the lever to the left of Wilson’s name actually voted for Teague. Since he had no one to his right, Wilson was the sole candidate who received no votes intended for another candidate. Thus, Wilson may have missed a runoff against Barrett by his unfortunate ballot placement.15

Since Barrett achieved only 35 percent of the total, he was forced into a runoff against runner-up Henderson. To counter Barrett’s support from the “Young Turks,” Henderson gained the backing of the old regime, including former legislator Harold Willingham. Securities dealer Lex Jolley supported Henderson, in part because Jolley’s father-in-law, L. N. Lassiter, was a good friend of “Boll Weevil” Henderson, the candidate’s father. Shortly before the run-off, Jolley showed up at a meeting in Willingham’s office, attended by about twenty-five Henderson supporters, including Aaron Cuthbert, a black Anderson Motor Company employee who was active in the NAACP and who controlled much of Marietta’s African-American vote. The attitude in the Henderson camp was pessimistic. Some refused to give him a campaign contribution because they were sure he would lose. They offered to back him in a future race if he would drop out before he made too many enemies. Nonetheless, Henderson “squalled [that] he wasn’t
going to step aside. He was going to win it.”

Two weeks later Barrett proved that the first round victory was no fluke. The Fair Oaks businessman won decisively with 56 percent of the tallies. Joining Barrett on the five-man board were Bill Oliver (Post 1), Harry Ingram (Post 2), Tommy Brown (Post 3), and Al Burruss (Post 4). Insurance executive Bill Oliver had the tightest race. In the 9 September 1964 Democratic primary five candidates vied for the two-
year eastern post. Deputy Warden Dewey Gable led the field, while Oliver barely edged out Joel Addison for second place. The initial unofficial returns had Addison leading Oliver by six votes, but a recount reversed the results. Dubbed “Landslide Oliver,” the businessman was declared the second-place finisher by a margin of one vote. In a 23 September run-off Oliver did much better, beating Gable by over a thousand tallies.
Neither Barrett nor Oliver had Republican opposition in the general election, but the other three Democratic nominees did. In 1964 the Republicans held their first ever primary election in Cobb County. With seven hundred people voting, the GOP nominated J. T. Hulsey to challenge Harry Ingram, Barney Nunn to run against Tommy Brown, and F. Y. Dillingham to oppose Al Burruss. With Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater carrying Cobb by over four thousand
votes, all three Republican commission candidates ran competitive, if ultimately unsuccessful, races. In a bitter, mud-slinging campaign Ingram won 55 percent of the vote against Hulsey for the four-year term in the eastern district. Burress scored a 58 percent victory over Dillingham for the four-year western post and Brown gained 56 percent of the tallies against Nunn for the western two-year slot.
The New Commission Chairman

In the Crabgrass Frontier, Kenneth Jackson discusses the factors behind suburban growth. To a large degree the migration from the inner city was unplanned and unregulated. As improved modes of transportation permitted people to live greater distances from work, middle-class Americans jumped at the opportunity to move out of congested, polluted cities. Enterprising businessmen filled a need by purchasing large tracts of cheap rural lands and constructing residential subdivisions for far less than the cost in heavily developed areas. Cheap real estate prices and low suburban taxes proved an irresistible draw. The changing racial composition of downtown neighborhoods spurred the migration to the suburbs. During the late twentieth century large numbers of African-Americans and other minorities deserted rural areas for the cities. As poor blacks moved in, affluent whites and blacks moved out, seeking family-friendly neighborhoods where residents generally belonged to the same social class and shared similar values. The movement to the suburbs followed market forces, aided by government policy. The Barrett years illustrate how local government can play a positive role in facilitating social change. Growth was accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s by the rapid expansion of roads, parks, libraries, schools, water lines, and sewers—essential ingredients in generating a high quality of life.

Ernest Barrett served five consecutive terms as commission chairman, holding office from the first day of 1965 to the end of 1984. Through those two decades, he avoided even the hint of scandal, leaving office no richer than when he first entered. The greatest of Cobb's twentieth-century commissioners, Barrett helped make the county one of the nation's most desirable locations. His greatest strength was his talent at consensus building on the commission and in the community. Despite his lack of college education, he learned quickly. Armed with the relevant facts, Barrett went to each person individually to hammer out a deal that everyone could accept. According to Fred Bentley, Barrett worked effectively behind the scenes because of his "uncanny ability to bring people together" and win people's trust by keeping his promises.

New commissioner Harry Ingram became a friend early in 1964 when Barrett paid him a visit. They related to each other as fellow
“country boys.” Barrett expressed admiration for what Ingram had accomplished as a Smyrna city councilman and persuaded him to run for one of the district commission posts. During his two decades in office Barrett kept a little home garden. Canning vegetables became good therapy in relieving everyday tensions. Frequently, Ingram dropped by Barrett’s home and served as a sounding board while the chairman vented his frustrations over difficult developers, community activists, or county employees.21

Ingram was one of a number of devoted, loyal associates. Barrett’s secretary for twelve years, Lillian Sloan, viewed him as a compassionate man who never lost his temper at employees or visitors to his office. Barrett provided direction, but was not a detail man, preferring to delegate responsibility to his secretary and department heads, while he spent time in the community meeting and talking to people. He expressed the philosophy that if he were honest, the people who worked for him would be honest too. Leading by example, he proved to be a skilled team player and compromiser. Barrett’s lack of education bothered him and caused him to wonder how he had come so far. But he educated himself by going frequently to Institute of Government workshops at the University of Georgia. Sloan recalls that he was sometimes criticized for being slow to make up his mind, yet he had sound judgment. He would listen to everybody, then reach his own decision and stick to it.22

Barrett was a Cobb County native, born 29 April 1922 on his grandfather’s Chastain Road farm. While he was a small child, his parents moved briefly into a two-room “shotgun house” near Marietta. Then they relocated to Pell City, Alabama. He later recalled working so hard on the family farm that he “didn’t have much time left for mischievous things.” Some of his fondest childhood memories were hunting and fishing with his father, although for a poor family the excursions were more out of necessity than for sport.

At age sixteen or seventeen, Barrett returned to Cobb County, living two years in the Macland community on the prosperous Corner Road farm of Walter H. and Edith Barrett Cantrell, his uncle and aunt. As a teenager he found his first job at a small dairy, receiving his pay in milk and butter. Ernest soon sought urban employment at Williams Drug Store on the west side of Marietta’s Square. He swapped his guitar for a bicycle, so he could serve as a delivery boy. He also worked in the
drugstore as a "soda jerk." Later he became a bellhop in Atlanta at the Ansley Hotel, before driving a truck for the American Laundry, owned by H. B. Wilson.

By the time he was twenty years old Barrett was married to Jackie Knight of Marietta. A few months after Pearl Harbor, he was drafted into the army and served on the west coast and in the south Pacific. In 1946 he used the G.I. Bill to learn the laundry business at the A & M College in Clarksville, Georgia. As soon as he was able to purchase the necessary equipment, he opened Fair Oaks Cleaner and Laundry. By the time he became commission chairman, the energetic entrepreneur had expanded his business into a chain of four establishments. Active in the community, Barrett served on the board of the Fair Oaks Fire District and became involved in the Junior Chamber of Commerce, where he made numerous contacts. He directed the choir for over a decade at Olive Springs Baptist Church; later, as a member of Marietta's First United Methodist, he sang at numerous funerals and weddings. His first taste of politics came in 1960 when he served as campaign manager for Garvis Sams, who was elected ordinary (probate judge), placing him on the advisory board to Commissioner Herbert McCollum. The experience in running a countywide campaign served Barrett well when he embarked on his own election bid four years later.23

Passing a $14.9 Million Bond Referendum

After taking office, Barrett announced his intention of putting the county's finances in order as the first step toward gaining public trust. He reasoned that the voters had rejected several recent bond referenda because they lacked confidence in elected officials. On 4 January 1965 the chairman announced that Ernst and Ernst, a nationwide accounting firm, would conduct quarterly audits of all county departments and draw up long range plans to maintain Cobb's fiscal health.24 The following day, the commission stopped construction on the Judicial Building, the first of three proposed structures in the new courthouse complex, until the county received precise estimates of the final cost. For the first time in four years the water system began in March 1965 to require sealed competitive bids from suppliers. About the same time the
commissioners announced plans to appoint a one hundred-member Public Improvements Study Commission to draw up a specific plan of what needed to be funded through a proposed bond referendum. 25

On 4 April 1965 Barrett named as study group chairman the Reverend Murdock Calhoun of John Knox Presbyterian Church in east Cobb. The commission chose Bob Kienel, the president of Acworth's Unique Knitting Mills, to head a subcommittee to define the needs of north Cobb. Attorney Frank Holcomb, one of the defense attorneys in the infamous Amos Reece case, headed the Marietta and central Cobb subcommittee. Smyrna lawyer T. J. Hunt chaired the southeast Cobb group, while Lockheed senior aircraft design engineer Quentin B. Farmer served as southwest Cobb chair. The county commission met with the study group leaders and top officials of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce to organize the effort and review technical data.

The one-hundred-member group contained a distinguished group of politicians, businessmen, farmers, and professionals. According to Barrett, the committee represented diverse talents and viewpoints and was selected "with proper regard to geographical distribution and to known public zeal." As one might expect in the mid-1960s, none were African-Americans, but a few were women, including librarian Joanne Stratton, Mrs. Jim Woods, Mary Aven, Mayor Mary McCall of Acworth, Mrs. W. H. Whitlock, Annie Dorsey, and Mrs. T. J. Overby. The group contained at least three Republicans (Kienel, Aven, and Warren Herron). Many were power brokers in their communities, such as south Cobb leaders Felton Barnes, George Thompson, Walter Cantrell, and rising politician Joe Lee Thompson. Barrett included the mayors of Cobb's incorporated cities, several past and present school board members, longtime Superior Court clerk John T. LeCroy, defeated commission chair candidates Joe Mack Wilson and Jack Henderson, former county extension agent "Boll Weevil" Henderson, retired Judge James T. Manning, ex-ordinary J. J. Daniell, and former commissioner George McMillan. The business community was well represented by "Young Turks" Bill Bullard and Wyman Pilcher and such individuals such as Roy Varner, Ed Stephens, Campbell Dasher, Lockheed executive Roy Simmons, Porter Campbell, and Rosser Little, Wilder Little, and A. D. Little. Journalists included Sid Williams, Otis Brumby, Bill Kinney, and Brooks Smith. 26

The selection of such a blue-ribbon panel went far to hold public
opposition to a minimum. On 2 June 1965 the study committee issued a report calling for the issuance of $14.9 million in general obligation bonds. This figure was essentially what Barrett claimed the county could afford without raising taxes. The committee recommended bonds for five major projects: $9.4 million for road and bridge improvements, about $3.5 million to complete the courthouse complex, slightly less than a million dollars for libraries, $900,000 for parks, and a little over $200,000 for a juvenile home.

The commission accepted the plan with minimal changes and set a July date for a bond referendum. On 25 July 1965 the Journal published an editorial declaring an "absolute and critical" need for the public improvement bonds. The same day bond supporters paid for a large advertisement that claimed the Barrett administration had already saved the county over a half million dollars by introducing such reforms as a central purchasing department. The advertisement further asserted that the lack of a capital improvement program was costing the county money. An inadequate courthouse forced the commission to pay needless rents for downtown office space, and the outdated road network required the county to spend about eight hundred thousand dollars a year patching old pavement. Bemoaning an "out-moded system dating back to the hitching-post and horse-trough days," the proponents argued that the bond issue program would bring about a new day.

While the Republican Party formally endorsed the bond issue, the Young Republican organization objected to certain aspects of the proposal. Doug Howard set up a Cobb Young Republicans Truth Committee, which called for the bonds to be retired in ten years rather than thirty. According to Howard, a number of highway engineers believed that Cobb countians were "kidding ourselves if we think these roads will last more than 10 years." Defeated commission chair candidate O. C. Hubert complained that the amount proposed for road improvements was much too large. The affluent realtor favored repairing only the worst roads. George H. Keeler of Marietta raised objection to the recreation bonds since the issue would be used to attract matching funds from the U. S. government. Equating federal support with federal control, Keeler argued that Cobb would be creating "a recreational Frankenstein" with the parks and recreation board becoming a stooge of the government in Washington.

Despite their concerns, the opponents failed to organize an effec-
tive opposition. On a rainy 28 July 1965 about one fourth of the eligi-
ble voters went to the polls to approve overwhelmingly the five bond
issues. The juvenile home expansion project received the largest mar-
gin of victory (9,031 to 3,801). Three other items (roads and bridges,
libraries, and the courthouse complex) passed by about two to one. The
tightest contest was for parks and recreation (6,942 to 5,726).30

Following the referendum, Ernest Barrett took a delegation to
New York to try to improve Cobb County's bond rating. Accompanying
him on the October visit were attorney Fred Bentley and an Ernst and
Ernst accountant, William A. Downer. Lockheed-Georgia aided the
county's presentation by preparing graphs and charts. Bentley took the
lead in explaining the county's case to the New York bond companies.
The Marietta attorney thought that previous county issues had a rela-
tively low "BB" rating because the McCollum administration "had run
the county's credit into the ground." As a result the county had to pay
extremely high interest rates to attract investors. Marietta and the
Board of Lights and Water, in contrast, had an "A" rating. The delega-
tion was the county's first to meet face to face with Standard and Poor
and Moody executives. The rating officials knew about Cobb's spectac-
ular growth and were persuaded that the Barrett team meant to run
affairs in a businesslike fashion. John Pheiffer, a senior analyst at
Standard and Poor, pronounced the presentation "one of the finest I've
ever seen." Consequently, the bond rating improved to an "A," saving
the county several million dollars on its 1965 issue.31

In December Barrett returned to New York to sign the bonds and
collect the $14.9 million. Traveling with him on this journey were Fred
Bentley, Superior Court clerk Tyre Lee Terry, county controller Michael
Bolek, and bonding attorneys Ted Thomas and John Mobley III. The
county sold the bonds to Trust Company of Georgia at an attractive
3.5118 percent interest rate. For a month the county invested practi-
cally all the revenues in government securities. Some $560,000 went
into the county checking account to meet obligations already under
contract. Barrett announced that as soon as the details could be worked
out, he would transfer the rest of the bond money to seven Cobb
County banks for reinvestment.32

Ernest Barrett was serious while he was working, but enjoyed a
good time after the day was done. Having successfully completed the
people's business, the Cobb delegation went to one of New York's finest
restaurants, Mama Leone's. At a long table next to them a large party of tourists from the Midwest were dining. Barrett bore a resemblance to a famous actor. So during the meal, Fred Bentley leaned over to a lady at the nearby table and whispered, "That's Laurence Harvey." Suddenly, the word went through the restaurant like prairie fire, and a number of women came over to ask for his autograph. Barrett dutifully complied, signing Harvey's name. One lady even grabbed a scone off the table and took it home, wrapped in a napkin. When someone later chastised Bentley for deceiving the tourists, he responded that far from being cruel, the Cobb countians had given the ladies something to tell back home for years to come.

With the bond campaign successfully completed, the Barrett administration was off to a good start. The goal for the next few years was to put the borrowed funds to use in developing the infrastructure the public demanded. In the next several chapters we will examine the record of the commissioners in building a more modern Cobb County.
On the eve of the 1965 bond referendum the Marietta Daily Journal described Cobb as the largest county in the state without a parks system. The City of Marietta began building parks in the 1930s, but the only county-operated sites were Sewell Park in east Cobb and Larry Bell Park in Marietta. The hundred-member bond study committee proposed the sale of nine hundred thousand dollars of recreation bonds, five-ninths of which would go toward land acquisition, three-ninths to site improvements and equipment, and one-ninth to hire a professional planner. The group envisioned a number of twenty-five to thirty-acre tracts in areas of high population density. In a policy statement issued before the election, the county commission vowed to use the revenues for ball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities. To appease citizens still angry over the Pinetree fiasco, and perhaps to avoid an integration controversy, the commissioners specifically promised that none of the money would be spent on golf courses or swimming pools.¹
Lawson Yow and John Sibley, September 1964 (Yow family collection)

After the referendum passed, the county government created a recreation commission, chaired by Lawson Yow, a resident of Paper Mill Road and son-in-law of Atlanta businessman John Sibley, the former head of the Sibley Commission that prepared Georgia in the early 1960s for school desegregation. Fred Bentley and fellow “Young Turks” introduced Barrett to Sibley during the 1964 campaign. A large property owner in the Sope Creek area of east Cobb, Sibley strongly favored the conversion to a five-member commission. He liked Barrett and became a friend and supporter. Other charter members of the recreation board were Jennie Tate Anderson, Robert Eubanks, Paul E. Lee, and Ed Seay. The board could not incur bonded indebtedness, but it had the power
to provide and supervise public parks. It was required to submit an annual budget to the county commissioners and to recommend the name of a director of the parks department.

The recreation commission hired Charles M. Graves of Atlanta to develop a master plan. Graves was an experienced planner who did his homework and recommended parks for areas where population growth was projected. But his advocacy of large regional parks ran contrary to what the public had been promised and frightened several board members into thinking that he was going too fast and too far. Graves advocated spending the 1965 bond money on five small (twenty-five to thirty-acre) neighborhood parks and one large regional park of 150 acres in south Cobb at Floyd and Hicks Road. His long-range plan called for a total of six regional and thirty-two neighborhood parks. No one objected to neighborhood parks, but the regional centers angered those who wanted green spaces in the maximum number of subdivisions and communities.

The first public official to condemn the plan was Representative Ben Jordan, the lone Republican in the Cobb delegation. A. D. Little, the chair of the parks committee for the Public Improvement Study Committee, also came out in opposition. They pointed out that the county commission had promised to use the bond revenues exclusively on neighborhood recreation sites. With criticism mounting, the county commission on 9 January 1966 repudiated the regional concept, but endorsed Graves' plans for neighborhood parks. At the 9 January meeting, the commissioners authorized the parks and recreation board to secure real estate options for the first five community parks. The local government did not have to pay the full cost of the properties. As soon as it secured options on park sites, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) promised matching grants.

Yow and his fellow board members lacked experience in writing grants, but in April 1966 they concluded a search for someone who could. On the recommendation of the parks and recreation commission, Ernest Barrett and the county government hired twenty-nine year-old Jim Oates, the head of the recreation department in Carrollton, Georgia. Oates devoted the next seven years to creating Cobb's park system. The federal government provided a matching dollar for every dollar the county spent on parkland. Potential park sites in developing areas could be purchased for around a thousand dollars an acre at 1960s
prices. With HUD making a fifty-fifty match, Oates was able to stretch the bond revenues a long way. Cobb received its first HUD award for three park sites in February 1967. Two months later, HUD helped acquire six additional parcels.4

Board chairman Lawson Yow and member Paul Lee spent many hours together in an automobile, traveling around the county looking at potential park properties. Often Jim Oates went with them. The other recreation commission members toured the county as well. At scheduled board meetings they discussed the sites’ relative merits and made recommendations to the elected officials. Yow understood that the county government wanted him to avoid purchasing properties with lakes. The elected officials could no longer keep them segregated and did not want angry constituents denouncing them when they opened integrated swimming areas. As a result, the county lost out on a beautiful piece of property with a lake that Yow and other recreation officials found in west Cobb. Nonetheless, the commissioners’ fears seemed quickly to fade. By the 1970s integrated swimming pools were less controversial and an integral part of some of the new parks.

Yow played the central role in purchasing the property for Terrell Mill Park. A prosperous manufacturers’ representative, Bill Berry, lived with his large family at that location. Berry maintained a cow pasture at a wicked turn in Terrell Mill Road near the intersection with Paper Mill Road. The Yows and Berrys were neighbors and good friends, and the recreation chairman persuaded Berry that the county needed a park more than he needed a cow pasture. The commission was accustomed to paying about a thousand dollars an acre; but in bustling east Cobb, the family received about three times that amount for slightly more than thirty acres.5

On 11 July 1970 Shaw Park off Canton Highway became the first of the new recreation areas to open. Lawson Yow served as master of ceremonies at a celebration attended by fifteen hundred people. With numerous youth softball players looking on, parks and recreation board member Jennie Tate Anderson was handed a bat and asked to hit the first ball officially pitched at the park. Praying harder than she ever had, she managed to hit a line drive down the third base line. The executive director of the Georgia Recreation Commission, John H. Davis, remarked at the dedication that, until recently, Cobb’s accomplishment was almost unheard of. Public parks had historically existed in cities,
not in unincorporated rural areas. But the suburbanization of America had created a need for county recreational facilities. Cobb’s assumption of this responsibility made it a leader in the state in improving the quality of life of its citizenry.6

Not long after the Shaw opening, the county inaugurated Wallace Park on Pisgah Road in the Austell area. In late 1971 county voters overwhelmingly approved a seven million dollar bond referendum, which included four million dollars for park site development, $1.25 million to build a fine arts auditorium at Larry Bell Park, and $1.75 million for a courthouse administration building. The county held a huge celebration in June 1974 when four new parks (Fair Oaks, Fullers, Terrell Mill, and Rhyne) held grand openings on the same day. Later in the year, when the recreation commission completed forty-acre Kenworth and seventy-acre Wild Horse Creek, the system included thirteen parks. The last was unique in possessing an equestrian ring for horse show competitions, as well as standard park facilities.7

Meanwhile, Cobb benefited from state and federal projects along the Chattahoochee River. In 1971 the federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation issued a report calling for an extended park of several thousand acres along the Chattahoochee from Lake Lanier to Peachtree Creek below Vinings. The report noted “an appalling lack of open space” for outdoor recreation in the metropolitan area. It raised the specter of permanent environmental damage if governments failed to act soon to take the lands off the private market. Fortunately for nature lovers, the riverbanks were still largely undeveloped, because of the lack of sewers and highway access. Sam Nunn called for such a park along the Chattahoochee during his successful campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1972. The following year the freshman senator and all ten Georgia representatives introduced legislation providing eighty-five million dollars to purchase various properties along the forty-eight-mile stretch of river. The proposed park was designated the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. Fifth district representative Andrew Young was the most active member of the House of Representatives in working for the plan’s implementation. According to a spokesperson in Young’s office, the purpose of the park was to “protect the natural, scenic, historic and other values” along the river.8

An ardent environmentalist, Governor Jimmy Carter strongly supported the measure. While he was Georgia’s chief executive, Carter
accepted from the Nature Conservancy the Palisades, an important section of the Chattahoochee that towered hundreds of feet above both riverbanks between I-75 and I-285. In 1972 the Conservancy had acquired by gift and purchase a large part of the Palisades from Alfred D. and Thornton Kennedy, the Georgia Power Company, Julian LeCraw, and E. B. Toles. The environmental organization then transferred these properties to the state at the cost of acquisition. With the assistance of a large federal grant Georgia turned the area into a recreational facility. The state offered to transfer the property to the federal government if the proposed Chattahoochee bill should pass.9

As the years passed and the federal bill stalled in Congress, the Friends of the River and other conservation groups became alarmed. Entrepreneurs viewed the riverbanks as lucrative sites for houses and apartments and threatened to bulldoze the trees for their developments. Finally, in August 1978, with Carter in the White House, a slightly scaled down version of the bill reached the president's desk. As fifty Georgians stood behind him in the Rose Garden, the president signed a $73 million authorization bill, permitting the Department of the Interior to acquire up to 6,300 acres in a four thousand foot corridor along the river. Carter remarked that he could not imagine any presidential duty that gave him more pleasure than signing the bill to protect the Chattahoochee.10

At the White House ceremony President Carter complimented the landowners and private organizations that donated land or money to the new recreation area. The National Park Service announced that it would use the State of Georgia's master plan in developing fourteen separate segments of the long park. The first six sections, consisting of 1,332 acres, opened on 1 January 1979.11

Libraries

As was the case with parks, libraries in the past had been a city rather than a county responsibility. Marietta's Clarke Library dated back to 1893. Acworth, Smyrna, and Austell also supported small city libraries. Possessing an Emory University post-graduate degree in library science, Florence Weldon Sibley became the first licensed librarian at the Clarke Library in 1936. As Marietta grew, the little octagon-shaped
Florence Weldon Sibley (Corley family collection)
building became inadequate. By the 1950s patrons often stood shoulder to shoulder trying to read and check out books. Miss Tib, as she was lovingly known, started the first bookmobile before World War II to carry books to rural areas. Due to gas rationing the service stopped during the war, but picked up again afterward. Joanne P. Stratton, who later headed the library system, drove the bookmobile for a while. Sibley helped create branches in the 1940s for Bell Aircraft employees at Marietta Place and for African-Americans at the Fort Hill housing project. Annie Dorsey and the Junior Welfare League also played central roles in creating and maintaining the Fort Hill branch.12

On the recommendation of Sibley and others, Lettie Roberta Williams in 1947 became Marietta's first black librarian in a tiny room of a day care center on Cole Street operated by the housing authority. Williams spent her childhood in Marietta, attending Lemon Street Elementary School and washing dishes for the Sanger family on Atlanta Street. When World War II began, she became the first African-American from Cobb County to join the Women's Army Corps. She went overseas as a clerical worker attached to General Eisenhower's headquarters. After the war, she returned to Marietta and worked part time for the housing authority before becoming the Fort Hill librarian. In 1950 she moved to Washington, D.C., and spent the rest of her career as a typist for the U.S. Coast Guard.13

Hattie Gaines Wilson helped out for several years as a volunteer before being hired to head the Fort Hill branch in 1951. Wilson was born in 1919 in Hart County, but spent most of her childhood in Marietta. After graduating from Lemon Street High School, she completed two years at Paine College in Augusta. For eight years she taught in a one-room school in Mableton before marrying in 1946. When Wilson took over, the facility operated only on Tuesday afternoon and Saturday from 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. In the 1950s the branch had little more than an old set of encyclopedias and a few textbooks. Over the years it grew modestly in size and continued to serve a need in the Fort Hill community long after the library system integrated. After Lemon Street Elementary School closed down, that facility became the home of the Fort Hill branch in the early 1970s. Eventually, it would be renamed the Hattie Wilson Library. In time branches would also be named in honor of Florence Weldon Sibley and Joanne P. Stratton.14

In the late 1940s and early 1950s Cobb school superintendent
Paul Sprayberry took advantage of state matching funds to purchase books for a future county library system. Stored in a room behind the superintendent’s office, the volumes were used to supplement the meager holdings of the public schools. A future library board chairman, J. Dennis Kemp, became concerned about the lack of library resources in unincorporated areas while trying to conduct research for college assignments in the 1950s. Along with fellow Jaycees, he went to the county commissioner and school superintendent to ask what could be...
Public Library Sites, 1976 (Cobb County Planning Department, Cobb Data Report: 1976)
done to help. Part of an old west Cobb family, Kemp agreed to serve on a county-appointed study committee created in 1956.

The committee recommended that the county appoint an eleven-member library board to govern an autonomous system. In 1957 Commissioner Herbert McCollum followed that advice and made Kemp a board member. Thus began the Cobb County-Marietta Library System, with about twenty-five thousand books, mainly at the Clarke Library. The initial budget was $10,500, a third of which was put up respectively by the city school system, the county school system, and the county government. One employee, Frances Clark, was responsible for the unincorporated areas. She worked at a desk in the back room of Superintendent Sprayberry’s office. By the end of the 1950s Marietta’s Clarke library moved from the tiny building on Church Street to the old U.S. Post Office, a 1909 classical revival structure on Atlanta Street. By then the system maintained two bookmobiles, operating from the basement of Marietta’s Park Street School. The bookmobiles traveled many miles around the county, serving rural schools and sparsely populated communities. With the county’s dramatic growth, the library board decided that branch libraries were needed in the towns and suburbs with sufficient population density. Even before the 1965 bond referendum, the number of branches grew to ten and the quantity of books to about one hundred thousand.19

The hundred-member bond study committee noted the system’s progress, but thought the county could do much more. Many of the branches occupied tiny, inadequate facilities. The Powder Springs branch, for instance, operated out of a basement room in city hall so small that patrons had no place to sit down. They could read standing up, check out books, and little else. In the 1965 referendum the voters authorized $985,000 of library bonds to be divided for library construction ($497,800), land purchases ($95,000), books and supplies ($310,000), and equipment ($82,200). With these funds the county placed new library buildings in Powder Springs, Acworth, Kennesaw, Fair Oaks, Mableton, and Oakdale and in east Marietta on Lower Roswell Road. The borrowed revenues also financed additions to the main library in Marietta and the Sweetwater Valley branch in Austell.

An unfortunate scandal marred the library success story. After the main library moved to Atlanta Street, Florence Sibley stepped down as head librarian, but continued to work in acquiring and access-
ing new books. In the 1960s the system went through several directors. Miss Tib's favorite was Robert W. Bullen, whom she trusted implicitly. Financially secure, she endorsed her paychecks back to the library. Bullen was supposed to place them in a discretionary fund for book purchases and other needs. Instead, he cashed them and spent the money on antiques for his home. Bullen misappropriated other funds as well. During a routine audit, an accountant discovered the cancelled checks returned by the bank and wondered where the money had gone. He began a thorough investigation to determine what had happened. Miss Tib had kept records of her donations, but she became confused and agitated when Bullen suggested that she was old and forgetful and had somehow lost track of what she did with her checks. Fortunately, two staff members, Joanne Stratton and Ruth Stoddard, came to her defense and helped prove that Bullen was the culprit.\(^\text{16}\)

On 25 June 1968 the library board publicly announced that funds were missing and that Bullen had resigned after six years as director. Less than two months later, Bullen pled guilty in Cobb Superior Court to five counts of embezzlement. He was already under a psychiatrist's care. On the recommendation of Solicitor Ben Smith, Judge Conley Ingram fined the former library director two thousand dollars and sentenced him to five years probation. The order required Bullen to continue psychiatric treatment and pay back the $16,582.60 he stole from the library fund. At the time of the guilty verdict, Bullen returned ten thousand dollars to the library board, promised to sell his house, and agreed to draw money from a teacher retirement fund and other sources to help restore the stolen revenues.\(^\text{17}\)

In time, the library system regained public confidence, but was constantly frustrated by a lack of funds. The budgeting process was complicated by the fact that revenues came from a variety of sources. The board had to make annual budget requests to the state and federal governments, the county commission, the two public school boards, and the city councils of Marietta, Austell, and Smyrna. By the early 1970s the process was greatly simplified when Ernest Barrett and the county commission made the library system a department of government. After that, the library board merely submitted a budget request to the commissioners and operated on whatever they approved. By the end of the Barrett era in the early 1980s the system had grown to fourteen libraries with a $1.5 million budget.\(^\text{18}\)
The Cobb County Arts Council

As affluent, well-educated people flocked to Cobb County, they demanded the cultural amenities they had enjoyed in other places. The cultivation of the fine arts in the last half of the twentieth century occurred primarily through private, voluntary efforts, with assistance from government at all levels. By the 1960s a number of struggling organizations attempted to promote the visual arts, theater, music, and dance in Cobb County. They often competed with one another, seeking the same patrons and unwittingly holding their exhibitions and performances on the same dates. In 1967 Peggy Dosser Benson headed a steering committee that recommended formation of the Cobb County Arts Council to coordinate activities. The council worked with the public schools to introduce students to art exhibits and symphony and ballet performances. For her pioneering efforts in these and other activities Benson in 1987 received a Governor's Award in the Arts.

From the beginning Benson and the council worked to build a performing and visual arts facility. The old Larry Bell Center, created at the end of World War II, combined the arts and sports in one gymnasium/auditorium. While that structure served the needs of a small county, it became increasingly inadequate as Cobb grew in size. Then, in January 1965 the building was gutted in an early morning fire that left the county without a public auditorium other than those in the schools.19

Even before they had the funds to rebuild, Cobb’s leaders began planning a new complex. In 1968 the arts council began an intensive educational and lobbying campaign to make the case for two separate buildings, one for performing arts and another for athletic events. Cobb commission chairman Barrett was impressed with the group’s ideas and appointed Dr. Glenn Reed, the successor to Benson as arts council president, to head a Larry Bell study committee. Joining Reed were Judge Conley Ingram and retired Arrow Shirt president Robert Garrison. As a result of their efforts, $1.25 million for the two structures were included in a 1971 bond referendum that Cobb voters overwhelmingly supported. Following the election, new arts council president Sam Hensley remarked: “We needed this so desperately. The size of the fine arts auditorium is ideal (seating 600-700) since it will allow for an intimate atmosphere. We wanted something where the audience can relate to
the performers. We didn't need anything that would compete with Atlanta as was talked about at one time."20

Cleveland Cail served as architect for the civic center. The 540-seat theater, later named in memory of Jennie Tate Anderson, opened in 1975 with a performance titled *From Cherokees to Galaxies: History of Cobb County in Dance, Drama, and Music*. The production coordinator was Peggy Benson, while Jim Way directed the play, Betty Shipman Bennett conducted the Cobb Community Symphony, and Iris Antley Hensley directed and choreographed the Cobb Marietta Ballet performance. Meredith Rambo and Bob Rutherford served as artists for the production, and, in all, over three hundred people from the Arts Council's member organizations performed or displayed their art works.21

**The Cobb Symphony Orchestra**

At about mid-century the president of the Marietta Music Club, Mrs. Howard Miller, started holding chamber music sessions in her home. About a dozen instrumentalists responded to her call and began performing on a weekly basis. In 1951 they decided there was sufficient interest to start an orchestra. About twenty to thirty people made up the all-volunteer group, playing watered-down renditions of classical pieces and popular music such as "Blue Tango." The first two conductors were inexperienced and lasted only a short time. Ken Stanton, the head of the county schools' music program, persuaded one of the school band directors to lead the group for a while.

In 1952 Betty Shipman Bennett joined the orchestra. A college-trained musician with some course work in conducting, she was a young mother with two small children. Having taught music in her native North Carolina, upstate New York, and Cincinnati, she was anxious to continue her musical career after moving in 1951 to east Cobb. By chance, she learned about the orchestra through the Lockheed Star, a newspaper for the employees of the Lockheed Georgia Division. When she joined the embryonic group, she played piano and flute. Bennett was not impressed with the skill level or commitment of the charter members, as they often wanted to practice for only a half hour or so before rushing home. Nonetheless, every time she tried to quit, they
came to her and asked her to come back. At first the orchestra put on
one concert a year, with the initial performance on 6 June 1952 at the
Larry Bell auditorium. Before long the conductor began missing prac­
tices, due to other obligations, and Bennett substituted during
rehearsals. Finally, the orchestra leaders asked her to head the group full
time. In 1955 she began a thirty-five-year tenure as conductor of the
Cobb Symphony Orchestra. 22

A large part of the work in the early days was to recruit musicians.
Before Bennett took over, some of the better players had grown dis­
couraged at the lack of direction and dropped out. Gradually, they
returned as they realized the orchestra was more disciplined. Amateur
performers could quit whenever they pleased, but Bennett persuaded
them to commit to scheduled performances and a mandatory two-hour
rehearsal each week. In her first year as conductor, Bennett led the
orchestra in Schubert’s Fifth Symphony, the first work of that complex­
ity ever presented by a Cobb County orchestra. Bennett was well aware
of the risks involved. She faced the performance with “fear and trepi­
dation,” comparing it to “going out in public in a bathing suit.” To her
relief, it was well received, and in following years the orchestra per­
formed the works of other major composers.

The symphony was so poorly financed that Bennett for a number
of years worked for free. Nonetheless, the financial problems began to
abate after the formation of a board of trustees and a women’s guild, the
former to solicit business sponsorship and the latter to raise money from
other private sources. The women’s guild, chartered in 1972, started as
a project of the Marietta Junior Welfare League. Its fifty members were
drawn from the community at large. The board of trustees was organized
in 1967 with prominent Marietta attorney and legislator Bob Flournoy
serving as first president. Flournoy helped the group incorporate and
become eligible for tax-exempt contributions.

Musicians, such as Alice Booth, James Stephens, and Elaine
Kroner, played with the orchestra for decades. In the first several years
of Bennett’s leadership, the symphony was divided about half and half
between high school students and adults, but gradually the orchestra
matured to the point that musicians between ages twenty and forty pre­
dominated. By the 1970s and 1980s a considerable number of Kennesaw
State students gained experience by playing with the symphony. Still
limited financially, with annual budgets of around forty thousand dol­
lars, the orchestra paid the first chairs in the string section, but relied on volunteers elsewhere.

When Bennett retired in 1990 the orchestra had grown to about fifty regular performers and was housed at Kennesaw State College. The school paid most of the conductor's $4,500 annual salary, and Bennett supplemented her income by teaching college students flute and orchestra on a part-time basis. Kennesaw State music professors Wayne Gibson, Joseph Meeks, and Donald Forrester served on the board of trustees, and Meeks, a talented pianist, frequently performed concertos with the orchestra. The Cobb Symphony performed regularly at the civic center's Jennie Tate Anderson Theater and in the James V. Carmichael Student Center at Kennesaw State. While the board searched for a replacement for Bennett, KSC music professor Steven Everett served as interim conductor.21

Everett seemed the front-runner for the permanent position until, for personal reasons, he removed his name from consideration. He eventually became chair of the music department at Emory University, where he taught composition, electronic and computer music, and music of Asia. He also served as co-artistic director and conductor of the innovative Thamyris New Music Ensemble in Atlanta.24 After a yearlong search, the president of the board of trustees, Don Forrester, announced the selection of Steven Byess to replace Bennett. A thirty-year-old Cobb County native, whose ancestors moved to the Tate/Jasper area of north Georgia in the pioneering days of the mid-1800s, Byess had played before with the Cobb Symphony and was currently the assistant conductor and principal bassoonist with the Augusta Symphony Orchestra. A graduate of North Cobb High School and Georgia State University, Byess held a Master of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music in Ohio.25

The arrival of Byess strengthened the tie between Kennesaw State and the Cobb Symphony Orchestra. The conductor became a full-time Kennesaw State music professor with a course release each quarter to head the symphony. For the next nine years the orchestra held its rehearsals on campus, with most of the performances in the college’s Stillwell Theater. By the end of the 1990s about fifteen to twenty Kennesaw students typically performed with the orchestra. Including faculty and alumni the KSU family contributed over a third of the performers of the roughly eighty-five-member orchestra.
Under Byess’ leadership, the orchestra’s annual budgets grew to about one quarter million dollars annually, more than six times the level when he began. Paid professional musicians, covered by a collective bargaining agreement, held all the first chair positions. They, in turn, served as teachers for the volunteer performers. By 1998 the symphony board was able to hire an executive director to handle administrative matters. By the end of the decade, the Cobb Symphony had a growing reputation as a community group of exceptionally high artistic merit. For a three-year period in the late 1990s the Georgia Council for the Arts ranked the group in its top grant-request category along with such competitors as the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Atlanta Opera, and the Atlanta Ballet.

As the symphony expanded in size and quality, however, it experienced growing pains. By the turn of the century the stage of the Stillwell Theater at KSU was far too small for an eighty-five-member orchestra. For each performance up to 20 percent of the performers had to be seated in the wings off stage. The sound of the orchestra also became overwhelming in a facility with little more than three hundred seats for the audience. As the board had difficulty meeting the annual budget, it started scheduling performances in a larger facility, where more tickets could be sold. By the beginning of the new century the symphony held most of its rehearsals at Marietta High School and concerts at the Jennie Tate Anderson Theater or in the sanctuaries of large churches. Before the start of fall semester 2000, Byess left Kennesaw State to join the faculty at the University of Michigan. While he continued to fly back to Cobb for rehearsals and performances, he no longer was affiliated with the local university. Thus, the relationship between college and orchestra became less close. The Cobb Symphony continued to operate in association with, but no longer in residence at KSU. At the start of a new millennium the orchestra seemed to have reached a plateau with growth hampered by the lack of a large concert hall in Cobb County.26

The Visual Arts

Of the seventeen organizations included in the Cobb County Arts Council in the 1960s, one of the largest and most established was the
The Fine Arts Club. After the new county library opened on Atlanta Street, the City of Marietta in 1963 leased to this group the old Clarke Library building on Church Street. There, the Fine Arts Club conducted classes and held exhibits. Over the next two decades the club went through periods of activity and relative inactivity, depending on the interest and efforts of its leadership. In 1982, under the direction of Noah Meadows, a Marietta physician, the organization began to develop more consistent programming. In that year it merged with various other community groups to form the Marietta/Cobb Fine Arts Center with a long-range plan of developing a permanent museum. Drawing on his extensive personal collection and paintings borrowed from other museums, Meadows arranged and served as curator for a special showing entitled The Wyeths: And Other First Families in American Art. The following year the Fine Arts Center collaborated with Kennesaw College in sponsoring an exhibition by University of Georgia emeritus professor Lamar Dodd. Like Peggy Benson, Meadows was honored for his accomplishments with a Governor’s Award in the Arts (1986).

By the last two decades of the century, Kennesaw State regularly displayed in the Sturgis Library and Stillwell Theatre galleries exhibits of leading artists, as well as student and faculty works. The South Cobb Arts Alliance was another local organization that put on frequent shows by local artists. This group began in November 1972 with an arts and crafts festival held on the track and football field at South Cobb High School. In promoting the event, the organizers gained permission to use the name of Robert Meredith, a Powder Springs artist with a national reputation. Many local artists had never displayed their works before and were overwhelmed by the large turnout and the volume of sales. Following this successful demonstration of interest, the organizing committee formed a permanent arts alliance for south Cobb and began holding annual arts and crafts festivals, art exhibits, and concerts. In 1988 the alliance began an annual national juried art exhibition. For years the group had no permanent home and held its art exhibits in a variety of places, including local banks. Finally, the South Cobb Arts Alliance gained permission to display their works in the historic Mable House, a Plantation Plain structure built in the 1840s by Cobb County pioneer settler Robert Mable. In the late 1990s they moved their exhibits next door into a new building, the Mable House Cultural Center, built by Cobb County’s Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs.
Department. Utilizing a five million dollar grant from the state, the parks department at the end of the century renovated the historic Mable house and made plans for a large amphitheater on part of the Mable property.28

Despite a few shows of regional and national significance, the Fine Arts Center, like the South Cobb Arts Alliance, served mainly in the 1980s as a venue for local artists to display their works. The Cobb arts and cultural affairs department joined in this effort in 1983 by initiating an annual Jubilee Southern Festival for the Arts. Held in Glover Park in Marietta, the Jubilee attracted some fifty thousand visitors over a Labor Day weekend. Later, well-attended Jubilees were held at the county fairgrounds and the Galleria. Nonetheless, the public/private collaboration proved problematic when taxpayers insisted that art exhibitions conform to community moral standards. In 1987 arts patrons were shocked when Arts and Cultural Affairs director Kathy Hoppe removed from display a painting, Night Mare and Armadillo, by W. C. Burnett. Arguing that the painting contained abnormal sexual overtones, Hoppe decided its display was inappropriate, regardless of artistic merit. The censorship issue contributed to the cancellation of the Jubilee festival the following year.29

A happier collaboration followed a few years later when the Marietta/Cobb Fine Arts Center began seeking a larger building, where it could maintain a permanent collection. Once more the visual arts benefited from the growth of the Cobb County Public Library System. When the library moved to newer facilities on Roswell and Alexander Streets, the arts group asked for the old Marietta post office building on Atlanta Street. In 1988 the county offered to lease the neoclassical structure to the Fine Arts Center for twenty years with the possibility of three twenty-year extensions. Described by Marietta artist Yvonne Randall as a “work of art itself,” the site proved an ideal home for a Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art. The organization set to work on an ambitious renovation project, including the restoration of the marble floor in the foyer and the Greek Revival style pillars at the front entrance. By the grand opening of the museum on 6 April 1990 the group had raised and spent over $450,000 to provide adequate exhibition, office, and classroom space.

The initial exhibit consisted largely of paintings given or loaned to the museum by local benefactors, most notably seventeen works
donated by Sara and Fred Bentley, Jeanne and Noah Meadows, and Louise and Alan Sellars. According to board president Randall, the opening brought to fruition a “dream to bring top quality visual arts to Cobb County.” During the 1990s the permanent collection grew to over 250 paintings and sculptures, mainly by nineteenth- and twentieth-century American artists. A few months after the opening, the Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art achieved accreditation by the American Association of Museums and gained tax-exempt status as a non-profit 501-C-3 organization.

Even for a county as large as Cobb, the art museum was an ambitious project, and its board struggled continually to raise sufficient funds through private donations and government grants. In the 1980s and early 1990s this and other arts groups remained solvent with the aid of sizeable expenditures from county and city governments. Those appropriations, however, raised troublesome questions about the proper relationship between government and the arts. Many conservatives argued that public funding for the arts was an inappropriate function of government. They thought that government should confine itself to providing for the public’s health, safety, and welfare, and let private contributors support artistic endeavors. They denounced as elitism any suggestion that a privileged few knew better than everyone else what forms of culture and entertainment were worthy of public support. On the other hand, liberal defenders of the arts worried about issues of censorship such as those growing out of the aborted Jubilee festivals. If arts groups expected public support, they might also have to accept community control over what was appropriate. It was illogical to think that taxpayers would back forms of art they found offensive. As we will see in a later chapter, controversies over the art museum and over a local theater brought Cobb much unwanted national publicity in the middle years of the decade.
Roads and Sewers in the Barrett Era

Roads, Bridges, and Interstate Highways

Every administration since George McMillan had sought bond issues to pave roads, but none before matched the $9,375,000 project the Barrett administration implemented in 1965. Cobb was growing year-by-year and in need of ever-greater infrastructure improvements. Prior to the referendum, the county hired a local engineering firm, Hensley-Schmidt, to conduct a survey of Cobb's transportation needs. The company issued a report detailing how best to pull Cobb motorists out of the "mud." Due to limited resources, previous commissioners had failed to correct many wicked curves and excessive grades. In places the pavement was dangerously narrow, inadequately sloped, or excessively rough, due to deterioration. A number of railroad crossings were unprotected. Three rural roads, including Shallowford near Canton Highway, lacked bridges over creeks, forcing motorists to ford streams. The trend toward two- and three-automobile families added to the traffic problem. Country roads that once carried only a few cars a day had become major thoroughfares.
In 1965 about six hundred miles of county roads remained unpaved. Following the successful bond referendum, Barrett set out to make improvements to the major collector roads, thirty-one bridges, and almost six hundred streets. In addition to road improvements, the bond issue provided a million dollars for routine maintenance, freeing general operating funds that the county used to pave sidewalks at the approaches to fifty-five schools.¹

Hensley-Schmidt won the largest contract for engineering work on major thoroughfares. The engineering firms of Mayes Sudderth and of Miller, Stevenson and Baker also received contracts. Most of the planned improvements were completed over the next three years. While the Barrett administration did much to upgrade Cobb's network of roads, it did not end traffic congestion. With the county growing in the 1960s and 1970s by eight to ten thousand people a year, the struggle to keep up with infrastructure needs was never ending. Better roads encouraged builders to construct new shopping centers, homes, and apartments, thus generating more traffic. Improvements helped for a brief time, then the streets became more clogged than ever. Recognizing that much more was needed, the electorate on 24 May 1977 overwhelmingly approved another $19.25 million road bond issue.²

While the county worked on state and local roads, the Georgia highway department made progress on the interstates. When the Barrett administration began, I-20 was being designed to run through the southern part of the county from Atlanta to Birmingham. Its anticipated presence led to one of the most important business coups of the era. In the summer of 1965 Mayor Ivan Allen and other Atlanta officials announced with great fanfare that Six Flags Over Texas would build a theme park in Fulton County. However, the Dallas officials of the Great Southwest Corporation had second thoughts and turned their attention to less expensive lands across the Chattahoochee. In October 1965 Ernest Barrett led an unpublicized delegation to Texas to make Cobb's bid for the amusement attraction. Commissioner Bill Oliver and Cobb Chamber of Commerce special projects director Harold Nix accompanied the chairman.

The vice president of the Great Southwest Atlanta Corporation, John C. Hunt, was impressed with Barrett's eagerness to cooperate. He liked the fact that a large water line and sewer treatment plant already served the area. Despite intensive lobbying by Atlanta officials, Hunt
quietly began purchasing seven parcels of land in south Cobb totaling 276 acres. The largest was two hundred acres belonging to Hue Lee of Atlanta. The Chattahoochee Brick Company and school board member Sollie Cole owned others. The total package came to over a million dollars.

A subsidiary of the Great Southwest Corporation of Texas, the company promised to spend about seven million dollars in developing the park complex, including motels and restaurants around the site, along with a number of exhibits, rides, and trails. Opening in 1967, Six Flags became a major source of summer and weekend employment for students and others looking for seasonal and part-time work. It played a central role in turning Cobb into a favorite tourist stop for visitors from surrounding states.5

Running from Michigan to Florida, Interstate 75 brought millions of people to Cobb County. In time it attracted two major shopping malls and numerous office buildings. For several years in the 1950s and 1960s a controversy raged over whether the interstate should run west of Kennesaw Mountain, parallel U.S. 41, or follow a more eastern route. Before he became a superior court judge (and later a Georgia Supreme Court justice), Conley Ingram advocated a western route. He reasoned that it would create a corridor of development from U.S. 41 to the other side of Kennesaw Mountain, going through the center of the county. He predicted accurately that an eastern location would bring congestion to that part of the county, while the west remained undeveloped.4

Defeated commission candidate O. C. Hubert and the Cobb County Real Estate Board were the most prominent proponents of the central route along the Four Lane. Hubert opposed a more eastern route, claiming it would have a deleterious effect on prime recreation sites along Lake Allatoona.5 However, the advocates of a limited access U.S. 41 were too late. Planners once thought they could turn the Four Lane into such a road by adding a few interchanges. By the late-60s, the U.S. 41 corridor had developed too much, and Hubert and the real estate board fought a losing battle.6

Regardless of the environmental issues, the eastern route gained the support of Governor Carl Sanders, the Cobb commission, the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, most of Cobb’s cities, and a number of civic organizations. That route was the least developed and appeared to be the cheapest alternative. By July 1966, Interstate 75 was completed
from the Chattahoochee River to I-285. Another segment from I-285 to north of Roswell Road (the current North Marietta Parkway) was under construction and nearing completion. From the late 1960s to 1977 travelers going north spilled onto U.S. 41 at that point to continue their journey toward Cartersville. The Marietta to Cartersville stretch was the last uncompleted segment of I-75 anywhere between Tampa, Florida, and Sault Ste. Marie, Canada.7

By the early 1970s, local leaders became increasingly frustrated by the lack of progress, and I-75 became a bargaining chip in the 1974 governor’s race. With two north Georgians, Lester Maddox and Bert Lance, seeking the Democratic nomination, George Busbee of Albany was desperate to find support north of Atlanta. The longtime legislator visited Cobb and met with Representatives Joe Mack Wilson and Al Burruss, powerbroker Harold Willingham, and others. When he asked what he could do to gain their support, the Cobb countians asked for three things: the conversion of Kennesaw Junior College to senior-college status; the completion of the Marietta loop, including an underpass at Atlanta Street under the railroad track; and the construction of the last leg of I-75. Busbee promised to support all three projects and kept his word over the next four years.8

When I-75 was completed in December 1977, Harold Willingham chaired the Committee for Interstate 75 that staged a celebration. Willingham gave much credit to Bert Lance, a Calhoun banker, for the route’s completion. As the director of Governor Jimmy Carter’s department of transportation, Lance resolved a number of troublesome right-of-way problems. When the route opened in December 1977, Lance, by then heading President Carter’s Office of Management and Budget, came down from Washington for the ceremony. Other dignitaries at the ribbon cutting included Carter’s secretary of transportation, Brock Adams; Governor Busbee; the current Georgia Department of Transportation director, Tom Moreland; Senator Sam Nunn; and seventh district congressman Larry McDonald.9

The final segment ran seventeen miles from Roberts Road (the future Ernest Barrett Parkway) to Red Top Mountain in Bartow County. The Marietta Daily Journal reported that within minutes of the 11:00 A.M. opening on 21 December 1977, all lanes were full of traffic as if the road had been there forever. After the ribbon cutting, festivities moved to the Cobb Civic Center in Marietta, where about four hun-
dred guests were treated to a barbecue lunch and about three hours of speeches. Master of ceremonies Willingham compared the completion of the 1,564-mile superhighway to the 1869 opening of the first transcontinental railroad. President Carter phoned in a message that I-75 was the "most important route in the nation" and an example of how road builders can serve modern transportation needs while maintaining a sensitivity to the environment. Governor Busbee emphasized the road's importance in bringing industry, trade, and tourism to the region. Everyone could take satisfaction that this example of intergovernmental cooperation had made possible decades of spectacular economic growth in the I-75 and U.S. 41 corridor.
MARTA

Just a month before the 1965 bond referendum, the county voters decided not to travel down another transportation path. For the last several years the Georgia General Assembly had worked on plans for a multi-county rapid transit network. In the general election on 3 November 1964 Cobb voters narrowly approved an amendment to the state constitution endorsing the concept in principle. Also voting in the affirmative were the people of incorporated Atlanta and the counties of Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton, and Gwinnett.

During the 1965 session the General Assembly worked out a detailed plan for the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), governed by four directors from Atlanta, two each from Fulton and DeKalb, and one each from Gwinnett, Clayton, and Cobb. According to the MARTA act, the five counties and the City of Atlanta would hold separate referenda to ascertain the wishes of the local people. Cobb voted on 16 June 1965. With a number of families on summer vacation, the June turnout was light. The 1964 pro-MARTA vote coincided with a presidential election when over twenty-eight thousand citizens expressed an opinion pro or con. The second time the total vote was just a little over twelve thousand with 6,869 against public transportation and 5,276 for. Cobb was the only county to reject MARTA. Without Cobb, the new authority went into existence, at least on paper, in January 1966.

The MARTA defeat closely paralleled the one legislative race on the June ballot pitting a Democrat against a Republican. Former representative Bill Teague, a Democrat, challenged Ben Jordan, who the previous year had become Cobb's first Republican legislator. Teague supported MARTA. Jordan said he wanted to wait a while. Cobb would vote the following month on Ernest Barrett's $14.9 million bond referendum, and Jordan thought that it would take care of the county's most pressing infrastructure needs. The vote in the legislative race paralleled the MARTA results: 6,950 for Jordan and 5,172 for Teague.

The Marietta Daily Journal credited the Young Republicans with leading the fight against the public transit system. The breakdown by militia districts revealed strong support for MARTA in Marietta, Smyrna, and Vinings, through which the buses and trains would have run, but overwhelming opposition in the other towns and the rural and
suburban areas. According to *Journal* editor James H. Wynn and reporter Pascal Grubbs, the MARTA issue swayed voters to Big Ben Jordan, but the real story of the election was that Republicans simply outworked Democrats. Jordan and his workers knocked on more doors and twice mailed correspondence to all registered voters, while Teague and his backers mailed nothing and did comparatively little handshaking.13

Longtime east Cobb resident Dorsey Dodgen chaired the Cobb County Young Republicans at the time of the MARTA fight. A Goldwater Republican, Dodgen favored limited government and low taxes. The Young Republicans fought what they considered to be a socialized transportation system. Dodgen argued that public buses and trains would never be self-supporting and that people who did not use the system would pay a large part of the fares for those who did. If people really wanted public transportation, he claimed, then private enterprise would serve the need. According to Carolyn Dodgen Meadows, a future national Republican committeewoman, another reason to oppose MARTA was that it planned to send few buses and no trains into Cobb for the next fifteen to twenty years. Yet local people would have to pay taxes to finance the system.

A popular misconception is that Cobb's negative vote reflected a racist desire to keep African-Americans out of the county. If some people voted against MARTA for that reason, the Young Republicans were not responsible. They did not use the race card in their advertisements, and contemporary commentators failed to note race as a factor in the negative vote. For Dorsey Dodgen, the only issue was freedom from government intrusion in an area properly handled by free enterprise.

Numerous local leaders supported MARTA without fear that it would hurt their careers. Ernest Barrett deplored the defeat as "one heck of a big step backwards" and predicted that Cobb eventually would join the system. Mayor Howard Atherton of Marietta predicted that the decision would cost the county in the long run. In a backhanded compliment to the Young Republicans he asserted that if the proponents had worked as hard as the opposition, they would have carried the day. The executive director of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, Glenn Bennett, expressed regret that Cobb County did not join, but echoed the view that "in the not too distant future the citizens of Cobb County will become a part of the rapid transit authority." State Senator Kyle Yancey worried that Cobb would be left out of the planning stage.
Representative Hugh McDaniell raised the fear that developers would bypass a county lacking public transportation, causing Cobb to fall behind its neighbors. Of course, these fears proved not to be true. Cobb continued to grow and prosper without a public bus system. In an age when almost everyone had an automobile, new residents flocked to Cobb's spacious new subdivisions with no apparent concern about the absence of rapid transit. Low taxes, reasonably priced houses, good schools, and safe neighborhoods more than made up for the inconvenience of a long commute to work.14

Even in the four counties that approved MARTA, the public system was years from operation in the mid-1960s. In 1968 voters in Atlanta and unincorporated DeKalb and Fulton counties went to the polls to consider financing MARTA through a $377.6 million bond issue, backed by a property tax increase. With black leaders providing only lukewarm support, the proposal lost in all three jurisdictions. The NAACP and other civil rights organizations were angry that they were underrepresented in the planning stage. They complained that poor and black neighborhoods would receive inadequate service. While MARTA supporters seemed amateurish and disorganized, rapid transit opponents fought vigorously. Meanwhile, the county commissioners of Clayton and Gwinnett sensed that their constituents opposed the bond idea and refused to call a referendum at all.15

Atlanta already had a private bus service operated by the Atlanta Transit System (ATS). At forty-five cents a ride, bus fares were expensive, yet ATS by the late 1960s faced bankruptcy. Part of the problem was that the company was overtaxed. ATS paid the city a gross receipts tax, and riders paid the state a tax included in the price of every ticket. The private system needed relief. A future Cobb County resident, Burton Wamble, represented the southwest Georgia county of Grady at the time. In 1969 he was vice-chairman of the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee when he received a distress call from an ATS executive. With the support of Governor Lester Maddox, the committee managed to lift the sales tax on bus fares. Meanwhile, Atlanta Mayor Sam Massell and the board of aldermen agreed to forego the gross receipts tax, allowing the private system to remain solvent until MARTA could take over.16

By 1971 MARTA officials had profited from earlier mistakes. They placed on the board one of Atlanta's most influential black businessmen, Atlanta Life Insurance president Jesse Hill. The board guaranteed poor
people that the initial fares would be fifteen cents, a third of what ATS charged. MARTA promised to run rail service to the Perry Homes public housing project and to fund the system with a general sales tax rather than bonds. In November 1971 the voters of Atlanta and Fulton and DeKalb counties embarked on the new MARTA system, financed by a penny sales tax, the first local option sales tax in the state's history.17

In hindsight, one can argue that the people of Cobb County were wise to stay out of MARTA. By saving a penny on every dollar purchase, Cobb enjoyed a low-tax environment, where consumers had more control of their personal finances. In the 1960s and 1970s Atlanta lost much of its white middle class to the suburbs, where taxes were lower and real estate more affordable. There is little doubt that “white flight” was accelerated by school integration and other racial factors. But the movement to the suburbs started before the integration crisis and continued after it, as people acted in a manner consistent with their economic self-interest. Suburbanization was central to American life by 1970, when, for the first time, more U.S. citizens lived in unincorporated suburbs than in cities. African-Americans shared the same aspiration for a home and mortgage in the suburbs. In another generation, as a growing number of blacks reached the middle class, they joined whites in the suburban quest. After reaching a low of only 4 percent in 1980, Cobb’s African-American population would begin to grow, reaching 19 percent by the year 2000, the highest percentage since the Great Migration of the early twentieth century.18

If the new Cobb countians of the 1960s and 1970s worked in Atlanta, they poured each morning onto the improved roads and interstate highways to commute to the big city. Fulfilling the American dream of a nice house on a grassy half-acre lot close to highly rated schools, Cobb’s migrants found in fresh new subdivisions the quality of life they wanted. Building the infrastructure to support the county’s suburban growth became the primary function of the county commission and the achievement for which Ernest Barrett is best remembered.

Sewers and the Growth of the Suburbs

When Barrett took office, the lack of sewerage was a critical deficiency in unincorporated Cobb. In a dozen or more subdivisions, developers
had built their own package treatment plants and turned them over to the county to maintain. But much of the county existed on septic tanks, and Cobb’s streams were extremely polluted. According to Cobb’s public health engineer, James M. Womack, “our streams receive water from springs and other seepage of ground water which maintains the flow in the stream. The thousands of septic tanks in Cobb County pollute the water, which in turn pollutes the streams.” The Cobb Health Department branded the lack of sewers and sewage treatment facilities as a major public health risk.19

In February 1966 the Georgia Water Quality Control Service prohibited any new sewage outlets on Sweetwater Creek, a major dumping place for treated sewage from Austell and Marietta. The director of the water quality control board, Wesley B. Williams, asserted that the Chattahoochee River and several of Cobb’s major creeks (Sweetwater, Nickajack, Sope, and Rottenwood) had alarmingly high bacteria counts. Sweetwater Creek caused the greatest concern, because the town of East Point, downstream, used it as the source for its drinking water.20

A growing amount of debris clogged Sweetwater’s channel, threatening Austell with flooding during every extended period of rain. That spelled trouble because Austell’s sewage treatment plant shut down during floods, allowing raw sewage into the stream. The second largest creek in the Chattahoochee-Flint-Appalachicola River Basin, Sweetwater posed a serious health hazard. Nickajack Creek was just as polluted. In 1966 the public became alarmed at the discolored water caused by pollution from private and industrial sources and by the lack of capacity at Smyrna’s Church Road treatment plant. The foaming, malodorous waters below the plant were so polluted that fish could not live in them. Sope and Rottenwood creeks, running into the Chattahoochee above the intake for Atlanta’s water supply, added to the pollution problem.21

Admitting that Cobb was “fifteen years behind,” Ernest Barrett worried that the lack of adequate sewerage would stifle Cobb’s residential and industrial development. In 1966 the county commission contracted with the Hensley-Schmidt engineering firm to develop a master sewer plan. Just as he had done for roads, Barrett hoped to call a referendum to gain taxpayer approval for general obligation bonds to finance sewerage expansion. It was soon apparent, however, that city residents
Creeks of Cobb County (prepared by Mark Patterson, based on 2002 Cobb County Geographic Information System data)
were reluctant to risk tax increases to help the unincorporated areas. Joe Mack Wilson and other key urban legislators refused to introduce enabling legislation for a referendum. So Hensley-Schmidt recommended revenue bonds that did not require a popular vote, since they were backed by user fees from water customers rather than tax revenues. In May 1967 Barrett announced that the county was considering that route and that water customers should expect their bills to go up a dollar or so each month.22

For the next two years a series of frustrating circumstances delayed the start of the sewer program. The bond market was weak in 1968, as the nation experienced a trade deficit and tight money conditions. Barrett, county attorney Sidney Parker, and financier Lex Jolley traveled to New York to argue Cobb's case for thirty-five million dollars of water and sewer revenue bonds. According to Parker, Wall Street was sold on the soundness of the county construction program, but constrained by poor market conditions. Some Atlanta bond companies told Jolley they thought that thirty-five million dollars would bankrupt Cobb County and the investors would never get their money back. Fortunately, Tom Cousins and other large developers spoke in the county's behalf, arguing that a modern sewer system would facilitate quality projects and generate the water revenues needed to retire the bonds.

Willing to take a large view of Cobb's potential, several New York firms formed a syndicate headed by Blythe & Company to offer the county a single bid at 6.5 percent interest, the legal maximum that Cobb could pay. In May 1969 Barrett announced the sale. The bond issue contained twenty-two million dollars for new sewer construction and thirteen million dollars to refinance old sewer bonds. The Atlanta office of Robinson-Humphrey handled the transaction for the New York syndicate. A Robinson-Humphrey executive in New York told the Cobb countians that they might find it “a little tough going in the beginning...but there was no reason why [the financing] wouldn't work fine.”23

After the county commission accepted the syndicate's offer, Barrett, Jolley, and several others went back to New York to pick up the thirty-five million dollar check. On the day of the transaction, they received the funds and had all the paper work cleared up by ten o'clock in the morning. Barrett wanted to deposit the money as quickly as possible, so that the money would start drawing interest that day. He had calculated that the interest earned in one day on thirty-five million dol-
Drainage Areas

Drainage Areas and Treatment Plants (Cobb County Planning Department, Cobb Data Report: 1976)
Lex Jolley working of water problems with Herbert McCollum in the previous administration (McCollum interview, Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Kennesaw State University)

...more than pay the delegation’s hotel and travel expenses. Chase was the correspondent bank for the First National Bank of Cobb County, where much of the money would be deposited, but Chase’s headquarters were nearly ten blocks away, and a steady rain was coming down. On rainy weekday mornings, cabs were difficult to flag down in the Wall Street area, but Barrett was determined to reach the bank on time. While the rest of the delegation stayed dry, Barrett and Jolley struck off on foot, running half the way. An “old country boy,” Barrett did not mind getting wet.

The two Cobb leaders reached the bank with time to spare, so they decided to purchase some coffee from a sidewalk vendor. As they sipped their drinks under the merchant’s shed, the proverbially rude New Yorker shouted at them: “That’s just for folks buying coffee; you’ll have to go outside to drink it.” Angered by the rebuke, Barrett glared at him, pulled out the thirty-five million dollar check, and demanded, “How much do you want for this damned...stand?” For a moment the vendor’s mouth quivered, but no words came out. When he finally composed himself, he retorted, “Mister, when you get through with that cof-
fee, if you want another one, it’s on me.” On later trips to New York, Barrett and Jolley went by the stand, and the proprietor always remembered the commission chair and the incident.24

Even after the completion of the deal, the county’s mayors continued their criticisms. Howard (Red) Atherton of Marietta claimed that the plan was too expensive and would bankrupt the water and sewer system if the county found itself in a recession. Smyrna’s mayor, George Kreeger, expressed similar sentiments. The debate exposed a conflict of interest between the unincorporated areas, where sewers were desperately needed, and the cities, where sewage systems were already in place. Before the municipalities were willing to join the county sewer system, they insisted that the water rates charged urban customers remain low.25

As Cobb raised water and sewer rates to pay off the revenue bonds, homeowners joined the chorus of complaints. In November a delegation of women attended a commission meeting to express their outrage at high water bills. Their spokesperson implored the commissioners to reconsider and lower the rate structure. One woman said her bill was so high that she let her children flush only every third time. Several turned their wrath on county engineer Bob Sutton, claiming that he did not return phone calls. Barrett scolded the critics for not attending public hearings when the rate structure was first advertised. He asserted that the sewer plan had the endorsement of several grand juries, the Chamber of Commerce, the Marietta Daily Journal, and all the civic clubs. The commissioner reasoned, “We’ve got children in the hospital with hepatitis [due to seepage from septic tanks].... Every treatment plant we’ve got is overworked.... We’ve got no alternative but to use the new rate structure until it shows we can pay off the...bonds.”26

As Cobb began to build sewer lines and treatment plants, Smyrna and Marietta gradually came to see the wisdom of a united effort and joined the county system. Smyrna mayor Harold Smith met in early 1970 with Wesley Williams of the Georgia Water Quality Control Service. At first Smith hoped the state would help improve Smyrna’s treatment facilities, but Williams told him the county needed to unite behind one large system. He gave the cities an ultimatum to upgrade or join the county system. In February 1971 Smyrna signed a contract with the county to join the sewer system at a cost of twenty-five cents per thousand gallons. In December the Marietta Board of Lights and Water
approved a similar sewer contract with the county.27

The county commissioners faced sharper criticism from environmentalists than from cities or irate customers. In the fall of 1970 Cobb and Fulton agreed to build a joint sewer line down Cobb's side of the Chattahoochee River, the common border between the two. The arrangement made sense from a financial perspective because Cobb's shoreline was somewhat flatter, with the most imposing parts of the Palisades rising above Fulton's riverbank. Starting at the Marsh Creek plant, Fulton planned to run sewer pipe across the river bottom and then dig a ditch for about a mile down the east Cobb shore to Sope Creek. After burying the sewer line, the county would cover over the ditch. At Sope Creek, Fulton's line would link with Cobb's and the joint sewer would continue another eight miles to the Chattahoochee River Wastewater Treatment Plant, then under construction, on
Atlanta Road. Along most of the eight-mile route from Sope Creek to Atlanta Road, workers planned to dig a ditch about fifteen to sixteen feet deep to bury a sewer pipe of seventy-two inch (six foot) diameter. Cobb taxpayers would benefit from Fulton paying half the cost for a sewer line Cobb intended to build anyway. Chairman Barrett announced that Cobb would “come out ahead financially, and at the same time satisfy the water control and ecology people.”

The chairman’s latter assertion proved to be wishful thinking. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted the nation’s first environmental impact study on the Chattahoochee project and raised concerns about the effect of the pipeline on the high banks of the Palisades. The agency demanded that the county tunnel underground for about five thousand feet from Rottenwood Creek to Powers Ferry Road, rather than blasting away the cliffs to bury the sewer line. Roy Woods, the regional director of the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, supported the EPA position. He said he sympathized with Cobb’s desire to control pollution, but feared the ditch through the Palisades would destroy their natural beauty. “It took the Lord half a billion years to build those Palisades,” he said, “and would take man only a few days to destroy them.” He claimed, “The Park Service could design that sewer line so that you wouldn’t know it was there, and I feel sure the county could too.”

County engineer Bob Sutton responded that an EPA-proposed tunnel would cost Cobb an additional seven hundred thousand dollars. Barrett argued that Cobb had contracted with Fulton so that the Palisades could be saved on at least one side of the river. He asserted, “If they [the EPA] keep on holding this thing up, they are going to force us to change the contract. Fulton County—like us—can’t come up with any more money. We can’t continue to hold up the contracts, with money in the sinking fund. We can’t afford to keep losing interest money—we need to tie some customers in.”

The conflicting viewpoints of developers and environmentalists came out at a public hearing on the project conducted by the EPA. The Friends of the River, the Sierra Club, and the Georgia Conservancy criticized Fulton County’s weak regulatory ordinances. Spokesman Robert L. Schwinn doubted that “the high density development fostered by the real estate promoters and speculators with the connivance of the county commissioners could ever occur without access to major
sewer lines." He blamed the EPA for not standing up to the real estate speculators. On the other hand, an Atlanta developer, Blane Kelly of the Landmark group, argued that the environmentalists were "judging the life style of Americans...whether they must live in the high density urban environment of Atlanta or in a small town like Alpharetta." He claimed, "Without the sewers, you are not giving them a choice." The Fulton County engineer, Howard Frandsen, made a similar point, insisting that newcomers deserved the same services that established residents received. He predicted, "Installing sewer lines that are too small or speculating about the effects of uncontrolled urban runoff will not change the metropolitan area growth pattern."

After several months of haggling, Sutton and Barrett realized that they had to give in. The EPA director of facilities, Asa B. Foster, Jr., wrote Barrett that any future federal grants hinged on the county's willingness to cooperate. Sutton admitted that "if we hadn't done this, EPA would not only have all of our federal funds cut, but could have the cut
retroactive where we would have to repay all the money we had gotten on our sewer program, about $5.6 million." Cobb’s protests were primarily to give Sutton time to do some “horse trading.” The EPA ultimately reduced its demands, requiring only about 3,700 feet of tunneling (instead of the original five thousand) with occasional open cuts, where buffer zones of trees and other vegetation would preserve the scenic view. The federal government also agreed to increase its contribution to the project, allowing the county to break even on the added cost of saving the Palisades.31

As construction of the sewer line proceeded, U.S. district attorney John W. Stokes complained that Cobb had violated the 1899 Refuse Act by allowing silt pollution into the Chattahoochee. He singled out two areas: the riverbank near I-75 at Rottenwood Creek and the Cochise subdivision in Vinings. Cochise homeowners objected to the project going through their backyards. One woman with experience at well drilling convinced the neighborhood that the pipeline would cause the riverbank to slide into the water. Engineer Sutton admitted a silting problem, but argued it was nothing compared to the large quantities of topsoil needlessly flowing into the water supply from poor agricultural practices upstream. Noting that the county had already begun to replant and reseed the excavated areas, Sutton maintained, “We are going to do better…. We have to face the fact that we could have been more effective. But then you can always do a better job, even if it is washing and ironing clothes.” The county persuaded most Cochise residents to allow the pipeline through their properties, but where they refused to grant easements, the government condemned the necessary acreage.32

Cobb changed its plans on occasion to satisfy the concerns of preservationists. For example, the engineers moved the pipeline a considerable distance from the river at Rottenwood Creek to save a tree with a carving by a Civil War soldier. One of the county’s most historic sites was the paper mill ruin along Sope Creek at Paper Mill Road. The mill dated back to before the Civil War and remained in operation until about 1902. As at the Palisades, the EPA wanted the county to go under this significant site. Cobb agreed to tunnel through about a half mile of solid rock, and, in return, the EPA offered to pay a third of the cost of a twelve-mile Sope Creek line.

Sope Creek was terribly polluted, and east Cobb residents had
complained for years about the “obnoxious odor” of the water. Extensive development above and along the creek overburdened the East Marietta treatment plant. Waste from industrial sites and septic tanks poisoned the water and made it unsafe to touch or drink. The county tried to place “Polluted—No Swimming” signs along the creek bank, but vandals stole them about as fast as they went up. At one point, county engineer Bob Sutton halted any further sewer tie-ins because the treatment plants were so overloaded. Developers built new east Cobb homes with septic tanks or ran dead-end sewers that they hoped would eventually connect to the county system. In the meantime, Cobb sent out “honey wagons” to tap the dead ends and carry away the waste.

In late 1973 the huge Chattahoochee River Wastewater Treatment Plant went into operation and began handling about ten million gallons of sewage daily. Later renamed the Robert L. Sutton Water Reclamation Facility, the $4.5 million project purified solid waste and performed a secondary treatment on wastewater. At the plant’s dedication county engineer Sutton said that it eventually would be equipped to perform a tertiary treatment, achieving 99 percent waste removal before the purified water was dumped into the Chattahoochee.

During the next year the county completed the lower part of the Sope Creek line and began work on the upper. By that point scientific studies made clear that Sope Creek pollution endangered Atlanta’s drinking water, and both the federal EPA and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) pressured Cobb to complete the project. The entire eight million dollar Sope Creek line was completed in 1975, sending raw sewage directly to the Chattahoochee plant and allowing the county to close down two outdated treatment facilities on Gresham and Sandtown roads. With the “dead-end” sewers now connected, the water department retired the fleet of thirteen “honey wagons,” saving the county over one hundred thousand dollars a year.

In years to come, county engineers would further expand the wastewater system, maintaining a south Cobb plant in Mableton, increasing the capacity of the Chattahoochee facility, and building treatment sites just south of the Cherokee border on Noonday Creek and near Kenworth Park between Kennesaw and Acworth. Yet by the mid-1970s, with the completion of the Chattahoochee and Sope Creek
projects, the Barrett administration had already prepared the way for the tremendous suburban explosion that would make east Cobb one of the nation's wealthiest locales. Unincorporated east Cobb did not develop by accident. In addition to its role in providing the necessary infrastructure, the Barrett administration did much to modernize planning and zoning to encourage rational growth. We will turn to that topic in the next chapter.
Planning, Zoning, and the Growth of East Cobb

The Planning and Zoning Commission

As the Barrett administration improved Cobb’s infrastructure and the county became an increasingly desirable place to live, political and business leaders recognized the need for a comprehensive land use plan. Suburban homeowners typically held an ideological bias against big government, but a pragmatic desire for zoning controls that protected their property values and quality of life. If developers wanted to build houses and shopping centers, taxpayers insisted that they not overburden the existing roads, sewers, and schools. In 1964 Representative Bob Flournoy sponsored a bill in the Georgia legislature that created a Cobb County zoning department, headed by a professional college-trained planner. In his last year in office, Herbert McCollum chose Louis Smith as the first person to hold the planning post.

McCollum was often at odds with Smith and the appointed planning and zoning commission. After McCollum and the advisory board overruled them on a number of zoning applications, one planning board
member, Mableton realtor George Wilson, resigned in protest, exclaiming he was "tired of being nothing more than a stooge and a rubber stamp." When the five-man commission took office in January 1965, one of their first actions was to reappoint Wilson. The south Cobb businessman returned only after Chairman Barrett pledged to listen and follow the planners' lead. Joining Wilson on the planning and zoning commission were J. B. (Jake) Ables, a Smyrna councilman and former mayor; Dr. Robert Hayes, a Georgia Tech engineering professor; George Thompson, the proprietor of South Cobb Cleaners; and David Kelly, a Lockheed civil engineer. The county commission selected Kelly, a holdover from the previous board, as the new chairman.

Although Cobb's first land use plan dated back to Rholie Ward's administration, Herbert McCollum had ignored it. The Barrett team hired Hensley-Schmidt to develop a new plan. In late 1966 the consultants presented a report. They said it was not "a detailed land development guide," but a broad picture of the direction the county might take over the next fifteen years. According to their research, Cobb was only 25.8 percent developed, yet it was already suffering from the unplanned "scatteration" of subdivisions across the landscape, especially north of Marietta, in Vinings, and in a triangle bordered by Powder Springs, Austell, and Smyrna. They argued that unregulated suburban sprawl, resulting from land speculation, was costly to governments trying to provide services. The Hensley-Schmidt report condemned the growth along U.S. 41 and other highways of strip shopping centers that were unattractive, depreciated the value of neighboring properties, lacked sufficient off-street parking, and contributed to the county's traffic problems.

The consultants recommended that Cobb County build more schools, prohibit residential construction on undersized lots, and prevent commercial encroachments on residential neighborhoods. To ensure quality growth, Hensley-Schmidt advocated urban renewal in poorer neighborhoods, strict zoning, countywide code enforcement, and the encouragement of neighborhood improvement associations.

After about six months of discussion, the planning and zoning commission adopted the Hensley-Schmidt report and presented it to the elected leaders as a guide to decision making. From the beginning, the county commission split its votes on policy questions with Chairman Barrett and eastern district commissioner Bill Oliver (or his
replacement, T. L. Dickson) on one side, western district commissioners Al Burruss and Tommy Brown on the other, and eastern district commissioner Harry Ingram the swing vote. Ingram generally leaned toward the Barrett/Oliver/Dickson faction, but was a peacemaker who sided enough with the western commissioners to maintain their trust. He used his position to build compromise and harmony on the board.

East and west Cobb had profoundly different interests. The eastern district was suburbanizing around an affluent, transient population that did not necessarily expect to stay in Cobb forever. East Cobb newcomers typically considered themselves Atlantans before Cobb counties and more likely read the Constitution than the Daily Journal. They would send Republicans to the county commission a decade before the other side of the county did so. Much of the western district remained rural through the Barrett years and preferred zoning policies that kept out east Cobb style developments. In an indication of zoning fights to come, the commission divided three to two for the Hensley-Schmidt plan, with the two western commissioners voting in the negative.

For much of Barrett’s first decade in office, Dr. Robert D. Hayes served on the planning and zoning commission. A Georgia Tech professor of electrical engineering, Hayes completed his doctorate in May 1964. That summer he worked in Tommy Brown’s campaign. When Brown joined the commission, he nominated Hayes to the planning board. The young professor was involved in the county’s initial efforts to implement the Hensley-Schmidt study. Although Hayes had never taken a planning course, he occasionally carpooled with Malcolm Little, a Marietta neighbor and head of the planning department at Tech. Little gave Hayes a crash course in urban planning. He quickly found that the thinking process for an engineer and a planner was the same. Coming from slightly different angles, planners and engineers dealt with questions of where to build roads and sewer lines, how to control traffic flow, and how to zone land to be cost effective. The board typically met once a month to plan and at least twice a month to zone. Hayes arranged his teaching schedule so that his Thursdays were free for board business. Like most of the other members, he spent his weekends traveling the county to investigate upcoming zoning requests.

Louis Smith and his staff efficiently put together detailed information and made recommendations on each zoning application, but board members needed to view properties for themselves to make intel-
ligent judgments. As the number of applications rose, they began to divide them geographically, with eastern appointees focusing on properties in the eastern half of the county, and western appointees doing the same in their section. In the beginning the board had almost no guidelines. The slim 1965 codebook required little more than that new houses be at least 1,200 square feet. The only zoning categories were light industrial, heavy industrial, light commercial, heavy commercial, apartments, residential on quarter-acre lots, and residential on half-acre lots.

Ernest Barrett brought elected and appointed officials together to discuss issues and set policy guidelines. The chairman created a college seminar-room atmosphere where all ideas were taken seriously and everyone was encouraged to express opinions. Barrett believed that public servants had a moral obligation to do their best for the people of the county. He cautioned against excessively restrictive regulations that prevented responsible developers from making a fair profit, but he also insisted that builders not hurt their neighbors. In the 1960s and 1970s the zoning board and county commission developed a one-inch thick zoning code as they established precedents with each application.

At the beginning of the Barrett years east Cobb was rural from the Big Chicken on the Four Lane (U.S. 41) to the town of Roswell. Nonetheless, the county was changing rapidly, especially in the corridor between U.S. 41 and I-75, then under construction. Commuters complained constantly about traffic jams during rush hour along the Four Lane. Hayes favored a commercial zoning for the entire corridor, so that the zoning board did not have to consider every project. He opposed apartments and other residences between the two thoroughfares, thinking they would discourage quality, income-producing office buildings and shopping areas. His was a minority view, however, and the commission allowed a number of apartments in the corridor.

In the 1960s the residents of east Cobb were particularly concerned about the fate of Powers Ferry Road, near which numerous Lockheed employees lived. As applications for apartments and service stations poured in, the planners and commissioners did their best to listen to citizen complaints and slow down commercial developments. In that era they managed to keep strip shopping centers from overtaking the major east Cobb intersections. The planning board used Roswell Road in Sandy Springs as an example of the type of over development
it should avoid.

After several years as a planning commissioner, Hayes resigned to take a job in Florida. Two years later he rejoined the Georgia Tech faculty at the urging of Dr. Ben Dasher, brother of prominent Marietta businessman Campbell Dasher. When he returned, friend and neighbor Arthur Crowe was chairing a Chamber of Commerce committee on planning and zoning. The distinguished attorney invited Hayes to accompany him to a meeting of the county commission. Barrett spotted Hayes and, during a break, waved him up front. Before the meeting resumed, he asked Hayes to become chairman of the planning commission. The Tech professor held that position from 1969 to 1973.

At first, the planning and zoning board and the county commission sat together behind one big table, with members of the respective bodies alternating seats and Barrett and Hayes sitting side by side. Later, they moved to a meeting room with two tiers of tables, the zoning board sitting below and the elected officials above. With Hayes conducting the zoning meetings, applicants presented their requests, the public made comments, and the zoning commission discussed and made recommendations. Before sunshine laws the members frequently went into executive session, excluding the press and public, while they decided what to do. After the zoning commission made its recommendations, Barrett called the county commission to order for further discussion and a final decision. In the Barrett years, the elected officials followed the planning board's lead about 90 percent of the time.

The zoning process typically involved a great deal of give and take among developers, homeowners, and commissioners. It seemed to work best when zoning attorneys presented an applicant's case. They usually knew what the planning board would permit and how to strike a deal. When developers wanted to build large residential subdivisions, board members asked them whether they were willing to donate land for a school or a fire station to serve the community. Entrepreneurs representing themselves generally balked at such proposals, but experienced zoning lawyers realized the board would drive a hard bargain and came prepared to make an offer.

Representatives of homeowners associations were also able to gain concessions from developers if they were willing to negotiate. One of the most outspoken community representatives was Betty Ann Rhodes, who lived with her physicist husband on Post Oak Tritt. She
came well prepared to commission meetings with detailed information on industrial pollution of Sope Creek and other streams and how many gallons of water would run off the pavement from streets and parking lots around commercial developments. The members of the planning board, as well as the county commissioners, encouraged quality projects and expected contractors to follow county guidelines. The process ideally involved a balance of power between developers and homeowners, with both sides benefiting from the county's growth. Bob Hayes became concerned that too many construction crews ignored county stipulations on buffers. When the county required heavy vegetation, the workers sometimes planted something less protective. The planning board hired future sheriff Bill Hutson, then a Marietta patrolman, to deliver court orders to unresponsive contractors.10

Subdivisions

The first large subdivision to go into east Cobb during the Barrett administration was Tom Cousins' mammoth, 750-acre Indian Hills project near Sope Creek between Roswell and Lower Roswell roads. The Atlanta developer conceived the project in 1967, and then spent a decade planning, landscaping, and constructing houses. When Cousins appeared before the board in the late 1960s with his zoning request, residents of the area came to oppose him. Homeowners on their five-acre lots wanted to keep that part of the county rural, and they had legitimate fears about traffic and water run-off. Sewers had not yet reached that far and Cousins had to build his own package plant until the county system was completed.

Cousins promised the board a quality development, but the zoning code was so inadequate that the county could not require particular standards. The experienced businessman tried to reassure everyone by vowing that no house would be sold for less than twenty-three thousand dollars, an upper-middle-class price at the time. Some Atlantans doubted that anyone would buy expensive houses way out in east Cobb, but Cousins believed the proximity to I-285 would make the area attractive to those who worked near the perimeter highway. That proved to be the case. A large number of original Indian Hills residents were pilots and other employees at Hartsfield International Airport.11
In 1968 future U.S. congressman Johnny Isakson opened the first Northside Realty office in Cobb County. In the 1940s his parents, Edwin and Julia Isakson, had begun buying rundown Atlanta houses to renovate and resell for a profit. From this beginning the elder Isakson moved into the real estate business, working for several companies before joining with Howard Chatham in 1960 as the manager of Northside Realty's first and only office, located in Buckhead. Possessing a business degree from the University of Georgia, twenty-three year-old Johnny Isakson arrived in Cobb County on the eve of east Cobb's tremendous expansion. By the end of the first year Isakson was supervising six agents and doing about two hundred thousand dollars of business a month, a respectable amount in an era when middle class homes sold for fifteen to thirty thousand dollars. Eleven years later, when the young businessman assumed the presidency of Northside Realty, the company owned three Cobb County offices where sixty agents annually brought in over eighty-two million dollars in sales.12

According to Isakson, at least half of the phenomenal appreciation of real estate values in east Cobb during the 1970s and 1980s can be credited to Ernest Barrett's success in running water and sewer lines into that part of the county. In 1970, when Tom Cousins started selling houses in Indian Hills, Northside Realty was there. The only commercial establishment within miles was a country grocery store and gas pump at the corner of Lower Roswell and Johnson's Ferry. Shortly after the first Indian Hills houses went on the market, the bridge across Sope Creek on Lower Roswell was washed away in a rainstorm. The area was so undeveloped that the county left the road closed for eighteen months. Isakson facetiously suggested that, "Cousins had connections with the Lord," because, going from Marietta, the closed road was just beyond the first part of Indian Hills. Prospective homebuyers could reach the new subdivision, but go no further; so, "It was kind of like having a railroad dead-ending in your hometown. Everybody was going to get off."13

One of the most unusual projects in east Cobb was the Loch Highland subdivision, north of Shallowford, off Mabry Road, developed by Earl McMillen in 1973. The 360-acre residential community consisted of contemporary homes around two manmade lakes. Unlike the more traditional residences of the era, Loch Highland houses contained an abundance of natural materials, such as rock and stone, that helped
them blend into the scenery. Reflecting the public’s growing environmental awareness, McMillen hired an arborist to save as many trees as possible, even notching some houses to give trees room to grow. Bill Byrne, a future county commission chairman, handled much of the landscaping for the project. As the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) drove up the price of oil, Atlantans for a while seemed less likely to drive to weekend cabins in the mountains. McMillen conceived of Loch Highland as a permanent “vacation home in the woods” for affluent people contented to get along without a second house.

Unfortunately for the innovative developer, the energy crisis of the mid-1970s helped drive America into a recession that undermined the real estate market. Hard times at Lockheed contributed to a temporary local downslide. In 1975 McMillen was forced to declare bankruptcy. Before he went under he sold undeveloped lots in Loch Highland to a variety of contractors. To protect the integrity of the community, he avoided giving individual builders more than one lot in any particular part of the development. In this manner he limited the possibility of two houses of similar design being built near each other. Builders did their best to alter designs so that no two homes were exactly alike. From the beginning Loch Highland attracted nonconformists who took pride in the subdivision’s uniqueness. Although McMillen failed to make the profits he anticipated, he succeeded in enhancing east Cobb’s reputation as a desirable place to live.14

Cumberland Mall

Historian Kenneth Jackson has remarked that “the Egyptians have pyramids, the Chinese have a great wall...and Americans have shopping centers.” Although the Columbia University professor doubts that the modern mall is the best use of money and space, he concedes that he holds a minority view. By the late twentieth century enclosed malls would be found in Hong Kong, Singapore, Paris, London, and most affluent metropolitan areas. Automobile-centered shopping centers with stores surrounded by large parking lots go back to Kansas City’s Country Club Plaza in 1923. At the end of World War II, however, the nation had only eight planned shopping centers with ample parking
and central management. Everything changed after the war when millions of Americans flocked out of downtown areas to the suburbs. Inspired by Milan's Galleria and the small shops of Switzerland and his native Austria, Victor Gruen built the first enclosed indoor mall in suburban Minneapolis in 1956. The climate-controlled Southdale Shopping Center, with two department stores, specialty shops, and many skylights, appealed to snow-bound Minnesotans, and served as a model for enclosed malls throughout the nation.

In August 1973 Cobb County acquired its first enclosed shopping area when Cumberland Mall held a grand opening for four major department stores (Rich's, Sears, Penney's, and Davison's) and 110 smaller shops. During recent decades the county had been served by several smaller shopping centers, notably Belmont Hills in Smyrna, Cobb Center on South Cobb Drive, and Town and Country on Roswell Road. Located on U.S. 41 near I-75 and I-285, Cumberland Mall was Cobb's largest commercial project, containing more stores and floor space than the three earlier centers put together. Only one other southeastern mall, in Pompano Beach, Florida, boasted as many as four department stores.

At the opening ceremonies Ernest Barrett predicted that the new mall would be the “first of many” for Cobb County. Noting that Cobb was perceived as a “bedroom community” for Atlanta, the chairman argued that Cumberland Mall gave more people an opportunity to work near home. The Marietta Daily Journal reported that all 5,200 parking spaces were occupied by 10:30 A.M. on opening day, with as many vehicles from Cherokee, Douglas, Fulton, and Clayton as from Cobb. Developed by Crow, Carter and Associates of Atlanta, the enclosed shopping center took advantage of the growing affluence in metropolitan Atlanta's northern suburbs. According to company president Frank Carter, the land and buildings at Cumberland Mall exceeded sixty million dollars in value and contained 1.25 million square feet of floor space.

Despite the smiles of opening day, the county and the developers were sometimes at odds during the massive project's construction phase. The task of providing utilities proved a major challenge. The Chattahoochee River Wastewater Treatment Plant was still several months from completion, and county engineer Bob Sutton had to tell Crow, Carter and Associates that they would have to pay Cobb for a
temporary treatment plant until the mall could tie in with the county system. The developers balked until Sutton asked them to calculate the extra interest on their construction loan that a delayed opening would cost. On sober second reflection, the project managers gave into county demands and asked Sutton when he wanted the check for the temporary plant.18

As chairman of the planning board, Bob Hayes had similar experiences. Because a project this size was so novel, everyone made mistakes. Cumberland Mall proper consisted of seventy-two acres, but Crow-Carter eventually developed about 360 acres, including office buildings, condominiums, and apartments. The contractors had trouble staying within their original boundaries. On the west side they were supposed to maintain a one-hundred-foot construction buffer to protect homeowners, but they often did not. They covered with silt the home of a man in a wheelchair, and they dumped refuse on Stillhouse Road. Distraught homeowners contemplated selling their properties and moving away if the builders would not negotiate with them. Hayes called up Crow-Carter executives and told them they were not treating their neighbors fairly. In the end the developers purchased more acreage than they had intended, buying out the most irate neighbors and expanding their overall project. The opening of Cumberland Mall was just the first step in the phenomenal development of high-rise office buildings and retail centers in the “Platinum Triangle” near I-75, I-285, and U.S. 41. The creation of the Galleria, the conference center, and the Cumberland Community Improvement District would be major achievements of later decades.19

Barrett v. Hamby

In evolving a consistent, coherent zoning code, the planning board and county commission sometimes set precedents that angered applicants and led to lawsuits. On occasion, the commission got into trouble for paying more attention to irate interest groups than to professional planners. In the mid-1970s the county became involved in a landmark case over prime east Cobb real estate at the northeast corner of Sandy Plains and Piedmont roads, diagonally across from Sprayberry High School.20 At this location the estate of Mack C. Hamby owned 26.5 undeveloped
acres that county planners had zoned R-20, a classification allowing single-family homes on half-acre lots. The adjacent land to the north on Sandy Plains was zoned commercial. No natural boundaries separated the two properties or justified why one should be commercial and the other residential. A half-acre cemetery sat approximately in the middle of the Hamby property, lessening its residential value.  

The executor of the Hamby estate was anxious to sell the property, but the only offers came from developers interested in its commercial use. So the executor went before the planning board and asked for a reclassification to PSC (Planned Shopping Center). While making his case, the applicant submitted a petition signed by twenty-seven nearby property owners in support of the rezoning. Several citizens spoke against the request on the grounds that a shopping center in that location would increase traffic congestion and detract from the area's residential nature. Administrators at Sprayberry High School were concerned about the impact on traffic, and a student told the commission that the shopping center would be a distraction. One speaker claimed to have a petition with over a thousand signatures in opposition to the Hamby request. Unfortunately, the petition did not become part of the official record; so it was impossible to know where the petitioners lived or whether the signatures were valid. Consequently, in the later judicial hearing the court was unable to determine whether the petitioners had a right to have their opinion heard.  

The zoning department and the planning board sided with the applicant and recommended the PSC zoning, but the county commission, responding to community pressures, rejected that advice and retained the residential classification. The Hamby executor then filed a complaint in Cobb Superior Court, arguing that the county had unfairly and unconstitutionally deprived the heirs of the property's maximum value. In the hearing before Judge Howell Ravan, the attorney for the plaintiffs, Jean E. Johnson, Jr., put on the stand a local property appraiser, Carl J. Tschappat. The latter testified that he had evaluated the property for a prospective buyer and concluded that the traffic at the Piedmont-Sandy Plains intersection was already too heavy for a residential development. Residents in a subdivision would be motoring out of their driveways at the same hour in the morning when students were arriving for school. In contrast, stores in a shopping center likely would open later and close long after the school day and, thus, cause less rush-
hour traffic congestion. Tschappat concluded that the property’s highest and best use was as a shopping center.22

A real estate broker, Charles Wilson, offered similar testimony, claiming that the high traffic count, the cemetery, the proximity to the high school, and the lack of trees on the property made the Hamby estate more desirable for commercial than residential purposes. The attorney representing the county, Ben F. Smith, found himself in a weak position since the county zoning administrator had recommended a PSC classification and the planning board had gone along with him. The county’s land use map was new and incomplete. In preparation for the trial, planning board chairman Bob Hayes spent his weekends at the courthouse with colored pencils, helping department chair Louis Smith color in the zoning map.23 Attorney Smith put department head Smith on the stand to testify that the future land use plan was before the commissioners at the time of their vote. Despite his earlier advice, the chief planner did his best to defend his bosses on the county commission. He observed that the map was merely a guide with no legal force, but it clearly listed the Hamby property as residential. He offered the opinion that commercial properties should not be placed next to schools and that the general area already contained sufficient commercial locations. Having heard both sides, Judge Ravan ruled in behalf of the plaintiffs, overturning the R-20 zoning.24

The county was stunned and immediately appealed to the Georgia Supreme Court. Before that time courts almost never overturned local zoning decisions. In a 1960 Georgia Supreme Court case, Vulcan Materials Co. v. Griffin, Chief Justice William Henry Duckworth wrote the opinion that set the precedent for the next fifteen years. An intellectual giant who dominated the Supreme Court, Duckworth argued that zoning decisions were legislative in nature and courts should take a hands-off approach in all except the most extreme cases. The jurist based his opinion on the 1945 Georgia constitution that gave zoning powers to local governments. County attorney Ben Smith had ample reason to assume that Judge Ravan’s decision would be reversed. To affirm the trial judge’s decision would place the Georgia high court upon a path of judicial activism, going from no interference in local zoning decisions to complete interference.25

In his brief Smith cited the precedent of courts staying out of zoning cases unless a zoning board had almost totally deprived property
owners of the use of their land. That obviously was not the case here. Smith claimed that the controlling factor, under the Georgia constitution, should be the safety, morality, and welfare of the community, not the landowner’s economic self-interest. Writing for the majority, Justice Robert Hall conceded that zoning was a legislative matter, but countered that the Georgia constitution prohibited “taking private property without just compensation.” He recognized the need for a balance between the good of society and the rights of individual property holders. But he argued that the county’s R-20 classification inflicted serious loss on the Hamby heirs, while the county failed to demonstrate a “countervailing benefit to the public.” Thus, the zoning illegally confiscated property, giving the high court no choice but to affirm Judge Ravan’s decision.

The Georgia Supreme Court decided Barrett v. Hamby by a vote of five to two. Joined by Justice Robert H. Jordan of Talbotton, Marietta resident Conley Ingram wrote the dissenting opinion. Ingram warned that the court had committed itself to the “awesome task” of reviewing “any local zoning decision based on conflicting evidence.” On both practical and constitutional grounds, he argued, the court had overreached itself. He feared that the courts would be overburdened by a “floodtide of litigation” and that their judgment would replace that of locally elected zoning authorities.26

Privately, Ingram thought that the court’s real motive was its fear that the U.S. Supreme Court would start hearing Georgia zoning cases. He believed that Justice Hall, the author of the majority opinion, wanted to show that Georgia was doing something in order to keep the federal courts out. Ingram later conceded that courts had a role to play in checking local governments that became arrogant or corrupt. As protectors of constitutional rights, courts had a duty to make sure local zoning boards were fair-minded and not unduly influenced by one side. But the Marietta justice maintained that the courts should go no further than to determine whether the “local government has made an honest, conscientious decision on conflicting evidence.” Noting that the Georgia constitution vested zoning powers in locally elected officials, he argued that the courts should not “usurp the power to make the decision.”27

Barrett v. Hamby brought profound changes in the zoning process in Georgia. The number of court appeals greatly increased. Applicants often assumed that elected officials would deny their requests when
strong public opposition formed. So their attorneys used the zoning hearings less to persuade the commissioners than to establish the groundwork for a constitutional appeal. On the positive side, the decision forced board members to explain why they voted the way they did and to be more consistent in their determinations. In the short run, Barrett v. Hamby was a blow to the Barrett administration’s attempt to control development, but in the long run it forced county government to make more defendable decisions that balanced individual rights and community needs. Cobb County hired a full-time draftsman after this point to make sure that land use maps were current and could stand up in court.28

Cobb County Board of Tax Assessors v. Sibley

Few functions of county government hit closer to home for property owners than the appraisal of real estate for tax purposes. While the Barrett administration adjusted its zoning procedures to conform to the Georgia Supreme Court’s decision, it struggled to adjust its tax books to comply with another state mandate. According to state law, local governments had to tax property at 40 percent of “fair market value.” In 1963 Cobb conducted a general review of tax valuations. For the next fourteen years the assessments remained unchanged unless a property was sold. Then, the county reappraised it based on the purchase price. With the county’s dramatic growth, the value of real estate climbed steadily, but longtime landowners enjoyed low tax bills based on the out-of-date 1963 assessment. Clearly, the old-timers enjoyed an unfair advantage over newcomers. Under pressure from the state to tax everyone at 40 percent of fair market value, Cobb completed an updated general review in 1977.

When the county next mailed reassessment notices, many longtime residents saw their tax bills triple or quadruple in size. Hardest hit were elderly citizens on fixed incomes who owned considerable acreage, but were “land poor.” For much of 1977 and 1978 Cobb County was thrown into turmoil by a taxpayers’ revolt against the new assessments. In the long run Atlanta banker John Sibley launched the most significant protest. By 1977 Sibley had sold off most of his fourteen hundred
acres in east Cobb. He transferred twelve hundred acres to the developers of the Chattahoochee Country Club and another thousand, bound by Paper Mill Road and Sope Creek, to Tom Cousins. Years earlier he had given most of the rest to his children. Tom Cousins bought his tract in 1971 for $4,500 an acre. After all these transactions, Sibley retained approximately eighty acres, mostly timberland. In 1977 the businessman received a reappraisal notice assessing the main tract at $248,000 (up from $68,000 previously) and a small timber tract at $42,240 (compared to $4,230 before). One of Georgia’s wealthiest citizens, Sibley could easily afford to pay more taxes. But he worried as a matter of principle about the impact of the reappraisal on Cobb’s last surviving farmers and others who wanted to retain forest or pasture land.

On 4 November 1977 Sibley filed a notice of appeal with the Cobb County board of assessors. He would later appeal his 1978 tax bill as well. In a letter to Cal Phelps, the Cobb County administrator in charge of the 1977 general reassessment, Sibley raised a fundamental
question that affected many landowners: “How should farm lands, woodlands, and other open and unimproved lands...which lie in a growing urban area be valued for ad valorem tax purposes?” The Cobb County appraisers divided all properties into four categories: commercial, residential, industrial, and vacant lands. The final classification included forest, farm, pasture, and other unimproved tracts. The tax officials tried to assess properties according to comparable area sales prices. Unfortunately, the only people buying large vacant tracts tended to be speculators and developers. The appraisers lacked time to consider how individual parcels were being used. Rather, they lumped all vacant lands in a particular district together. Sibley pointed out that one of his land lots was relatively flat, while another was hilly, yet both were appraised at the same value.

Sibley argued that Georgia law required tax appraisers to take “existing use” into consideration, but Cobb County failed to do so. The civic leader maintained that the current system harmed individual landowners and society at large. When hardworking citizens were forced to “pay up or sell out,” he asserted, the community lost the stability they provided and the benefits of clean air and a beautiful environment. He concluded his letter to Phelps by confessing, “Increased taxes to me are, of course, a burden and a concern. But there are many other people for whom the cost is more burdensome and who, precisely for that reason, lack the means to protest. On their behalf, as well as my own, I want to see the points I have raised get a full hearing.”

In September 1978 the Cobb County board of equalization ruled against him. Joined by a number of longtime residents, Sibley went next to Cobb Superior Court. One of the parties to the suit, W. H. Hyde, had lived on the same east Cobb farm with his brother, J. C. Hyde, Jr., since they were children in 1920. The brothers jointly owned the land and made their income entirely from farming and social security. Consisting of about 127 acres at the end of Hyde Road, the pasture, crop, and forestland backed up to the Chattahoochee River. With the 1977 reappraisal, the estimated value rose from $30,500 to an astronomical $289,000, a fair value if the tract was being developed as a subdivision or shopping mall, but totally unrealistic for two elderly farmers whose house lacked running water. If they had to pay taxes on the county's assessment, they would be forced off the land they loved. Their neighbor, George W. Power, saw his assessment rise about fourfold from
$21,900 to $84,900. Another plaintiff, Fred Allgood, had resided for over fifty years on a forty-eight acre farm along Allgood Road in northeast Cobb. He made his living from truck farming and raising cattle. In 1977 his property assessment increased from $20,000 to $120,000. At the current millage rate, his tax bill went up from $236 in 1976 to $1,553 in 1977. Plaintiffs Laura W. McAfee, J. Walton Taylor, and E. D. Hill, Sr., experienced similarly sharp increases, despite the lack of improvements to their properties.36

The case was assigned to Judge Luther C. Hames, Jr., a Talmadge man, who had been solicitor-general when Amos Reece was prosecuted two decades earlier. Then, he seemed part of a racist system that provided unequal justice to black defendants. In the Sibley case, however, he wrote an eloquent opinion, taking the side of the underdogs against arbitrary government bureaucrats. His ultimate conclusion was forecast early in his statement of facts when he asserted that the assessments “suggest an absolute lack of fairness.” He condemned the appraisers for their failure to consider any measure of fair market value except a property’s “highest and best use.” As a result, he argued, “The power to tax has become the power to prescribe to property owners what use they may make of their property. For a property owner to use his property for agricultural purposes is to subject his property to confiscation.”

Hames cited a number of precedents to show that government lacked the power to tax at levels that prevented legitimate enterprise. Fearing that officials would turn the county into an “asphalt jungle,” he ruled the 1977-78 valuations of rural lands unlawful and unconstitutional. The decision left the digests in effect for other types of real estate, but instructed tax assessors to reappraise all rural lands (not just those of the plaintiffs), taking existing use into consideration.37

County officials seemed exasperated by the verdict. Due to another court case, the 1977 tax bills did not go out until the middle of the next year. When Ernest Barrett learned of the Sibley decree, he exclaimed, “Lord, we don’t need any more tax holdups.” Representing the assessors, attorney Charles A. Evans worried that the judge had not made clear what he meant by ordering Cobb to “consider” a property’s existing use. After weighing their options for several days, the county appealed the decision to the Georgia Supreme Court.38

The high court heard arguments on 12 June 1979 and rendered a unanimous decision, written by Justice Hiram K. Undercofler, on 5
September. In affirming Judge Hames’ order, Undercofler cited a law passed by the General Assembly in 1975 that required assessors to consider existing use in determining the fair market value of vacant land. He noted that the zoning process was complex and Cobb’s appraisers could legally take into account a variety of factors, including how a parcel was zoned. But since they ignored existing use, they acted illegally. Judge Hames pointed out in his order that 63 percent of the land in Cobb County was still undeveloped. So this 1979 decision had ramifications for numerous property owners. Sibley and his heirs filed court documents into the 1990s related to their particular tax problem. The decision added to the workload of county officials and temporarily threw tax bills into confusion, but it aided average people on fixed incomes trying to hang onto rural lands.

In 1992 a state law took affect that required tax assessors to appraise property devoted to a bona fide conservation use at 40 percent of its current use value (as opposed to 40 percent of fair market value for practically all other real estate). The rule applied to a minimum of ten, but no more than two thousand, acres belonging to a single owner. At least half the land had to be devoted to good faith production of agricultural products or timber. Fortunately for many Cobb countians, the definition of agriculture was broad enough to cover such things as cutting hay, operating a horse farm, or even maintaining a fishpond. After the owner applied for an agricultural assessment, the current use appraisal remained in effect for ten years. After that time, the owner could reapply and the property would again be reassessed. If the owner sold the property during the first five years after the agricultural assessment went into effect, the penalty was twice the difference between the taxes paid and the taxes that would have been paid under a fair market appraisal. If the property was sold for development purposes in the last five years, the penalty was merely the difference between the taxes paid and the taxes that would have been paid. As a result of the Sibley case and the 1992 Georgia law, rural property owners in rapidly growing areas were protected as long as they refrained from speculative profits on their land. While Cobb and other counties taxed speculators at reasonable rates, they guarded against taxing people off their lands when they merely wanted to live out their lives on their undeveloped holdings.
End of the Barrett Era

In April 1978 Ernest Barrett, a heavy smoker, entered Emory Hospital, where a spot was found on his right lung. The doctors operated and removed a cancerous growth. While the commissioner recovered, Tommy Brown acted as chairman pro-tem. Harry Ingram had left the commission in 1970 to run the revenue collection department, but Barrett continued to rely heavily on him for advice on a variety of topics. After the operation, the chairman called Ingram and asked him to manage his office until he got back. With the permission of the other commissioners, Ingram left revenue and became special county administrator.41

Although Barrett recovered from surgery, he never regained the energy of his early years. He continued to be the unquestioned leader of county government, but he could no longer handle every administrative detail. The hiring of a county manager had been a goal of veteran Democratic representative Joe Mack Wilson since his race for the commission chair in 1964. In the Georgia House, Republican minority leader Johnny Isakson also favored the concept. Like most of the Cobb delegation, Isakson feared that Barrett might become too ill to continue in office. As a businessman, he knew how damaging a vacuum of leadership could be to any organization. When Wilson approached him prior to the 1983 session, Isakson agreed that the legislature should create a county manager position while Barrett still had over a year left in his term.

As sponsor of the bill, Isakson began holding discussions with the five commissioners. He was especially interested in keeping Barrett informed, so he would know the proposal was not aimed at him. Recognizing his health problems, the chairman publicly endorsed the measure about two weeks before the end of the legislative session. After that, it passed with the support of all except one Cobb County representative and senator. Among the Democrats, Joe Mack Wilson and Max Kaley were particularly significant in lobbying for its adoption. By this time Harry Ingram had decided that a county manager had too little job security and did not seek the new post. The first county manager in 1983 was Jim Miller, the highly regarded head of the county parks department.42

Barrett went out of office on the last day of 1984. On 28 February
1985 he checked into Cobb General Hospital after failing to respond to outpatient treatment. His adenocarcinoma (lung cancer) had returned, and on 11 March he died at age sixty-two. At his funeral in Marietta’s First United Methodist Church, Bernie Brown, the administrator of Kennestone Hospital, sang “How Great Thou Art,” the favorite hymn of the old choir director.

In the golden age of Cobb’s history Barrett had witnessed the growth of the county from about 150,000 when he took office to about 350,000 when he departed. In those two decades the tax digest expanded from $277 million to $4.2 billion. Barrett paved the last dirt roads in the county and saw the interstate highway network completed. As he said at the time, however, “Every time we pave a road to four or five lanes, it’s jammed within a week.” Driving past the Big Chicken near the end of his tenure, he told county engineer Bob Sutton that road congestion would be a central concern for the foreseeable future.

For a dynamically developing county, no infrastructure improvement could keep up with demand for long, but Barrett made great progress in modernizing utilities and services. As chairman of the Atlanta Regional Commission, he helped clean up pollution on the Chattahoochee River. He built a first-rate sewer system in unincorporated Cobb and initiated a network of libraries and parks. He actively courted quality developments and played a major role in attracting Cumberland Mall and Town Center. The year before Barrett left office, Harry Ingram went to the other four commissioners and persuaded them to rename Roberts Road in the chairman’s honor. Once a country lane, Roberts had recently been converted into a divided highway that ran in front of the future location of Town Center mall. Extending from Bells Ferry to U.S. 41, the road in 1983 became Ernest W. Barrett Parkway.

A month before the Cobb native left office, businessman and columnist Jasper Dorsey wrote that “the Barrett years for Cobb have been historic because of his superb leadership.... I’ve spent 17 years as a resident of Florida, Louisiana, Maryland and visited many other states, and I’ve never witnessed a better county administration than Barrett’s, nor a more forward-looking one. It is also one that enriched the man not at all.” Upon hearing of Barrett’s passing, Atlanta Regional Commission director Harry West recalled his “unique ability to get people with different interests and personalities to work together solving mutual problems.” Old adversary Joe Mack Wilson remembered that
"he brought us from a rural, agricultural county to the third most populous in the state.... He was an aggressive leader without being an aggressive man."44 Years after Barrett's death former colleagues still became teary-eyed in discussing his leadership qualities. Cobb, no doubt, would have grown without him. In the past the county had enjoyed great leaders, and Barrett shared power with talented contemporaries. But virtually every statesman of that generation, in public and private, credited Barrett with the pivotal role in Cobb's transition to a modern suburban county.
First Steps Toward a Two-Party System

Introduction

In her book *Suburban Warriors*, Harvard professor Lisa McGirr finds a direct relationship between the growth of suburbia and the New Right. Focusing on Orange County, in southern California between Los Angeles and San Diego, she traces the politicization of a group of middle class Americans, who found themselves profoundly out of harmony with the nation's liberal consensus of the post-World War II era. In the early 1960s these housewives, business people, and professionals began gathering in private homes to form local John Birch Society chapters. Their first task was to become more educated about the dangers of communism and centralized federal power. Soon they got involved in school board and other local issues; then they connected meaningfully to national politics in the Goldwater campaign of 1964. After the Arizona senator's defeat, they became fervent supporters of Ronald Reagan in his rise to the California governorship and the White House. In 1968 *Fortune* magazine had these grassroots activists in mind when it described Orange County as "nut country"; but, more accurately, they were ahead of their times. McGirr thinks they played a central
role in tilting America toward conservatism after the radical, leftwing protests of the turbulent sixties.

McGirr argues that the conservative culture of Orange County is a prototype for other hotbeds of right-wing Sunbelt politics from suburban Atlanta to New Orleans, Dallas/Fort Worth, Phoenix, and Colorado Springs. The Ivy League scholar observes that these communities share a large middle class, numerous migrants from other parts of the nation, a relatively small minority population, and important defense industries.\(^1\) Doing her research while Newt Gingrich was at the peak of his power, McGirr specifically noted a parallel between Orange and Cobb. To be sure, the two counties have obvious differences. The former is much larger, with forty miles of Pacific beachfront property and a population by 1970 of almost 1.5 million. The latter shared with the rest of the Deep South an adherence to the Democratic Party that stretched back to the Civil War and Reconstruction and delayed the growth of the GOP.

But the similarities in the two suburban entities are more striking than the differences. As southerners, Cobb County natives were brought up on tales of northern aggression and discriminatory railroad rates, designed to hold the South back. Their California counterparts had long resented Wall Street domination and federal control of large tracts of public lands. These biases fueled anti-Washington, anti-northeastern, states' rights philosophies. The two suburban areas developed around similar industries. By the 1960s both contained an air base and a naval air station. Cobb was the home of Lockheed-Georgia, while Orange had a large Hughes Aircraft plant and other important defense industries. Orange attracted numerous tourists to Knott's Berry Farm and Disneyland, while Cobb housed Six Flags and Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park. In both places military spending and tourism constituted the largest part of the economy in the late twentieth century.\(^2\)

Like Cobb, Orange County began its phenomenal growth during World War II. Transplants, seeking a better life, arrived daily, and by 1960 they made up three-fifths of the population. Midwesterners constituted the largest group of newcomers, followed by southerners. Attracted by well-paying, high-tech jobs in defense and electronic industries, the migrants tended to be more highly educated than the Orange County natives. Many were professionals or entrepreneurs. Sophisticated, modern Americans, they felt at home in a pluralistic
society and rarely entertained the racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, and xenophobic ideas that discredited the Old Right. Far from rejecting modernity, they believed in capitalistic virtues and were conspicuous consumers.

On the surface they were blessed with all the trappings of the American dream. The down side, according to McGirr, was that their transient life style and competitive culture undermined the bonds of family and community. They lacked roots in Orange County, and they were too busy getting ahead to have much time for family and friends. When they perceived their spiritual emptiness, they tried to latch onto “traditional moorings.” Conservative politics gave their lives meaning as they battled for timeless moral values against the eroding influences of contemporary culture.

Cobb developed more slowly than Orange County, but experienced similar economic and demographic trends. Between 1940 and 1960 the population tripled, going from 38,000 to 114,000. The first great in-migration came predominantly from nearby places, and as late as 1960 over three-fourths of all Cobb countians were Georgia natives. But during the next thirty years, as the population quadrupled to 448,000, the Georgia-born segment declined by about a percentage point a year to 65 percent in 1970, 55 percent in 1980, and 44 percent in 1990. At the last date over a quarter-million Cobb County residents had been born somewhere other than Georgia. Forty-six percent of the non-Georgians came from other states of the old Confederacy, 22 percent from the Midwest, 17 percent from the Northeast, 7 percent from abroad, and 6 percent from the West. The rest came from American territories or were born on foreign soil to American parents.

Some of the northerners and westerners were Republicans before they reached Cobb County. Others were so shocked by the Democrats’ total dominance that they welcomed a Republican alternative as a check on the arrogance of power. The county’s newfound affluence changed the thinking of natives as well as newcomers. As people moved up the economic ladder and acquired expensive homes and mortgages, they developed a self-interested appreciation of the Republican low-tax philosophy. As they became better educated, they were more inclined to think for themselves rather than following the lead of the powerbrokers of old. Between 1970 and 1990 the percentage of Cobb countians over the age of 25 with high school diplomas rose from 50 percent to 86, and
the proportion with college degrees increased from 10 percent to 33.

Since the in-migration into Cobb was overwhelmingly white in the generation following World War II, the African-American population declined to an all-time low of 4.2 percent by 1970. Ten years later the black percentage remained virtually unchanged at 4.5 percent. After that, the black population began to grow, reaching 10 percent in 1990 and 19 percent at the end of the millennium. Like Caucasian suburbanites, the African-American residents were considerably more affluent than blacks in other parts of the state. Over time, they narrowed the economic gap with their white neighbors. In 1970 the per capita income of Cobb's black residents was only 45 percent of the county average. A decade later it was 62 percent, and by 1990 it was 67 percent. By the last date, average income for Cobb's African-American population was only slightly below that for all Georgians. Meanwhile, the percentage of blacks living in poverty dropped in Cobb from 33 percent in 1970 to 14 percent twenty years later.

These figures were far better than those recorded for blacks in other parts of the state. In 1990 the per capita income for Georgia blacks was under eight thousand dollars and just 62 percent of the $12,834 figure for Cobb County blacks. Despite its long history of racial discrimination, Cobb was a more egalitarian place by the end of the twentieth-century and the home of choice for an increasing number of middle class African-Americans.5

All the factors above (a well-educated and affluent population, an important defense industry, a dramatic increase in the non-Georgia born population, and a relatively small, but affluent, minority population) opened the door for the growth of the Republican Party. In the 1960s the Republicans first began to run candidates in Cobb and to win occasional elections. Progress, however, was slow. The GOP was hurt in the 1970s by the Watergate scandal and the patronage powers of Democrat Jimmy Carter, a native son and the first president from Georgia. The emergence in the 1970s of Rep. Larry McDonald, a conservative Democrat, delayed a Republican takeover of the seventh district congressional seat. Nonetheless, the party made modest progress in local races. Then, with the Reagan presidency, Cobb Republicans surged ahead of their rivals, becoming in the 1980s virtually as powerful as the Democrats had been a few years earlier. The chapter that follows traces this dramatic turn of events in county politics.
The Cobb GOP and National Politics in the 1950s and Early 1960s

Shaped by myths of a glorious Confederate past and scandalous Reconstruction-era Republican rule, white Cobb countians at mid-century were numbered among the most fervent devotees of the party of Jefferson and Jackson. Even a Republican as popular as Dwight D. Eisenhower garnered just 29 percent of the local vote in his 1952 race for the White House. Four years later, General Lucius Clay’s close friend did slightly better, tallying 37 percent. Despite being the home of the mammoth Lockheed plant, Cobb gave overwhelming support to a northern liberal, Adlai Stevenson, over the general who led the allied armies to victory in Europe. In 1960 another liberal northerner, Jack Kennedy, gained 61 percent of the Cobb County vote against a conservative Sunbelt candidate with a Duke University law degree, Richard Nixon. From the Civil War to 1960 a Democrat won every presidential election in Cobb and the rest of Georgia, no matter how philosophically removed he might be from his states’ rights southern allies.

The Kennedy-Nixon race provided the first clue that the times were changing. When Vice-President Nixon spoke during a campaign swing through Atlanta, he was introduced by one of Georgia’s leading businessmen, Cobb County native James V. Carmichael. The former Bell and Lockheed general manager stopped short of a full endorsement, but made it clear that he liked what Nixon had to say. The Republican standard-bearer reached out to southerners, arguing that the GOP stood against the Democratic philosophy of “rampaging federalism in housing, education, urban affairs, natural resources, labor affairs, [and] agriculture.” According to Nixon, the Democrats favored “wild spending, higher taxes, [and] higher prices.... They stand against states’ rights. The South can never accept such men or such a platform.”

In the same year thirty-four-year-old Ralph Ivey of Rome, Georgia, became the first Republican candidate for Congress from the seventh district since 1910. While the Democratic candidate, Judge John W. Davis, won easily, Ivey ran a spirited race, bringing Arizona senator Barry Goldwater into the district on 16 September 1960 to help kick off the campaign. Since no Republican had run in fifty years, the party did not automatically receive a place on the ballot. A former assis-
tant U.S. attorney, Ivey qualified by gathering eleven thousand signatures over a two-month period. Lockheed mathematician Warren Herron and three other volunteers circulated Ivey’s petitions in Cobb, persuading fifteen hundred local voters to endorse his right to run. In Cobb Davis received 15,900 votes to Ivey’s 6,100, but the results might have been closer if the ballot had been less complicated. Ivey issued a protest, claiming that officials in Cobb threw out at least twelve hundred ballots cast for him, because the voters failed to cross out the name of Davis. The defeated candidate called for the use of voting machines to guarantee fairer elections in the future.

Despite Ivey’s defeat, local Republicans were encouraged that their candidate received as many votes as he did. With Warren Herron as charter president, twenty-five area residents in April 1961 formed the Cobb County Republican Association. Their initial newsletter announced Bayard M. Cole’s candidacy for the fifth ward seat on the Marietta city council. The Cole family had been Republicans since the Civil War. Bayard’s grandfather, Henry Greene Cole, was a Marietta hotel proprietor who spied for the Union army. Due to his suspicious conduct, he was arrested by the Confederacy just before the battle of Kennesaw Mountain and held in prison for nine months without trial. Released near the end of the war, Cole went back home, where he donated part of his land for the Marietta National Cemetery, the final resting-place of about ten thousand Union soldiers killed in Sherman’s Atlanta campaign. A New Yorker by birth, Cole was elected a delegate to the Republican-dominated convention that wrote the 1868 Georgia constitution. He ran for Congress in 1870, but with the tide turning against the GOP, lost to former Confederate general P. M. B. Young of Cartersville. When Reconstruction ended in Georgia, the Democrats established a monopoly on office that they maintained from the 1870s to the 1960s.

Bayard’s father, DeWitt Clinton Cole, was named for the New York governor who built the Erie Canal. One of Cobb’s few white Republicans, D. C. Cole served as postmaster of Marietta from 1898-1910, then became an assistant postmaster in Atlanta until a Democrat, Woodrow Wilson, removed him from office. On three occasions he served as a delegate to Republican national conventions. He also served as chairman of the Cobb County Republican Party. Despite his association with the party of Lincoln, he earned the respect of his neighbors
and gained appointments to the Marietta school board and the Cobb County board of registrars.\

Born in 1908, Bayard Cole attended college for several years, before taking a job with the Rural Electrification Administration in Alabama. In the late 1930s he contacted an old family friend, Lucius Clay, and received an invitation to come to Texas to work on the Denison Dam. While there, he met his future wife Mary Schloemann, who was a local librarian. Back in Marietta, the Coles became officers of the Cobb County Republican Party, with Bayard serving as chairman in the early 1960s. In his race for city council, Cole received only twenty-five votes and finished fifth in a five-way race. Nonetheless, the Republican activist was not discouraged and continued to work in the campaigns of other GOP hopefuls.\

In 1962 a Columbus attorney, A. Edward Smith, announced that he would run as a Republican candidate for governor. Bayard Cole immediately wrote him a letter, congratulating him on his entry. Smith thanked the Cobb party chairman and predicted that 1962 would be "the beginning of a real two-party system in Georgia." Unfortunately, the sixty-year-old attorney was not able to complete his campaign. Driving home from Atlanta following a dinner honoring New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, Smith swerved into the path of a truck and was killed instantly. Consequently, the Republicans failed to field a gubernatorial candidate, and Carl Sanders, the Democratic primary winner, was elected in November without opposition.\

That year Ralph Ivey ran again for Congress against John Davis. The seventh district Republicans held a meeting in Dalton on 30 June 1962, where they adopted a platform outlining their conservative principles. They proclaimed themselves in favor of greater personal liberty and individual responsibility, a reduction in the size of the federal government, sound fiscal policies, a balanced budget, and a thorough tax overhaul. Denouncing the "ultra-liberal welfare state policies" of the Democrats, they asserted that participation in federal medical plans for the elderly should be voluntary and that education should be strictly a state and local responsibility. In foreign affairs, they favored a strong national defense and keeping Red China out of the United Nations, but stopped short of attacking the UN per se.

Relatively little space was devoted to race relations. The platform called on Georgia to guarantee "equal political rights" (i.e., the right to
vote and hold office), but did not see a state or federal role in protecting other civil rights. Since the end of slavery, the majority of Georgia’s Republicans had been black, so it is not surprising that Republicans would favor equal political rights. But blacks constituted a much smaller percentage of the population in the seventh district than in the rest of the state. The district Republican position on civil rights was only slightly more egalitarian than that of most white southern Democrats and far out of line with both national parties. When the votes were counted, the GOP was disappointed that Ivey barely improved on the results of his previous election. In 1960 he received 26 percent district-wide; on his second try the total rose only to 28. In Cobb his share of the vote went up from 28 to 32 percent. Ivey pointed to voter apathy as a factor in his lack of success. Without a contested presidential, gubernatorial, or senate race, fewer than half as many people voted in 1962 as in 1960.13

On the local level Warren Herron challenged Democrat Bill Teague for a seat in the legislature. The first Cobb County Republican candidate since Reconstruction, Herron, under state law, had first to earn a place on the ballot by collecting signatures from 5 percent of the eligible voters. Fellow Republican association member Edward R. Seay of Marietta, headed the petition drive to gather the two thousand necessary signatures. In 1962 Herron was a thirty-one-year-old Lockheed employee. Possessing a Ph.D. in mathematics, he supervised one of the company’s pioneer scientific computers. A former navy officer and Duke University instructor, the talented young professional epitomized the modern Cobb County Republicans. Despite falling short, he ran a creditable race, receiving 34 percent of the vote (3,762 to Teague’s 7,361).14

The Goldwater Movement and the Growth of Republican Conservatism

The breakthrough year for Cobb and Georgia Republicans was 1964, when Barry Goldwater became the GOP standard bearer. Since World War II the national party had been controlled by a moderately liberal “Eastern Establishment” that ran candidates such as Thomas Dewey
and Dwight D. Eisenhower. When the Arizona senator defeated Nelson Rockefeller for the Republican presidential nomination, he brought party conservatives from the fringes to the center of power. Goldwater's 1960 classic, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, energized southern and western conservatives, who had long despaired that the Republican Party was just a me-too copy of liberal national Democrats (and far left of most white southerners). Goldwater argued that left-wingers, in their quest to uplift the masses, tended "to look only at the material side of man's nature," while the true conservative viewed man as "a spiritual creature." Claiming that no one could be free when he depended on the state for his economic needs, the Arizona senator asserted that the goal of conservatives was to achieve "the maximum amount of freedom for individuals that is consistent with the maintenance of social order." In his Republican nomination acceptance address, Goldwater opposed "those who elevate the state and downgrade the citizen" and identified conservative Republicans as those who were most likely to "cherish diversity" of thought and action.15

Bayard Cole was an enthusiastic Goldwater supporter. A third of a century later, the longtime Republican recalled with pride his opportunity during the 1964 election to ride with Goldwater from the Atlanta airport to Rome, Georgia. The year before, Cole had angrily sent a letter to Nelson Rockefeller, telling him, "It is indeed a strange bird that fouls its own nest," after the liberal New York governor had criticized fellow Republican Goldwater, but remained silent on the policies of the Democratic Kennedy administration.16

Dorsey Dodgen, another descendant of a pioneering Cobb County family, became involved in Republican politics in Ralph Ivey's campaigns for Congress. In 1964 the east Cobb countian became an enthusiastic champion of the Goldwater cause. His father, Roy Nathaniel Dodgen, was a farmer and community leader in the area around Post Oak Tritt and Holly Springs Roads. A lifelong Democrat, the elder Dodgen, nonetheless, became disenchanted with Franklin Roosevelt and the welfare state. He taught his children respect for others, respect for property, and the value of hard work.

Prior to Goldwater, the Democrats contemptuously called the few local Republicans by the pejorative, "post office Republicans," implying that they joined the GOP not to win elections, but to receive patronage jobs when a Republican president occupied the White House.17 In
fact, many of the early Republican converts were philosophical conservatives, who no longer felt at home in the national Democratic Party. Fred Kienel, for instance, was a Democrat when he moved south in the 1920s to open Unique Mills in Acworth. During the 1930s he began to vote for Republican presidential candidates out of his opposition to government regulations and red tape in Roosevelt's New Deal programs. While he continued to support conservative Democrats in state and local elections, he helped build a Republican Party in Cobb and was a delegate to the state party convention in 1960. His son Bob continued in his footsteps, serving as a delegate from Cobb County to the 1960 state convention in Atlanta and the 1964 convention in Macon.18

At the Macon convention, conservatives wrested control from the old guard. A Goldwater man, Dorsey Dodgen played a role in the conservative take-over, delivering the Cobb County vote whenever he could for leaders such as Joe Tribble of Savannah and Willard Strain of Dalton. The thirty-three-year-old Cobb countian found the new Republican leaders to be genuinely committed to reducing the size of government. Some, such as Roscoe Pickett, had been out of favor with the Republican establishment since 1952, when, as a national committeeman, Pickett supported conservative Robert Taft over Eisenhower for the presidential nomination.

The head of the Goldwater campaign in Cobb County, Dodgen traveled to San Francisco as a delegate to the 1964 Republican national convention. He was excited to see a new, conservative leadership seize control of the party. Recalling stories of Taft delegates allegedly being kidnapped in 1952, Goldwater campaign workers met Dodgen's plane to make sure that he safely reached his hotel. Danger was in the air even inside the convention hall. One evening Joe Tribble took Dodgen aside and told him, "You're going to sit on the aisle. You're the youngest man, and we're going to move the women and the older people inside, because they think that [Harry Bridges' longshoremen's union] are going to break in. They'll probably come in and start spitting on you, but you just sit there." According to the Cobb County delegate, union members harassed the Goldwater supporters all week, holding demonstrations, slashing the tires of the buses that carried them to the convention hall, and pulling other dirty tricks. Nonetheless, the troublemakers failed to gain access to the convention hall, and the delegates succeeded in nominating Goldwater.19
In November 1964 the Republican candidate registered a huge victory in Cobb County, carrying 20,863 votes (56 percent of the total) to Lyndon Johnson’s 16,647. The Arizona statesman won every rural and suburban electoral district and carried Smyrna three to two. President Johnson did well only in Marietta, where seven of eight wards voted Democratic. Cobb campaign manager Dodgen attributed Goldwater's winning margin to his anti-big government, anti-communist philosophy.20

The Arizona senator’s appeal to southerners stemmed from a combination of his libertarian economic philosophy and his opposition to Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In Conscience of a Conservative Goldwater admitted that the 1954 school desegregation decision was wise and just and that the Supreme Court was correct in claiming that the denial of opportunity to attend white schools conveyed a message of racial inferiority. He argued, however, that the court exceeded its authority, since control of education was del-
egated by the Constitution not to the federal government, but, implicitly, in the tenth amendment, to the states. For similar reasons, Goldwater objected to the Civil Rights Act, which outlawed segregation in public places. The conservative statesman opposed southern Jim Crow laws, but denied that the federal government had the constitutional right to tell restaurant owners and innkeepers whom they could serve. Of course, in the 1960s there was no chance that the southern states would abandon segregation without being forced by the federal government to do so. To champion states' rights had the practical effect of standing against delayed justice for African-Americans, no matter how noble the doctrine might sound in theory.21

Goldwater's reasoning differed profoundly from that of southern segregationists, but he stood shoulder to shoulder with them in viewing the sudden overturning of time-honored laws and folkways as a gross abuse of federal power. The first GOP presidential candidate ever to carry Georgia, Goldwater won 54 percent of the ballots statewide. He did best in Talmadge country, receiving 61 percent of the vote in the rural counties of central and south Georgia where (largely disenfranchised) African-Americans made up a majority of the population. As white segregationist Democrats turned to Goldwater, blacks deserted the Republican Party in record numbers. Analyzing Atlanta election returns, historian Numan Bartley concluded that the majority of Caucasians of all classes voted for Goldwater, but only about 1 percent of African-Americans did so.22

Southern Democrats found themselves in the 1960s in the schizophrenic position of having the region's most liberal and most reactionary voters. African-Americans became the most loyal backers of liberal candidates such as LBJ. In contrast, populist/segregationist Democrats such as Lester Maddox and former governor Marvin Griffin endorsed Goldwater, and elder statesman Richard Russell, a leader of Senate segregationists, went to Spain to avoid endorsing his old friend Johnson. In Cobb County state representative Bob Flournoy was part of a delegation that met with Goldwater on his visit to north Georgia prior to the Republican national convention. The prominent Democrat told the candidate, "Senator Goldwater, if you can get the damn Republicans to nominate you, us Democrats will elect you." Flournoy liked the conservative Arizonan but soon realized that he expressed his opinion too quickly. Fellow Democrats criticized the disloyal comment;
so Flournoy went back to supporting Democrats exclusively. Nonetheless, many traditional Democrats crossed over to vote for the candidate who opposed the Civil Rights Act. Flournoy believed that the primary reason for the large Goldwater vote in Cobb County was the race question. He heard many people say, “I want to vote for Goldwater, because he’s against the blacks.” Goldwater carried only five Deep South states and his native Arizona, while Johnson won 61 percent of the vote nationwide, the greatest landslide in modern presidential history. Once again, Georgia seemed far outside the national mainstream.  

Nonetheless, the central role of civil rights in this election disguises the fact that Cobb’s Republican Party held a relatively moderate position on race. The growth of the GOP in the suburbs stemmed largely from economic issues and the desire to build a two-party system. At least four leaders of the pro-school integration HOPE organization were active in the Republican Party in the early 1960s. F. M. (Frank) Wilson, Jr., a Lockheed engineer, was a delegate to the 1960 Georgia Republican Party convention. A fervent believer in racial harmony, he worked through John Knox Presbyterian Church on joint activities with African-American churches in Marietta. In 1962 Lawson Yow, the son-in-law of prominent Atlanta banker John Sibley, chaired the resolutions committee of the Cobb County Republican Association. A resident of Old Paper Mill Road, Yow would later chair the Cobb parks and recreation board. Dr. Pete and Ruth Inglis, who were outspoken in their efforts to keep the public schools open, also belonged to the Republican association. These individuals were racial moderates, who never marched in civil rights demonstrations, but recognized that segregated schools were morally wrong and that Georgia had to change. As relative newcomers, they were excluded from leadership positions in the dominant Democratic Party and believed that politics would be less corrupt and more responsive if Cobb had a legitimate two-party system. These racially moderate Republicans seemed to heed the advice of Richard Nixon that “the Republican opportunity in the South is a golden one; but Republicans must not go prospecting for the fool’s gold of racist votes. Southern Republicans must not climb aboard the sinking ship of racial injustice. They should let Southern Democrats sink with it, as they have sailed with it.”

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24
Election of Ben Jordan to the Legislature

Four years before Georgia Republicans held their first statewide primary, the Cobb GOP had done so in September 1964. With a heated commission race on the Democratic side, few people asked for a Republican ballot. Close to twenty-four thousand voted in the Democratic primary and only seven hundred in the Republican. But it was a beginning for a party that many white Georgians still blamed for Yankee occupation and the alleged horrors of the Reconstruction era. In this maiden election the GOP chose Ben C. Jordan to run for the state legislature against incumbent Bob Flournoy. The party nominated J. T. Hulsey, Barney Nunn, and Finis Y. Dillingham as county commission candidates and Robert Livsey, T. M. Holz, and Harold Johnson for places on the county school board.

In the November 1964 election Goldwater carried Cobb by forty-two hundred votes, and his coattails seemed long enough to help other Republican candidates. In the seventh district congressional race Ed Chafin, the owner of Lookout Mountain’s Rock City Gardens, lost to Democrat John W. Davis district-wide, but managed to win 51 percent of the vote in Cobb (17,723 to 17,224). Chafin ran strongest in Smyrna, Austell, and the unincorporated suburban and rural areas. He became the first Republican congressional candidate ever to carry Cobb. The biggest shocker of the fall elections was Big Ben Jordan’s upset victory over incumbent Bob Flournoy. In a countywide race Jordan won by a little over two hundred votes (17,298 to 17,082). Flournoy carried 65 percent of the Marietta ballots, but his Republican challenger took everything else except Red Rock and Big Shanty in the western part of the county.

Flournoy complimented Jordan and the Republicans for their hard work and excellent organization. In contrast to his earlier pro-Goldwater comments, he now regretted that Georgia had “seceded from the Union” and asserted that it was “really tragic for the people of Cobb County to buy the program Goldwater sold.” Reflecting afterward, Flournoy concluded that the straight-party ballot did him in. In the past, when few Republicans ran, the Democrat-controlled legislature made it easy on voters by allowing them to mark one box for president.
and for all members of his party down the ballot. In 1964 the anachronistic device of one-party days probably helped the Republicans in Cobb County. Following the election, new commission chairman Ernest Barrett and commissioners Tommy Brown and Al Burruss met with Flournoy. Believing that the Democratic Party had been outworked and out-organized, they asked the defeated legislator to head the Democratic executive committee and make sure that it did not happen again.  

A graduate of Mableton High School and Georgia State College, Ben Jordan had been active in Republican politics for several years, serving as president of the Cobb County Young Republicans in the early 1960s. He attributed his victory to "four years of hard work," which proved that Cobb would vote for the GOP if the "right man" ran. Arguing that Goldwater had made the two-party system in the South a reality, Jordan blamed the senator's smashing defeat nationwide on a liberal press's distortion of his views. A sales executive for Sloan Paper Company, the victor lived in Mableton with his wife Mary and three sons. At the time of his election he was a member of several service clubs and the Sunday school superintendent at Mt. Harmony Baptist Church in Mableton.

Due to reapportionment, Jordan and all other legislators had to stand for reelection just seven months later in June 1965. Six Cobb County Democrats won their primary contests and ran unopposed in the general election. The only contested race pitted Republican Jordan against former legislator Bill Teague. This time the Mableton politician won the countywide verdict decisively. In a light, off-year turnout, Jordan received 6,950 votes (57 percent) to Teague's 5,172. Jordan lacked the advantage of Goldwater's coattails, but enjoyed the greater benefit of incumbency. The Marietta Daily Journal attributed his success to the hard work of his campaign workers and the rapid transit issue. As noted in an earlier chapter, the Republican candidate opposed Cobb's involvement in the metropolitan system, while the Democrat favored it.

Nonetheless, the 1965 Jordan victory was the high water mark for Republican legislative aspirations in the 1960s. Just as the party began to grow, internal dissension between conservatives and moderates became a serious problem. Jordan came under attack from the Young Republicans for not being sufficiently conservative. They differed, for instance, in the degree of their opposition to rapid transit. The Young
Republican Truth Committee, headed by Doug Howard, totally opposed the rapid transit idea, attacking it as unworkable, too expensive, and harmful to the local economy.\textsuperscript{30}

In a paid newspaper advertisement, the truth committee pointed out that the rapid rail advocates’ own studies showed that most people would not use public transportation, even if it were free. The Young Republicans argued that the system was designed primarily to keep businesses in downtown Atlanta and that Cobb would receive minimal service for at least fifteen years. For pragmatic reasons, Jordan and GOP party chairman C. M. McCutcheon distanced themselves from the truth committee’s inflexible position, fearing that public opinion might shift in favor of public transit in the future. Jordan took the moderate approach of standing against the concept “at this time.” He implied that a bus system might be a good idea in the future, but the county had more pressing infrastructure needs (such as roads and sewers) to deal with first.\textsuperscript{31}

The views of moderate and conservative Republicans collided again when Jordan and the Cobb Republican executive committee enthusiastically endorsed commission chairman Ernest Barrett’s 1965 bond referendum. Young Republican Howard charged that voters were not being told they would pay for road bonds for thirty years, while the new pavement would wear out in ten. In 1966 Jordan faced opposition in the Cobb Republican primary from Doyle C. Brown, who criticized Big Ben for failing to mold a united party and for resigning from the Young Republicans in a “temper tantrum.” In the September primary the Mableton legislator easily beat Brown (1,198 to 410), but lost the general election in November to Democratic challenger Bill Cooper, a Powder Springs pharmacist and member of the county school board. Cooper won by over two thousand votes (15,022 to 12,852). Running countywide Jordan carried a few districts in south and east Cobb, but was beaten decisively in all six cities.\textsuperscript{32}

Congressional candidate Ed Chapin also did worse in 1966 than in 1964, when Goldwater headed the ticket. Then, Chapin carried Cobb and four other counties; this time he lost every county to incumbent John W. Davis, including Cobb by over four thousand votes. The Republicans in 1966 fielded more local candidates than ever more, but none except Jordan won as many as 40 percent of the ballots. In senate contests, Young Republican activist Doug Howard came in behind Cy
Chapman, while Wayne Gossett lost to engineer Sam Hensley. In races for the lower house E. Y. Smith and Ray Pigg lost to veteran legislators Hugh Lee McDaniell and Joe Mack Wilson, respectively. Assessing the election results, Republican contender Smith confessed that voters were not yet ready for a two-party system.33

**Bo Callaway and Local Republicans**

In 1966 the GOP's sole victory in Cobb came in the race for governor, where conservative Howard (Bo) Callaway became the first Republican candidate in ninety years. Callaway won his place on the ballot by soliciting the signatures of 5 percent of the electorate. Meanwhile, the Democrats chose their candidate in a divisive primary. The six Democrats who sought the nomination represented a large spectrum of Democratic thought, from liberal former governor Ellis Arnall, to moderate Jimmy Carter, to arch-segregationist Lester Maddox. Carter failed to open a local headquarters or name a county campaign manager, but, surprisingly, the future president carried Cobb with almost eight thousand votes, well ahead of Maddox, with less than six thousand, and Arnall with five thousand.34

Noting the large vote for Arnall and Carter, liberal Marietta Daily Journal editor Carrol Dadisman saw the election results as an indication that Georgians favored racial moderation over segregation. Arnall came in first statewide, but failed to win a majority. Under Georgia law, he was forced into a runoff with the second place finisher, Maddox, who beat out Carter with the aid of a huge vote in rural South Georgia. In his book *An Hour Before Daylight* (2001), Carter describes his loss to "racist Lester Maddox" as a low point of his career. He recalls being "deeply disillusioned. I could not believe that God, or the Georgia voters, would let this person beat me and become the governor of our state." Quickly, he overcame his disappointment and launched a four-year campaign that ended in his 1970 gubernatorial victory.35

In the meantime, Arnall and Maddox met in late September in the Democratic runoff. This time the results were reversed, with the under-funded Maddox achieving victory over his liberal opponent. The segregationist candidate again carried rural areas, but he also did well in suburbs, carrying Cobb with 57 percent of the local vote. Arnall
received a majority in Marietta and a few districts in east Cobb, and Maddox won everywhere else. People who voted for Carter two weeks earlier apparently considered Arnall too liberal and went with Maddox as the lesser of evils. For the first time since Reconstruction, however, the election was not over after the Democrats selected their candidate. Moderates and conservatives who disliked Maddox’s uncompromising defense of segregation had a principled alternative in Bo Callaway.

The day after the runoff, the Marietta Daily Journal ran a front-page editorial entitled “We Endorse Bo Callaway.” Editor Dadisman noted that the paper previously backed Ellis Arnall as the best Democrat, but preferred the west Georgia Republican to any Democrat, especially Maddox. Labeling Callaway a “responsible conservative,” the paper commended the GOP candidate for his service on the university system’s Board of Regents and, more recently, in Congress. Dadisman contrasted Callaway’s “positive, responsible conservatism” to Maddox’s attempt to drive blacks from his Pickrick restaurant with pickaxe handles and intemperate speech. Arguing that the Democrats, by nominating an “irresponsible racist,” had lost the right to public support, the Journal urged voters to overlook party labels and choose the best man.

Carolyn Meadows and her brother Dorsey Dodgen went door-to-door with canvassing cards, gathering signatures to put the Republican candidate on the ballot. The homes were spread out in east Cobb in the 1960s, and they had to drive considerable distances between houses. Having lived all their lives in the Post Oak-Gritters area, they knew a lot of people and received a warm reception. Many told them that they were Democrats for Callaway. Ultimately, the young proprietor of Callaway Gardens gathered over 151,000 signatures statewide, becoming the first Republican gubernatorial candidate since 1876.

Callaway’s father and grandfather had been part of the Democratic power structure in Georgia, and Franklin Roosevelt had been a frequent houseguest when Bo was growing up. Callaway became a Republican convert when Barry Goldwater emerged as a national conservative spokesman. The west Georgian’s views were characteristic of the idealistic young Goldwaterites who took over the Republican Party in the mid-1960s. In 1964 Callaway became the first Georgia Republican since Reconstruction to win a seat in the U.S. Congress. There he established the most conservative voting record in the Georgia delegation, opposing such Great Society programs as Medicare,
federal aid to education, and increases in the minimum wage. He also lobbied against LBJ’s Voting Rights Act of 1965.39

The congressman’s opposition to the Voting Rights Act has persuaded some historians that Callaway and Maddox possessed substantially the same viewpoint on civil rights. Nothing could be further from the truth. A product of a segregated South, Callaway confessed years later that he once held views that, in hindsight, were clearly unjust. However, the young businessman always favored protecting the right to vote. He objected to President Johnson’s bill because it targeted the South rather than covering all parts of the nation. When Republican minority leader (and future president) Gerald Ford drafted a bill to guarantee electoral rights everywhere, Callaway lobbied other southern congressmen and gained pledges from at least twenty to back the Ford proposal. The west Georgian thought that it was important to have white southerners behind the bill, because “the right to vote is sacred and to keep blacks from voting is wrong.” However, President Johnson rammed through Congress his more limited version that required southern states to report changes in election laws to the Justice Department, while leaving other sections largely unregulated. Viewing the measure as southern bashing, Callaway found himself unable to vote for it.

During the 1966 campaign the Georgia Republican appeared as a guest on “Meet the Press.” Allen Otten of the Wall Street Journal asked him why African-Americans should vote for him. Responding in characteristically Republican language, he identified the main problems facing blacks as lack of employment and educational opportunities. He further asserted, “I will treat every single person exactly alike. My goal is to raise the level of every Georgian and this includes all races.” Arguing that the Democrats catered to special interest groups, the candidate claimed that Republicans intended to “raise the whole state of Georgia.”40

A host of prominent Georgians endorsed Callaway, including two (Lucius Clay and John A. Sibley) with Cobb County connections. The conservative Republican condemned his Democratic opponent for refusing to serve blacks at his Pickrick restaurant, proudly proclaiming that Callaway Gardens were fully integrated. Callaway argued that he could better protect the state’s image and, thus, attract new businesses to Georgia. In contrast, the populistic Maddox attacked the Callaways for being anti-labor in their family-owned textile mills.41
In the general election Callaway narrowly carried Cobb County with 14,947 votes (49 percent) to Lester Maddox's 14,692 (48 percent). Former Governor Ellis Arnall, who lost to Maddox in the Democratic primary, complicated the election by failing to repudiate a write-in campaign. Consequently, some 945 Cobb countians (3 percent) wrote in the name of the liberal Arnall. Callaway carried east Cobb by large margins, doing best in Fullers, Merritts, and Vinings, suburban districts that were on the verge of becoming Republican strongholds. He also won in Marietta and Smyrna. Maddox carried west Cobb, recording huge victory margins in rural areas and in traditional Democratic bailiwicks, such as Austell, Powder Springs, Clarkdale, and Mableton.

The election results statewide were remarkably similar to those in Cobb. Callaway received 47 percent of the vote, Maddox 46, and Arnall 7. Since no one gained a majority, the legislature had the constitutional power to pick the governor. Overwhelmingly Democratic, the General Assembly chose segregationist Maddox to become the state's chief executive. The election defeat proved to be a great setback for Georgia Republicans, who failed to surpass Callaway's showing in any subsequent gubernatorial election of the twentieth-century. In Cobb County, a disappointed Republican Party had to face the depressing reality that Democrats controlled the national, state, and local governments. Cobb's constant growth and the influx of non-Georgians, however, gave Republicans hope that the future was on their side. The next election cycle in 1968 would go a little better for the Cobb GOP.

1968 National Contests

In September 1968 the Georgia GOP held its first statewide primary election to choose a Senate candidate to run against Herman Talmadge, who easily defeated Maynard Jackson on the Democratic side. In Cobb County the powerful Talmadge, running for his third term, overwhelmed his African-American opponent by more than five to one, winning every election district. The grandson of Kennesaw-born civil rights leader John Wesley Dobbs, Jackson would soon rise to prominence as vice-major and then mayor of Atlanta. The UPI remarked that it was the first time that Talmadge had ever run against an African-American or a Republican, but in 1968 he had to campaign against both.
In the Republican primary Atlanta businessman Earl Patton defeated state senator Jack Sells, also of Atlanta. Some 1,523 Cobb countians voted in the GOP primary with a slim majority favoring Patton. This was a small turnout compared to the twenty-six thousand voters in the Talmadge-Jackson race. But none of the Republican candidates in other contests had primary opposition, while the Democratic primary contained heated races for the school board, county commission, and legislature. Under the circumstances, Cobb Republican chairman J. Lee Krumme and other party workers could take satisfaction that so many devoted followers turned out.44

Two months later, in the general election, local Republicans demonstrated growing strength with two victories and several strong showings. On the local level the Republicans elected their first school board member, Gerald Green. With almost 70 percent of Cobb's registered voters participating, Republican Richard Nixon carried the presidential balloting. The once dominant Democrats could not even finish second, as segregationist American Party candidate George Wallace finished far ahead of Hubert Humphrey, a Minnesota liberal. Locally, Nixon received 41 percent of the ballots, Wallace 40, and Humphrey 19. The Republican candidate swept Marietta, Smyrna, and most of suburban east Cobb. The former Alabama governor led in the more rural and blue-collar western districts. Humphrey finished third in most districts and carried only Marietta fourth, fifth, and sixth wards, where about half the county's African-American population resided.45

This was the second presidential election in a row where Cobb found itself in the GOP camp. The Nixon victory, however, more resembled Callaway's 1966 gubernatorial showing than it did Goldwater's majority over Johnson. Two years earlier, the governor's race had also been a three-way contest featuring a liberal Democrat, a populist/segregationist Democrat, and an economically conservative Republican who favored racial moderation. Like Ellis Arnall, Vice President Humphrey suffered locally from a liberal voting record. He carried the added burden of President Johnson's unpopular war in Vietnam. Except for black voters, Humphrey had few supporters in Cobb County.

In 1962 George Wallace won the Alabama governorship as a Democrat. When he delivered his first inaugural address, he shocked much of the nation by his belligerent advocacy of "segregation today,
segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." Shortly afterward, the pugnacious politician stood in the path of an assistant attorney general to try blocking the integration of the University of Alabama. While Wallace gradually backtracked from his hard-core segregationist positions, he could never shake the image of angry bigotry, which was indelibly planted in the public imagination. Like Governor Lester Maddox, Wallace won the grudging admiration of those who admired his courage. But after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, when blacks and whites sat near each other in restaurants and on buses without the world ending, more and more white southerners concluded that they could live with integration. Gradually, the intransigent creed of Maddox and Wallace became irrelevant to the concerns of most southerners.

As they abandoned segregation, however, white Georgians continued to resent attempts by federal judges to impose upon them unpopular programs such as "forced" school busing. Few national politicians had a better grasp of the shifting southern position than Richard Nixon. While continuing to support the Civil Rights Act and the principle of equal justice, the California Republican adopted a southern strategy in 1968 to win the endorsement of South Carolina's Strom Thurmond and other powerful southern Republicans. Denouncing "forced" busing and pledging not to treat the South as a pariah, Nixon appealed to white southerners who accepted the end of segregation, but resented northern liberals and their pretensions of moral superiority. Just as Callaway had found himself positioned between Arnall and Maddox, the former vice-president held views on civil rights that were clearly more liberal than those of Wallace, but far to the right of Humphrey's. Cobb County could not abide a big-government liberal, but the voters showed their progressive inclinations by picking Nixon over Wallace. In this election sophisticated, suburban Cobb was far more moderate than the rest of the state, where Wallace carried 43 percent of the popular tally to Nixon's 30 and Humphrey's 27. Receiving a plurality, the populist, racist, old school Democrat garnered all of Georgia's electoral votes. By the end of the 1960s Cobb was not yet a bastion of Republican strength, but it was moving that way, and moderate Democrats were beginning to worry that affiliation with the national party was a liability in local elections.
The Republicans Take Charge

Victories in State and Local Races, 1968-70

Throughout the 1960s the Democrats maintained almost total control of local governmental offices. The main evidence of Republican strength came in races for president and governor, where GOP candidates Barry Goldwater, Bo Callaway, and Richard Nixon carried Cobb. Other than Ben Jordan, the only Republican to hold a local office was Gerald Green, who upset Democrat J. C. Powell in a 1968 school board race. The thirty-one-year-old pharmacist represented Post 5 in east Cobb (Elizabeth, Gritters, Post Oak, and Merritts militia districts). On election night Powell went to bed thinking that he had won by about one hundred votes. However, alert computer operators Jim Jones and Bob Coleman noted that the combined total for the two candidates was about five hundred higher than the number of people who voted in the school board race. The straight party ballot proved to be the reason for the error. A number of absentee voters had marked the straight Democratic ticket. Democrat Powell was entitled to those votes in the four relevant militia districts, but election officials, mistak-
enly, gave him the absentee straight party votes for all the eastern half of Cobb. Minus the erroneous votes, Republican Green became the winner.¹

Five other GOP candidates ran competitive races before falling short to their Democratic opponents. In contrast to 1966, when the Republicans ran numerous candidates who lost by lopsided margins, the party decided in 1968 to concentrate on just six races. The leadership recruited attractive candidates who seemed to outwork and outspend their Democrat foes. In the end, however, the Democratic label carried weight with southern voters who told campaign workers, "My daddy told me, don't ever vote for a Republican." Running for the last time, former legislator Ben Jordan received 46 percent of the ballots, but lost a western district county commission race by about sixteen hundred votes to E. P. (Doc) Ellison. Campaigning for the state house, thirty-year-old insurance agent George Lankford came within about two thousand votes of an even younger Democrat, twenty-seven-year-old George Kreeger, Jr. In a district that included all of Cobb and part of Paulding, the Republican did well in the east Cobb precincts and in his native Paulding, but lost most of the other districts, including Smyrna, where Kreeger's father was mayor. Also receiving over 40 percent of the vote, but falling short, were GOP candidates Ed Hay for the state senate and John Davidson and Joe MacMillan for county school board.²

Cobb Democrats shared with other southerners a concern that the national party had tilted too far to the left and no longer reflected the views of average voters. Nonetheless, the party that "redeemed" the South after Reconstruction continued to benefit from the large number of aging, yellow-dog Democrats who swore on their parents' graves that they would never vote for a Republican. Twice-defeated Ben Jordan blamed his party's losses on "people who, for some reason, continue to blindly follow the old political bosses." He bitterly attacked a Democrat-dominated legislature that shrewdly revised the straight-party ballot to apply to all races except president. Knowing that Humphrey would lose Georgia, the General Assembly designed a ballot where one could vote for president and then cast a straight-party ticket in all other races. That way, Senator Herman Talmadge headed the ticket in Georgia. Jordan blamed his defeat on Cobb countians who voted for American Party candidate George Wallace for president, then switched over and cast a straight-party ballot for Talmadge and the rest
The modest Republican progress in 1968 was sustained two years later when, for the second straight time, the GOP candidate for governor carried Cobb County. The former news director of WSB-TV, Hal Suit, emerged as the Republican candidate with a primary victory in September over Georgia comptroller general Jimmy Bentley, a former Democrat who bolted to the GOP. The powerful Bentley assumed that grateful Republicans would give him the nomination, and then conservatives of both parties would put him in the governor's mansion. However, the longtime Republican faithful resented the interloper's presumptions and gave the nomination to Hal Suit. In Cobb Suit beat Bentley by more than three to one, with Fulton County Judge Jeptha Tanksley running a distant third.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Carter carried the Democratic primary over former governor Carl Sanders and seven other candidates. Carter received 53 percent of the Cobb County vote and Sanders 42 percent. White racist J. B. Stoner, Wallace-supporter McKee Hargrett, and African-American attorney C. B. King gained between 1 and 2 percent each, and the remaining four candidates received less than 1 percent combined.

Arrow Shirt president Bob Garrison headed the Sanders campaign in Cobb County. He attributed the local loss to apathy on the part of the Sanders forces and the fact that sixty-seven hundred Cobb counties voted in the GOP rather than the Democratic primary. Judge Conley Ingram served as Carter's local campaign manager. He credited the victory to hard work and the candidate's integrity, claiming that the businessman-farmer "will be the same man after four years as governor as he was before we counted the votes." While Carter received a majority in Cobb, he was a little short elsewhere. So he met Sanders in a rematch two weeks later. That time, the Plains peanut farmer won easily, receiving about 60 percent in Cobb and statewide.

For the next five weeks Suit and Carter campaigned vigorously and debated each other on television. Carter, running as a racial moderate and fiscal conservative, pledged to operate government in a more businesslike fashion. Suit campaigned as a conservative, but came across as more liberal than Carter on a few issues, notably capital punishment, where Carter was for it and Suit was not. With two moderate conservatives competing against each other, the voters stuck with tra-
dition and elected the Democrat. Statewide, Carter received approximately 60 percent of the vote. Some 56 percent of the Cobb County voters, however, favored Hal Suit. Conley Ingram claimed that Suit's name recognition as a WSB newsman gave him a local advantage. The growing affluence and suburbanization of the county seemed added factors.

In addition to turning out for Suit, east Cobb voters elected two Republicans in 1970. The lone GOP school board member, Gerald
Green, chose not to run again, but he endorsed the ultimate winner, glass company owner Carl Harrison. A rising star among area Republicans, Harrison received 60 percent of the ballots for the east Cobb seat. The other Republican success came in September in a non-partisan election to fill the un-expired eastern district term of retiring commissioner Harry Ingram. In his second try at elective office, insurance executive George Lankford headed a field of eight, in which no one received a majority. In the runoff Langford faced automobile dealer Jimmy Teague. Party labels did not appear on the ballot, but Teague attempted to turn the election into a partisan contest, emphasizing his endorsement by the Cobb Democratic committee. The strategy backfired in suburban east Cobb, and Langford won 61 percent of the vote to become the first Republican on the county commission.

Other GOP candidates fared more poorly in 1970 than Harrison and Langford, but at least one gained the respect of his Democratic opponent and proved to be a force in the future. Thirty-one year old Kenneth O. Nix took on Al Burruss for a seat in the Georgia legislature. The Smyrna Republican had a law degree from Emory and five years of practice. In addition to his work with church and civic groups, he served on the Cobb Citizens for Decent Literature committee. The president of Tip-Top Poultry, Burruss had served four years on the county commission before gaining a seat in the General Assembly. In his 1970 reelection bid he easily defeated his Republican opponent. Nonetheless, he congratulated Nix for running a clean-cut campaign and accurately predicted he would be a factor in future political races.

The Breakthrough Year of 1972

The Nixon reelection year proved to be a banner time for local Republicans, who came close to reaching parity with their more established rivals. President Nixon's popularity helped local GOP candidates in all races. Georgia Republicans chose Carolyn Dodgen Meadows as a delegate to the 1972 National Convention in Miami. By this time President Nixon had greatly deescalated the American involvement in Vietnam, and the last U.S. troops would pull out in early 1973. But Students for a Democratic Society and other radical groups were still active on college campuses and were strong enough to hold massive
antiwar rallies throughout the country. From the perspective of these organizations, the president had moved much too slowly to extract the country from an immoral war. Demonstrators showed up in Miami in large numbers to express their contempt for the Nixon administration. Some of the radicals lined the routes to the convention hall, stopping automobiles and attempting to harass delegates. A favorite protest tactic was to throw yellow mustard on the evening gowns of lady delegates and to slash the tires of anyone with convention credentials. Riding one evening in the car of veteran Republican Joe Tribble, Carolyn Meadows and her brother Dorsey spotted trouble ahead. Tribble realized that the radicals had stopped traffic and were inspecting each car. So he told all his passengers to hide their credentials. The protestors looked in the car, but let it pass when they saw no convention badges. The vehicle behind them was less lucky. The demonstrators discovered the hated badges, and left the car with four flat tires.9

By this time many hardworking middle-class Americans had sickened at what they perceived as privileged youth engaging in anti-social, immoral, and unpatriotic behavior. Campus and antiwar protests, urban race riots, and the antics of longhaired hippies provoked a reaction across the country. The “greatest generation” had voted for FDR and Truman, served in World War II and Korea, and supported the liberal reforms of the depression era. But now many of them were tired of black militants and white radicals, disliked the War on Poverty and other expensive welfare programs, and resented the failure of governments at all levels to maintain law and order.

On the national level a long liberal era, stretching from FDR to LBJ, had come to a close. In the watershed years of the late 1960s and early 1970s a new conservative majority had emerged, and places like Orange County, California, and Cobb County, Georgia, were on the verge of becoming the power centers of this conservative, mostly Republican, revolution. The Nixon presidency would soon self-destruct, as Watergate revelations came to light. But in 1972 the American electorate seemed unconcerned about the developing controversy and gave the president 61 percent of the popular vote, just a few tenths of a point below Lyndon Johnson’s all-time 1964 record in the last great victory of New Deal liberalism. Given Cobb’s long Democratic heritage, Republican Nixon’s reelection victory was almost unbelievably lopsided. The president took 85 percent of the ballots,
swamping liberal Democrat George McGovern by about forty-one thousand to seven thousand. Even districts that always went Democratic, such as Coxes (Mableton) and Big Shanty (Kennesaw), went overwhelmingly for Nixon.¹

In a race for an open U.S. Senate seat, 56 percent of Cobb's voters went for Republican Fletcher Thompson, an Atlanta congressman since 1966. The rest of the state, however, gave the same winning percentage to his conservative Democratic opponent, Sam Nunn, a farmer and attorney from the south Georgia town of Perry.¹¹ The Cobb GOP also increased its hold on local seats. George Langford and Carl Harrison won reelection to their respective offices. Harrison was joined on the school board by two other Republicans, Harold Posey (Post 2—south Cobb) and Winn Crump (Post 6—east Cobb).¹²

For the past two years Harrison had teamed with two Democrats, Jack Darnell and R. J. McCurry, to support progressive school superintendent Alton C. Crews, regarded as one of the best school administrators in Cobb County history. The other four Democrats, however, con-
sistently outvoted the Harrison-Darnell-McCurry team. The board cast forty split votes in sixteen months, with Chairman Joseph S. Bird, Lloyd Perry, Sollie Cole, and Ray Gary voting down most of Crews's recommendations. Fed up with the continuous opposition, the superintendent resigned in April 1972 and took an equivalent position in Charleston, South Carolina.13

With many community leaders expressing support for the embattled ex-superintendent, Carl Harrison seemed to gain stature as one of the superintendent's most ardent defenders.14 The loss of Crews became the central issue in the fall school board races. Not only did Harrison and Darnell win reelection, but the other victorious Republicans, Posey and Crump, along with Democratic victor John Frey (Post 4—west Cobb) supported the policies of the ousted superintendent. Along with their Democratic allies, the three Republicans exercised meaningful power, and Harrison became chairman of the board.15

The GOP also made impressive gains in legislative contests, picking up two seats in the Georgia house and one in the senate. In eastern district races for the lower house, Travis Duke won Post 1 and Ken Nix took Post 3. A sales representative for a Mableton insurance company, Duke surprised most prognosticators by beating Gene Housley, a two-term veteran who seemed entrenched. Local Democrats, who still held six of the eight Cobb County house seats, blamed the Duke and Nix victories on the remarkably strong showing of President Nixon and straight-party GOP balloting. Meanwhile, Tom Moore of Sandy Springs outpolled former senator Sam Hensley for a senate seat. The new 56th district stretched from north Fulton, through north and west Cobb, to the Dallas area of Paulding County. The Democrat-controlled General Assembly carved the district to give Hensley the best chance of victory, but he barely carried his Cobb County base and lost overwhelmingly in Fulton.16

Impact of Watergate and the Carter Presidency

The Georgia Republican Party might have expanded faster in the 1970s except for the Watergate scandal of 1972-74 and Jimmy Carter's rise to
the presidency in 1976. After Richard Nixon's 1972 landslide victory, his presidency unraveled as evidence came to light that the Committee to Reelect the President had broken into and bugged the headquarters of the Democratic national committee in Washington's upscale Watergate complex. Audiotapes from the Oval Office proved that Nixon ordered a cover-up of the crime. As the president resigned in disgrace, a cynical public blamed politicians in general and especially Nixon's GOP for yet one more example of the arrogance of power.

In Nixon's resignation year, 1974, local Republicans merely treaded water. Ken Nix ran unopposed, and the GOP hung onto the 56th senate district when north Fulton resident Haskew Brantley defeated state AFL-CIO boss Herb Mabry. School board head Carl Harrison gave the Republicans another house seat by narrowly edging Smyrna's mayor, John Porterfield. However, Democrat C. W. (Chuck) Edwards upset one-term Republican legislator Travis Duke. So the GOP delegation in the lower house remained at two. The party also came up short in its efforts to gain a second county commission seat when political newcomer Johnny Isakson fell a thousand votes short in an eastern district race against Democrat Charlie Jones. After carrying Cobb in the last two gubernatorial elections, the Republicans failed to repeat in 1974. Democrat George Busbee defeated Macon mayor Ronnie Thompson in Cobb and statewide.

Isakson was one of many GOP candidates who believed that Watergate hurt him and the party. He also blamed "Machine Gun Ronnie," the GOP gubernatorial candidate. Thompson did not work well with the party leadership, came across as a wild man, and thus lacked the credibility of a Bo Callaway or Hal Suit. With the Ford administration struggling with inflation and unemployment and suffering in the polls for pardoning Richard Nixon, the Georgia party found itself in disarray.17

Georgia's former governor, Jimmy Carter, capitalized on his role as a Washington outsider in defeating President Ford in the 1976 presidential election. Heading the Democratic ticket in 1976 and 1980, Carter helped Georgia Democrats down the line. In 1976 Carter won lopsided victories in Cobb and Georgia on his way to the White House. The first Democratic presidential candidate to carry Cobb since Kennedy, he outpolled President Ford by about forty-five thousand to thirty-four thousand. According to Johnny Isakson, Carter's ascendance-
cy caused Georgia to fall behind other southeastern states in electing GOP candidates. Yet the Cobb GOP made modest progress toward that end due to the in-migration of new residents who did not share the mentality that “my granddaddy and great-granddaddy were Democrats and, therefore, I am a Democrat.”

In 1976 George Lankford held onto his eastern district commissioner seat, defeating Democrat George Bentley. Republican Johnny Isakson ousted incumbent Chuck Edwards to join fellow GOP members Ken Nix and Carl Harrison in the General Assembly. Jimmy Carter’s coattails were so long statewide that Isakson was the only Georgia Republican to defeat a Democratic incumbent that year for a legislative seat. At the time Republicans held only nineteen of the 180 seats in lower house. When Isakson ran for office, he did not put his party affiliation on his campaign signs. The young businessman reasoned that despite the influx of northerners, east Cobb still had many native southerners who would close their ears to a candidate’s message, if they identified him as a Republican. Isakson told the old-school Democrats that he did not ask them to change parties. He merely requested that they be independent and vote objectively when they went to the polls.

One of the biggest 1976 Republican victories came in the race for Cobb’s district attorney. GOP challenger Tom Charron won by twenty-two hundred votes over incumbent Buddy Darden, who had been weakened by the bad publicity of a murder case that blew up when a star witness recanted her testimony. The case began on the morning of 7 May 1971 when two pathologists, Dr. Warren Matthews and his wife, Dr. Rosina Vincenzi, were brutally murdered at their Lower Roswell home. At the time, the district attorney was Ben Smith. When he retired in 1972, Buddy Darden won the position, but the new district attorney invited his mentor back to prosecute the first two cases. Smith attempted to prove that the murders were the work of a gang of thieves from Birmingham known as the “Dixie Mafia.” His star witness, Debbie Kidd, a former girl friend of one of the gang members, testified that she accompanied the accused felons to the murder scene. Supposedly, they intended only to commit a robbery, but ended up killing the two physicians, who were just leaving for work. Kidd was granted immunity in exchange for her cooperation. Based largely on her testimony, seven men were found guilty in a series of separate trials held in 1973-74. After Ben Smith, with the assistance of future governor Roy Barnes,
prosecuted the first two defendants, he stepped aside. Barnes handled the third trial, and Darden presided over the rest.

The convictions soon unraveled when evidence surfaced that brought into question the professionalism of the Cobb County police department and the district attorney's office. A drug addict and prostitute, Debbie Kidd had been hypnotized by a police psychologist who, without prosecutor Smith's knowledge, may have provided her with details about the murder site. During the trial a Cobb detective had kept Kidd in his apartment and had an affair with her. During the appeals process, Kidd began recanting her testimony. By this point, district attorney Darden tried to distance himself from the investigation, admitting to a reporter that it had been "bungled" before he took over. In 1975 U.S. district court judge Charles A. Moye threw out the convictions of the first two defendants on grounds that the defense was denied access to the tapes of Kidd's psychological sessions. Eventually, the other convictions were thrown out as well. Not long after, public confidence in the verdict was further undermined when a convicted murderer, Billy Sunday Birt, confessed that he committed the Matthews killings along with his partner, Billy Wayne Davis.21

A decade and a half later, assistant district attorney Roy Barnes still maintained that the State prosecuted the right men and that any jury that heard the evidence would agree. He argued that Darden lost the 1976 election to one of the first hard-hitting, negative campaigns, with Tom Charron placing billboards all over the county saying, "Clean up the mess in the DA's office." In 1979 Charron put Billy Wayne Davis on trial. Like the "Dixie Mafia," Birt and Davis had a long criminal history. Davis admitted to robbing the Matthews house with Birt the year before the murders. He also admitted to driving Birt and another man by the house afterwards as they plotted a follow-up robbery. But Davis denied that he went with them on the day of the killings. Birt's motive in naming Davis may have been revenge, because Davis had testified against him in a murder case in Wrens, Georgia, for which Birt was serving a life sentence. On 3 November 1979 a Cobb County jury found Davis not guilty, thus closing the case. No conviction would ever hold up in the murders of Warren Matthews and Rosina Vincenzi. Tom Charron, however, would successfully prosecute many other cases and serve as district attorney into the 1990s.22
The Election of 1978

Two years later, in the non-presidential year of 1978 the two parties maintained their relative positions. Isakson, Nix, and Harrison won reelection to the lower house and Haskew Brantley won a third term in the multi-county 56th senate district. According to Isakson, once the Republican legislators proved they could be reelected, they gained the respect of their Democratic colleagues and were able to work with them on local legislation. The fact that the Democrats in the Cobb delegation all came from Marietta or Mableton gave the Republicans an advantage, since they could claim to represent the other parts of the county. Isakson lived in east Cobb, Harrison in the northeastern part of the county, and Nix in Smyrna. Along with Senate colleague Brantley of Fulton County, they forged an alliance that the Democrats had to take seriously. As the Republicans delivered in bringing badly needed improvements to the county, they encouraged other quality candidates to run under the GOP banner.

The GOP trio almost received a fourth member when Fred Aiken lost by only seventeen votes in his race against Democrat Gene Housley. An executive at Cobb Bank & Trust Company and proprietor of Alfredo's Restaurant in Dallas, Aiken had served in 1976 as president of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce. One afternoon while he was working at the bank, Doug Howard, the chairman of the Cobb County Republican Party, came to see him and asked him to run against state senator Joe Thompson, who was a Democrat at the time. Aiken told him that he liked Thompson and did not want to run against him. He also confessed that he was not sure whether he was a Democrat or a Republican. A week later Howard returned and asked him to run against Representative Housley, who had regained a legislative seat since his defeat in 1972 by Travis Duke. Aiken did not like Housley's voting record and thought that he needed to be replaced. In agreeing to run he became a recruit into the Republican Party. When he went to tell his father he planned to run, the elder Aiken at first approved. Then the novice candidate announced that he would campaign as a Republican. A product of the old school, the father predicted that the son would lose the respect of all his friends. Aiken responded that even if his friends turned against him, he would still be the same person and would eventually win back whatever respect he deserved. His father
smiled broadly and said, “Okay, I’ll help you run as a Republican.”

A Fulton County native, who grew up in Cobb and Paulding, Aiken was one of many lifelong Georgia Democrats who had become alienated by the liberal tilt of the Democrats and found the GOP to possess a more congenial philosophy. According to Aiken, the presence in office of such high caliber individuals as Johnny Isakson, Ken Nix, and Carl Harrison gave former Democrats the confidence to switch sides. The first-time candidate learned a hard lesson in this race. His huge district included all of Cobb and part of Paulding. Even with a five-person staff, he could not get out to meet all the voters. Yet on election eve he told his volunteers to take the next day off. The candidate arose late on election morning and squandered the day at Cumberland Mall, shopping and taking in a movie. When the results came in, and he realized that he lost by less than 0.1 percent, he made up his mind never again to stop working before the polls closed. If he had reached just a few constituents that day, he would have won.25

**Progress in the Reagan Era**

Just as local Republicans benefited immensely from President Nixon’s 1972 landslide victory, they took another giant step forward in 1980 with Ronald Reagan heading the ticket. Despite the fact that President Carter carried Georgia in his quest for a second term, Cobb countians went for the more conservative Reagan by fifty-two thousand to thirty-nine thousand. In the U.S. senate race Cobb played the key role in sending Mack Mattingly to Washington. Twenty-four-year veteran Herman Talmadge seemed to have won until the late returns from Cobb put the Republican challenger over the top. An Indiana native, Mattingly lived on St. Simon’s Island, where he had been a marketing manager for IBM before starting his own company. Mattingly received 71 percent of the Cobb County vote (a forty-one thousand vote victory margin). Statewide, Mattingly won by only fourteen thousand votes; so Cobb clearly made the difference in the outcome.26

For the first time Republicans gained parity in the Cobb legislative delegation, as Fred Aiken won the seat of retiring Democrat Gene Housley. The Republicans also gained their first majority on the county school board. The only two Democratic victors, Sam Whitfield and
Paul Moore, were unopposed in the 1980 general election. In the contested races the Republicans scored a clean sweep behind incumbent Harold Posey, Delta pilot Duff Green, accountant Bob Shaw, homemaker Carolyn Duncan, and structural engineer Bill Bates. The last named defeated a respected retired educator and two-term board member W. O. Smitha.

George Lankford retained his seat on the county commission, despite his indictment in 1978 along with several other men for gambling on the Super Bowl. The indictment was quashed on a technicality, and the grand jury refused to indict him again. East Cobb voters obviously did not hold the scandal against him, as he won by over four thousand votes against Democratic rancher and party activist George Bentley. Meanwhile, Reagan coattails extended into the courthouse, where Grant Brantley decisively defeated veteran judge Luther Hames and Tom Charron held onto his post as district attorney.

With Aiken's election the Cobb house delegation divided four-four with Republicans Isakson, Harrison, Nix, and Aiken and Democrats Joe Mack Wilson, Buddy Darden, Al Burruss, and Steve Thompson. Darden had rebounded from his district attorney loss to gain a house seat in 1980. Thompson was also a freshman, while Wilson and Burruss were the veterans of the delegation. On everything but a few partisan issues the Cobb representatives worked together to support legislation of interest to Cobb countians. They were all fiscal conservatives. The Democrats supported organized labor, and the Republicans did not, but none of them were liberal spenders. Despite party affiliation, they became friends. According to Isakson, their biggest difference was that Republicans wanted the charters of boards and authorities to give the GOP a chance of being included, while the dominant party wanted to make it as difficult as possible for the loyal opposition to make any headway.

Although the Republicans were a tiny minority in the General Assembly, they managed to push through a number of bills. Fred Aiken believed that he was successful to the extent that he made friends with members of both parties from throughout the state. He supported them when he thought they were right, and they returned the favor. The GOP representatives were self-confident businessmen and professionals who battled the Democrats when they had to and worked with them when they could. Victories were few and far between, and accomplish-
ments usually came when a Democrat took the credit. If a Republican introduced a popular bill, the next day a Democratic colleague would introduce the same bill under his name. While the GOP bills never got out of committee, the identical ones sponsored by Democrats reached the floor for a vote. Some party activists criticized Johnny Isakson for not being more confrontational and for not "cussing" the Democrats more often. With the GOP so badly outnumbered, however, he found that the politicians who wanted to "lob grenades" quickly lost credibility and became ineffective. He reasoned that when one is elected to represent the people, he does not gripe about the system but learns how best to get things done. Not only did he succeed in gaining appropriations for badly needed local projects, he won the respect of his colleagues. In 1983 fellow Republicans elected him minority leader, a post he held for four sessions until he ran for governor in 1990.29

In non-presidential election years in the 1980s Cobb Republicans tended not to do as well as they did when Ronald Reagan or George Bush led the ticket. Presidential races brought to the polls many voters who were new to the community, knew little about the local candidates, and voted strictly on the basis of party affiliation. In off years the electorate was always smaller, but presumably better informed about local issues and more likely to cast a split ticket. Nonetheless, the GOP by the early 1980s was the dominant party in suburban east Cobb and growing rapidly in the less developed western part of the county. Evidence of GOP strength can be seen in the race at the top of the ticket in 1982, where Republican gubernatorial candidate Bob Bell carried the county by two thousand votes, despite losing to Democrat Joe Frank Harris in the rest of the state almost two to one.30

In 1982 Carl Harrison moved to the state senate to represent the new 37th district, created in a special reapportionment session the previous year. About two-thirds of the district's registered voters resided in north Cobb with the rest in south Cherokee. His Democratic opponent, Gene Morris, owned a manufacturing company near Kennesaw Mountain. Harrison, a veteran of the school board and the legislature and for nineteen years the owner of Harrison Glass, had more name recognition. Running on experience rather than party identification, the Republican legislator received 55 percent of the vote. He joined three incumbent senators whose districts included parts of Cobb: Republican Haskew Brantley of Sandy Springs in the 56th district and
Democrats Joe Lee Thompson of Vinings in the 32nd and Roy Barnes of Mableton in the 33rd. For the first time the senate delegation was evenly divided between the two parties.

In newly constituted house districts the parties also maintained parity with the five posts in district 21 (east Cobb) going to the Republicans and the five posts in district 20 (west Cobb) to the Democrats. There were several new faces. After ten years in the General Assembly, Ken Nix left to take a state court judgeship. Joining Fred Aiken and Johnny Isakson from the 21st were freshmen Bill Atkins, a Smyrna pharmacist; Frank Johnson, a former Smyrna mayor; and Tom Wilder, the proprietor of a real estate firm. In the 20th first time representative Terry Lawler joined returning Democrats Joe Mack Wilson, Al Burruss, Buddy Darden, and Steve Thompson.

As the Barrett era on the county commission neared its close the Republicans won a second seat in 1982. Barbara Williams, who had worked tirelessly for years in George Lankford’s campaigns, joined him as the other eastern district commissioner. An owner of an east Cobb insurance company, Williams became the first woman on the county commission. She attributed her victory to her years of civic involvement through the Cobb Chamber and the hospital authority and admitted that “being Republican [in east Cobb] helped.” She joined on the commission two west Cobb Democrats, Harvey Paschal and Butch Thompson.

By 1984 a decade of historically high inflation and unemployment in America had come to an end. Due to Ronald Reagan’s personal income tax cuts and numerous other factors, unemployment had dropped, public confidence was up, and the country had embarked on a period of unparalleled prosperity. So Reagan’s reelection year was an excellent time for Republicans throughout the country. In Cobb County Reagan’s coattails seemed particularly long. Nationwide, the president carried forty-nine states, while his Democratic challenger, Walter Mondale, won only his native Minnesota and the District of Columbia. Locally, Reagan received 77 percent of the vote. In the wake of the Reagan landslide, the local GOP gained nine offices formerly held by Democrats. Defeated state senate candidate Max Kaley expressed the opinion of many dispirited Democrats when he said, “I’ve learned a live elephant can beat a dead donkey.”

The GOP won a number of races by huge margins. After twenty
years of dominance by Democrat Ernest Barrett, the county commission came under the control of a Republican chairman, Earl Smith, the owner of a heating and air-conditioning company. Smith had served on the planning commission in the 1970s and had recently headed a citizens' task force that studied county government. A GOP activist since the Goldwater era, the victor experienced his greatest challenge in the Republican primary, where he defeated commissioner George Langford and Marietta attorney Jim Peters. In the general election he had only token opposition, garnering 73 percent of the vote.
When Langford resigned in the summer of 1984 to run for the chairmanship, Republican Emmett Burton won a special election to fill the last several months of his term. Then in November Burton emerged victorious in a race for the full four-year term, winning by the same 73 percent margin that Earl Smith recorded in the chairman's race. With Smith, Burton, and Barbara Williams, the GOP for the first time had a three to two majority on the county commission. Burton's victory
Emmett Burton (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)

reveals much about the changes in Cobb County. The product of an old east Cobb family, Burton grew up a Democrat and had not been involved before in Republican politics. Johnny Isakson had worked in many grassroots campaigns in east Cobb, but he met Burton for the first time on the day after the new Republican office-seeker qualified for the special election. Burton provides evidence that by 1984 prospective candidates were running under the Republican banner for pragmatic
reasons, unlike the party veterans who identified with the GOP long before it was popular to do so.35

The house legislative delegation remained evenly divided in 1984, with the GOP again carrying all five posts in the eastern half of the county and the Democrats all five posts in the west. However, the races were much more lopsided in the east than in the west. Four of the five eastern representatives won without Democratic opposition and the fifth, Tom Wilder, won overwhelmingly against the older party's national committeewoman, Juanelle Edwards. In contrast, the races in the west were all close with Joe Mack Wilson, a twenty-three year veteran, gaining only a 51 to 49 percent victory over first-time candidate Brenda Mosley. Democrat Terry Lawler, a Clarkdale native who worked as a Lockheed accountant, barely won a second term over oral surgeon Reuel Hamilton with 52 percent of the ballots, while veteran Al Burruss had a slightly easier time in winning 57 percent of the votes against longtime GOP activist Doug Howard.36

The Republicans picked up a state senate seat in 1984 when Smyrna city councilman Jim Tolleson beat Max Kaley for Joe Lee Thompson's old seat. Meanwhile, Thompson went down to defeat in a race for tax commissioner against Kennesaw College political science professor Jim McDuffie. Highly respected sheriff Bill Hutson managed to win a third term as a Democrat, but garnered only 52 percent of the vote against a strong Republican challenger. Recognizing the difficulty of winning as a Democrat, Hutson switched to the GOP before he ran again in 1988. The only Democrat anywhere on the ballot who had an easy time in 1984 was two-term U.S. senator Sam Nunn, who received 70 percent of the vote in Cobb after being endorsed by such high-ranking Republicans as Senator Mack Mattingly and Representative Newt Gingrich. For all other Democrats the lesson was clear. Even a conservative Democrat would have trouble winning in unincorporated Cobb County for the foreseeable future. So the party that hardly existed in Cobb or elsewhere in Georgia before the 1960s had become a dominating presence. Republicans who hoped to carry Georgia in presidential or statewide races had begun to identify Cobb as a place they must visit if they hoped to win. Indeed, suburban Cobb had become one of the soldest Republican strongholds in the nation.37
Introduction

As Cobb County suburbanized, and newcomers arrived in record numbers, a unique type of southern conservatism evolved, respecting some southern traditions, but rejecting the white supremacist views of the recent past. Migrants from the north generally liked the South, commenting on the good manners and the neighborliness of the native population. In Dixie Rising, journalist Peter Applebome quotes a northern transplant who grew up on Long Island and felt out of step with Cobb’s conservative politics, but enjoyed discovering that “people are more down to earth, more polite, that you don’t have to walk around screaming and yelling and being rude.” Applebome claims that “Cobb is not the South that was, but it isn’t that vaguely idealized New South either. It’s the South of [Newt] Gingrich’s pugnacious sound bites, not Jimmy Carter’s peanut country drawl; of white wine, not bourbon and branch water; of tidy air-conditioned suburban churches, not hard-shell backwoods ones; of the gladiolus gardens and lemon meringue torte recipes of Southern Living magazine.”
No matter where they came from, Cobb’s new residents quickly regarded themselves as southerners. But they had little sympathy for the rural, segregationist, Talmadge-style populism that once dominated Georgia politics. Even when they lived in virtually all-white subdivisions, they believed in equality and did not consider themselves racist. If they thought about it at all, they favored neighborhoods segregated by class, not race. Zoning ordinances might keep out poor people, but they did so without regard to color or creed. Applebome quotes Newt Gingrich that the issue was safety: “People in Cobb don’t object to upper middle-class neighbors [of any ethnicity] who keep their lawn cut and move to the area to avoid crime. What people worry about is...[residents] who have no middle-class values.” Judging by Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen’s description of Long Island (Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened), attitudes of Cobb countians seemed remarkably similar to those of other suburban Americans.

Rooted in economic self-interest, suburban conservatism was built around two story houses with two-car garages and well-manicured lawns in pleasant subdivisions. With thirty-year mortgages that most were challenged to meet, suburbanites had good reason to keep taxes low and government limited. They worried about their children’s future and, perceiving a decline in personal morality, supported candidates who promised to uphold community values. Living in a county with an air force base, a naval air station, and a large defense industry, they naturally wanted the federal government to maintain a strong military. With their well-developed work ethics and competitive spirits, the white suburbanites of the 1960s and 1970s opposed most Great Society welfare programs, but were willing to pay for good schools, improved roads, and government services that enhanced property values and made life more enjoyable. As Lockheed laid off thousands of workers in the post-Vietnam era and as inflation by the mid-1970s reached double-digits, middle-class Cobb countians watched their household budgets carefully and looked for politicians who did the same with the people’s money.

Although most local Democrats were moderately conservative, the most fiscally conservative candidates usually represented the Republican Party. One notable exception was a Democrat from a distinguished Atlanta family who developed a national reputation for his articulate, passionate defense of conservative causes. An urologist by profession, Dr. Lawrence Patton McDonald was an anomaly in the
Democratic Party. Emerging in the post-segregationist era, he had little use for liberal civil rights leaders who advocated big government solutions to problems of race and poverty. At the same time, he had no desire to return to the days of Jim Crow and rarely talked about race at all.

The old Democratic right, represented by spokesmen such as Lester Maddox, had begun to die out by the 1970s. Increasingly, Georgia Democrats consisted of pro-civil rights, welfare-state liberals or pragmatic, adaptive moderates. Larry McDonald fit into none of these camps. Philosophically, he had more in common with Goldwater and Reagan Republicans than any branch of his chosen political party. A scholar and intellectual, he asked three questions of every proposed spending bill: do we need it, can we afford it, and is it constitutional? In an era of rising national deficits he found himself at odds with liberals who supported popular domestic spending programs regardless of whether they were constitutional or affordable. He also differed with the liberal wing of his party in remaining a fervent anti-communist who viewed defense spending as the nation's first priority.1

**Emergence of Larry McDonald**

Born in Atlanta on 1 April 1935, Larry McDonald was the son and grandson of physicians. The grandfather, Dr. Paul McDonald, operated a general practice for over fifty years in Bolton, just across the Chattahoochee River from Cobb. He also served as a public health doctor in Fulton County for many years. Wherever Larry McDonald campaigned in the seventh congressional district, strangers would come up and say, “Dr. Paul delivered me.” The grandfather's reputation proved a major asset to a relatively unknown candidate who remarked that no one knew him and few knew his daddy, but as soon as he mentioned Dr. Paul, “people would light up.”

Larry's father, Dr. Harold Paul McDonald, started the McDonald Urology Clinic in Atlanta, and both Larry and his older brother, Harold, Jr., joined his practice. Larry's mother, Callie Patton McDonald, was an intelligent, well-informed woman and the guiding force in shaping her son's character. Her brother was General Elmo Patton, and she was a distant cousin of the more famous general, George Patton. One of her ancestors was a pioneer nineteenth-century female
physician. A nutritionist and former home economics teacher, Callie McDonald made her physician sons sensitive to the relationship between diet and good health.4

Larry proved to be a precocious student, needing only two years to finish high school with honors at the Darlington School in Rome, Georgia. He completed the pre-med program at Davidson in another two years and gained acceptance to Emory Medical School at age seventeen. After receiving his M.D. in 1957, McDonald joined the navy for four years. Stationed in Iceland, he won a commendation medal for his service as a flight surgeon to naval squadrons. The handsome young officer came home with the rank of lieutenant commander5 and a bride, Anna Offergsson. Eventually, the couple had three children: Tryggvi Paul, Callie Grace, and Mary Elizabeth.

Dr. McDonald served a two-year general surgery residency at Atlanta’s Grady Hospital, then a three-year residency in urology at the University of Michigan hospital in Ann Arbor. While there, he became disgusted with the actions of the local government and ran unsuccessfully for a city council seat. Back in Atlanta, he became a partner in his father’s urology clinic, joined the national council of the John Birch Society, and grew increasingly interested in conservative politics. Friends remembered a serious, intense young man who grew bored quickly with small talk. Even at parties at the McDonald home, he socialized with guests for only a short while before retreating to the library to read books and magazines or make phone calls. As he spent less and less time at home, the marriage with Anna dissolved and a nasty divorce ensued. On two occasions he was held in contempt of court for falling behind on alimony and child support payments.6

In 1972 the young doctor decided to run for Congress against John W. Davis, who was in his twelfth year in office. Recognizing that north Georgia was solidly Democratic, McDonald made the pragmatic decision to affiliate with that party. He told his friends it was more important to reach Washington and change the country than to worry about party labels.7 Congressman Davis was moderately conservative in his political philosophy. Unlike McDonald, he assumed his job was to bring as many federal dollars to his district as possible. To maintain his influence in the halls of Congress, he often went along with the liberal proposals of his party leaders.

Davis labeled his opponent an extremist and criticized his affilia-
tion with the John Birch Society. McDonald pointed out the inconsistencies between the congressman's supposed conservatism and his voting record. The urologist-politician concluded that Davis, as part of a liberal establishment, "voted consistently for big government 'busy body' controls and big government spending sprees causing crushing taxes and ruinous inflation."

Carolyn C. Price, a staff member in the Marietta office throughout McDonald's congressional career, first met the candidate during the 1972 campaign. She lived in the same neighborhood with Dr. Reuel Hamilton, an oral surgeon who invited Carolyn and her husband to his home for a coffee in McDonald's honor. Having learned how to handle weapons responsibly as a child, she was particularly impressed with the novice politician's eloquent defense of the right to bear arms under the second amendment. She credited him with being the first person to give her a plausible explanation of the root causes of inflation. A disciple of the Austrian school of economics, McDonald advocated the conservative views of Hans Seinholtz, Ludwig von Mises, and Friedrich von Hayek, whose 1944 classic, *The Road to Serfdom*, articulated the author's fears that liberal policies were undermining freedom.
In trying to unseat Davis, McDonald spent over fifty thousand dollars of his own money. Nonetheless, he came up a few votes short on election night. McDonald narrowly carried Cobb County (11,812 to 11,108) and won Walker and Dade by large majorities, but Davis led in his home county of Chattooga by almost four to one and most of the other counties by enough to gain 52 percent of the tallies district-wide. The McDonald camp alleged voter irregularities after a few ballot boxes disappeared from outlying areas. When they resurfaced a day later, every ballot went to the incumbent. McDonald, however, chose not to protest the results, believing that the chances of a successful challenge were minimal. Instead, he began planning and organizing for the next round two years later.10

By 1974 McDonald had greater name recognition, and Watergate and double-digit inflation created an anti-incumbency sentiment on which he could capitalize. Many north Georgians found a man of strong principles a refreshing change from old-school politicians. The idealistic urologist carried Cobb by about three thousand votes and nearly broke even elsewhere in the district. He lost Marietta, Acworth, and Lost Mountain, but ran ahead of Davis in the rest of Cobb. In addition to his home county, he carried Dade, Gordon, Paulding, and Walker. Davis carried the other five counties, but not by enough to overcome McDonald’s Cobb County margin.

The outgoing congressman blamed his defeat on the poor economy and McDonald’s ability to outspend him better than three to one. Davis was particularly chagrined that some of his opponent’s money came from John Birch Society sources outside the district. He said he would not support McDonald in the general election, because the nominee had not voted for Democrats in the last two presidential elections. Strongly opposed to liberal Democrats Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern, McDonald made no secret of his support for American Party presidential candidates George Wallace in 1968 and John Schmitz in 1972.11

The victorious Democrat still had a major hurdle to clear before he moved to Washington. An unusually strong candidate emerged from the Republican primary when Colonel Quincy Collins, a former Vietnam prisoner of war, defeated Ernie Norsworthy. For the first time in the twentieth century, the two opponents in the general election lived in Cobb County. For a seventh district that traditionally was dom-
inated by its northern half, the 1974 election marked the shift of elec­
toral power to rapidly growing Cobb. The Daily Journal editorialized
that the fall election presented “a delightful dilemma” for Cobb coun­
tians who had to decide between two local men of conservative views.
The paper credited McDonald with high intelligence and one of the
strongest political organizations ever put together in north Georgia.
Collins, on the other hand, could count on the support of veterans and
others who admired the retired Air Force colonel for surviving almost
eight years in a North Vietnamese prison.

The candidates seemed to share a similar philosophy, but few
politicians were better informed than McDonald, and the Democratic
candidate seemed to have an intuitive grasp of the philosophical impli­
cations of every issue. In contrast Collins’ positions on central issues
seemed fuzzy. He ran more on character than conservatism. While vot­
ers admired McDonald’s honesty and consistency, some found him too
ideological and uncompromising. Moreover, the affluent physician had
a major character problem after Judge Howell Ravan found him in con­
tempt of court and sent him to jail for two hours in July 1974 for failing
to keep up with court-ordered alimony payments. In his testimony,
McDonald claimed he received living expenses from his campaign fund
and was trying to make alimony and child support payments from this
account. Republicans criticized this statement on two counts: he
seemed to neglect a legal and ethical obligation, and he was using cam­
paign funds illegally.

McDonald suffered the handicap of numerous enemies in his
own party following three years of harsh attacks on John Davis. The
Democratic establishment openly supported Davis in the primary, with
the executive director of the state party, J. P. Kirkland, charging that
McDonald was not a real Democrat. After the challenger’s primary vic­
tory, Kirkland modified his rhetoric, but gave the candidate lukewarm
support at best. Moderate and liberal Cobb County Democrats were
embarrassed that their candidate was so conservative and crossed over
in large numbers to vote for Collins. The GOP standard bearer openly
courted these voters, claiming that McDonald was neither a Democrat
nor Republican, but a John Bircher seeking a platform for his extrem­
ist views.

Despite his liabilities, McDonald scored points with ordinary vot­
ers by the clearness of his message. Collins believed that inflation had
many causes and was not specific on what he would do about it. McDonald argued that inflation resulted from the government spending more than it took in and printing paper money to make up the difference. When the government balanced the budget, he claimed, the problem of inflation would be resolved. Arguing that inflation hit hardest at elderly Americans on fixed incomes, he promised to oppose all wasteful overspending. The two candidates disagreed on tax increases to pay off the deficit. Collins reluctantly went along with President Ford, the head of his party, by supporting surtaxes on affluent Americans, designed to balance the budget. McDonald, in contrast, stood squarely against all tax increases, favoring a reduction in spending instead.  

Despite the bitterness of the campaign rhetoric, McDonald greatly admired his Republican opponent and found him a formidable candidate. While McDonald was better versed on issues, Collins was a war hero and a charming man with an excellent singing voice. Once at a church-related candidate forum, Collins told the audience that he would let a hymn speak his feelings. Without accompaniment, he stood up and put the crowd in a swoon with the beauty of his performance. Lacking musical talent, McDonald found himself in the unfortunate position of trying to win the crowd back by talking about issues. The Democrat privately admitted that following such an act was intimidating.  

In November McDonald won by the narrowest of margins. Collins took 55 percent of the vote in Cobb County, carrying Marietta, Smyrna, and suburban east Cobb, while McDonald received a majority only in the traditional Democratic strongholds of the more rural south and west Cobb. Collins narrowly carried Floyd County, where he had strong support in the county seat of Rome. The rest of the district was Democrat country and gave McDonald decisive majorities. Overall, McDonald received 50.3 percent of the total vote, just enough for victory.  

Observers noted that state senator Joe Thompson of Smyrna was the only Democratic officeholder to put in an election-night appearance at McDonald headquarters. The lack of party officials did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of McDonald loyalists who gathered in a large ballroom for the victory celebration. Since the candidate neither drank nor smoked, the celebrants had to be content with soft drinks,
served by Larry’s teenage son, Tryggvi, from a push-button dispenser in the corner. Former Smyrna mayor Harold Smith entertained the audience at the organ with renditions of tunes such as “Buttermilk Sky,” while the McDonald faithful awaited their candidate’s appearance. He finally came down in the early morning hours when victory was certain. Making the sacrifice of a medical career that he loved, Dr. McDonald headed to Washington to offer his remedies for the nation’s ills.15

**Congressman McDonald’s Record in Washington**

Representative McDonald won five elections and served in Congress until his death in 1983. His tenure coincided with the administrations of Presidents Ford, Carter, and Reagan. Nominally a Democrat, he voted against the majority of Democratic congressmen about 90 percent of the time. In 1983 he failed to vote with his fellow Democrats for Speaker Tip O’Neill’s election to the House’s top leadership position. When he entered the room for meetings of the Democratic caucus, fellow congressmen groaned audibly, but McDonald smiled broadly and voted his conscience. The party leadership retaliated by giving him just one committee assignment, the absolute minimum under congressional rules. The navy reservist was happy to serve on the House Armed Services Committee, but when he asked in 1983 to fill a vacant seat on the Veterans Affairs Committee, the Democrats overlooked the four-term representative in favor of a freshman.16

No one in Congress of either party voted more consistently for President Reagan’s programs than McDonald. The Georgia Democrat was flattered that prominent Republicans frequently asked him to switch parties. Some local Republicans, such as Carolyn Dodgen Meadows, liked his conservative philosophy and openly supported him, despite his party label. In 1982 former fifth district Republican congressman Fletcher Thompson endorsed his candidacy. McDonald would, no doubt, have felt more at home in the Republican camp, but he recognized the advantage of being a conservative Democrat. Since he was a member of the party caucus, he listened while Democratic liberals plotted their legislative strategies; then he planned his counter-
tactics accordingly. Despite his unpopularity with the party hierarchy, he felt an obligation to speak for the many conservative Democrats within his district, state, and nation. An idealist, he believed that the Democratic Party should maintain room for diverse philosophies.17

In June 1976 the forty-one-year-old congressman married Kathryn Jackson, a twenty-six-year-old native of Glendale, California. While other college students of her generation held demonstrations for liberal causes, she joined the conservative Young Americans for Freedom. At first she worked as a campaign volunteer for conservative candidates. Soon she went into business with a friend, managing successful campaigns. Larry and Kathy met in late 1975 when the congressman journeyed to Los Angeles to speak at a banquet of the California Conservative Union, where Kathy was handling the registration. Larry invited her to Washington to be his date at President Ford’s Christmas Ball at the White House. After a whirlwind romance, they were married six months later.

The couple shared an identical political philosophy, and Kathy was supportive when her workaholic husband put in long hours and spent almost every weekend on the road, visiting the seventh district or
Kathy McDonald, campaigning for her husband, 1976 (McDonald family collection)
speaking all over the country. They established a home in Alexandria, Virginia, and had two children, Lawrence Patton, Jr., and Lauren Aileen. Despite Rep. McDonald’s reputation in the press as an uncompromising ultraconservative, he held the respect of many congressmen, especially Republicans and southern Democrats. His wife recalled numerous evenings interrupted by telephone calls from fellow congressmen, asking him how he planned to vote and requesting him to explain bills under consideration. During the debate over the Panama Canal Treaty, he led a large number of colleagues who placed their signatures on full-page newspaper advertisements attacking what they perceived to be a canal give-away.18

At odds with the Democratic leadership that controlled Congress for forty consecutive years (1955 through 1994), McDonald recognized that legislation he sponsored had little chance of passing. He played essentially an educational function, preparing for the day when govern-
ment would move in a more conservative direction. In the bicentennial year of 1976, he published a book, *We Hold These Truths*, in which he articulated his constitutional theories. Opposing government regulatory agencies, labor laws, welfare programs, and foreign aid, McDonald called for a return of power to the states, local communities, and individuals. He believed that the best hope for conservatives was to concentrate on finding and training candidates for the House of Representatives. Since that body had the exclusive power of initiating revenue bills, it could restore constitutional government, regardless of what the other branches did. Using food stamps as an example, he asserted that "the House, all by itself, could not shoot the Food Stamp Program; but the House, all by itself, could starve it to death." He concluded: "The solution to restoring the Constitution is as simple as that. It will require time, effort, and sacrifice to accomplish it, true. But not as much as it cost our Founding Fathers to win the blessings of liberty for us in the first place."19

To further his educational activities, McDonald created the Western Goals Foundation in 1979. The mission statement of the organization called on conservatives "to rebuild and strengthen the political, economic, and social structure of the United States and Western Civilization so as to make any merger with totalitarians impossible." The foundation existed to coordinate the growing conservative leadership in the nation's capital. In March 1983 McDonald succeeded founder Robert Welch as president of the John Birch Society. Named after a Christian missionary killed by the Chinese Communists, the Birch Society had long taken a stance against communism and against American cooperation with communist regimes. Led by businessmen and professionals, the organization opposed American involvement in the United Nations and supported a wide variety of right-wing goals.20

McDonald traveled throughout the country, speaking to conservative groups or corporations whose CEOs wanted him to explain to employees the causes of inflation. The congressman carried with him economic charts prepared by staff member Don Vice. The charts were rolled up, and as McDonald talked, he gradually unrolled the scrolls. Showing the growth of the national budget from 1930 to the present, one chart vividly displayed a huge increase in federal spending. Another table dramatized inflation since the Kennedy administration. McDonald started unrolling the chart at one end of the room, walking
the length of the hall, followed by a ridiculously long roll of paper with a huge line demonstrating the inflation rate. According to Kathy McDonald, these visual aids were remarkably effective in making people understand that inflation was a major problem.

A conservative economic determinist, the congressman related inflation to a host of social problems. For example, he blamed the nation's declining moral standards on economic hardships. He would say, "Our dollar is so inflated, our currency is so worthless, that someone in the family can't stay home any longer and take care of the children." Is it any wonder, he asked, that a daughter of a poor family sometimes chose to be a dancer at a local nightclub for five hundred dollars a night, rather than spending years in school to become a hard-working nurse who made five hundred dollars a month. From McDonald's perspective, federal economic policies corrupted the moral as well as the fiscal fabric of the country. 21

Death of a Congressman

In the prime of his career, Larry McDonald was tragically killed on 1 September 1983, while journeying to Seoul, Korea, for ceremonies commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the U.S.-South Korean Mutual Defense Treaty, signed at the end of the Korean War. Over or just beyond Russian-controlled Sakhalin Island, just north of Japan, a Soviet SU-15 fighter plane launched two air-to-air missiles, destroying McDonald's aircraft (Korean Airlines 007). The Boeing 747 had left New York's Kennedy Airport the night before. After refueling in Anchorage, Alaska, KAL 007 inexplicably strayed north of its intended route. Instead of following the standard Route R20 across Japan to Seoul, the plane took a more direct route, which, unfortunately, passed over the Soviet Kamchatka peninsula near the Petropavlovsk missile, naval, and submarine base. There, Soviet jets began tracking the flight. Leaving Kamchatka behind, KAL 007 crossed the Sea of Okhotsk, home waters for Russia's Pacific fleet. Beyond the Sea of Okhotsk, the plane ventured into Soviet air space above the southern tip of the heavily fortified Sakhalin Island, where the Korsakov naval base was located. If KAL 007 had continued on its course, it would have come close to Soviet Pacific fleet headquarters at Vladivostok before continuing on
to South Korea. On orders from the ground, SU-15 pilot Major Vassily Kasmin fired his missiles, hitting the Boeing 747 just before it could exit U.S.S.R. air space. In a matter of minutes the damaged aircraft vanished from radar screens, plunging into the Sea of Japan. Some 269 people were on board.22

McDonald was supposed to be on another Korean Airlines flight, along with Senator Jesse Helms and other members of the American delegation. After a trip to Georgia, he boarded a plane at Atlanta’s Hartsfield Airport to journey up to New York, where he was booked on KAL 015. However, his flight from Atlanta to New York ran into bad weather and landed in Baltimore. By the time he reached Kennedy Airport, Flight 015 had just departed. After waiting in a half-flooded terminal, he managed to book passage on the ill-fated 007.23 Due in large part to the obstructionist tactics of the Soviet navy, rescuers were never able to find the wreckage of the plane. After six weeks of looking, the search officially ended in late October. After that date, several frightened Japanese fishermen confessed that they had illegally been harvesting octopus near Soviet waters and had witnessed the crash a number of miles away from where the U.S. Navy had been looking.24

Theories abound as to why KAL 007 wandered over three hundred miles north of the intended flight route. It is hard to believe that the experienced pilot, co-pilot, and engineer failed to realize they were off course. Some have suggested that the communists sabotaged their equipment, making them think they were further south than they were. In this case, the U.S.S.R. engaged in a calculated act of murder, perhaps to kill one of their most vocal critics. When worldwide opinion denounced the Soviets for killing innocent people, the Russians rationalized their violent action by accusing the American government of sending KAL 007 to spy on Russian military sites. Even though the Soviet pilot established visual contact with his target, he never came closer than two kilometers and allegedly mistook the Boeing 747 for a much smaller RC-135 spy plane. American RC-135s supposedly flew near Soviet air space fairly frequently. Another possible scenario is that the flight crew, all veterans of the Korean Air Force and staunch anti-communists, were Rambo-types who deliberately flew over Soviet air space to taunt the Russians and perhaps to save a few miles and a few dollars for the Korean Airlines. The unclassified evidence is so slim and so contradictory that all theories are little more than speculation.
The Reagan administration quickly exploited the political potential of the tragedy. President Reagan called the downing of the aircraft "an act of barbarism, born of a society which wantonly disregards individual rights and the value of human life and seeks constantly to expand and dominate other nations." U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick accused the Russians of "murdering the 269 persons on board" and then lying about it. By denouncing the Soviet action, the administration strengthened its case for a large military build-up. The administration outraged conservatives, however, by stopping short of meaningful sanctions. Following the president's televised address, Kathy McDonald criticized the government's failure to retaliate. She argued that the president, at a minimum, should stop sales of grain and pipeline equipment and prevent American tourists from traveling to the Soviet Union. The congressman's son Tryggvi, a twenty-two-year-old senior at the University of Georgia, participated in an anti-Soviet demonstration outside the White House, then met with Reagan's national security advisor, William Clark. Tryggvi presented a petition signed by the demonstrators, calling for an end to economic relations and arms talks with the U.S.S.R. Clark told him that the administration would not cut grain sales or end arms talks, but claimed that government officials were working to stop sales of vital technology.

While she was in mourning, Kathy McDonald and her two children stayed at the Atlanta condominium of her widowed mother-in-law, Callie McDonald. For days journalists and photographers besieged her, hiding behind cars and trees and jumping out to ask questions or shoot their cameras whenever she ventured outside. Some nervy reporters even shoved microphones in the face of two-year-old Larry, asking him if he knew where his father was. With the doorbell ringing at all hours of the night, Mrs. McDonald found it almost impossible to keep her young children asleep. In the hope that reporters would leave her alone, she finally went out and talked. One appearance did not satisfy the press, however, and reporters continued to come back. Soon she was a celebrity, with appearances on the "Today" show, "Good Morning America," and a host of radio and television talk shows. Invitations poured in to speak before the Belgian parliament and throughout Europe and Asia. Filled with anger, she denounced the Soviet Union for the senseless murder of her husband and the other 268 people aboard KAL 007. She was determined not to appear "a teary-eyed basket case"
in front of the cameras. For her efforts, critics denounced her as the "Ice Lady" who had ice water in her veins.27

The young widow had greater problems than the press. Larry McDonald died without a will, and under Georgia law the wife received only one-fifth of the estate. Moreover, McDonald had no pension. Adamantly opposed to Social Security, he objected even more to the fact that Congress exempted itself from paying into a system that other Americans had to support. As a matter of principle, McDonald was the only representative who refused to make contributions to the congressional pension fund. Consequently, his wife was left with little income. Kathy McDonald also worried that her husband's loyal staff would lose their jobs when someone else took the seventh district seat. For these reasons, on the next-to-last day of qualifying, she announced that she would be a candidate to fulfill the remaining sixteen months of her husband's term.28

Some twenty candidates jumped into the race, including several who qualified as paupers and one who claimed he rediscovered the fountain of youth on one of the holes of the Atlanta Country Club. Both Republicans and the Democratic establishment saw McDonald's death as an opportunity to gain control of the seventh district seat. The leading Republican candidate, David Sellers, had lost to McDonald in 1982, but won his respect. The strongest Democratic candidate was George (Buddy) Darden, a state legislator and former Cobb County district attorney, who had the backing of most party insiders. Likable, invariably polite, and deeply involved in community organizations, Darden emerged as the candidate of choice of those who wanted a return to non-ideological, consensus-building, pragmatic politics, designed to take care of constituents and bring as many federal dollars to the district as possible.

Larry McDonald's press secretary, Tommy Toles, managed Mrs. McDonald's campaign, although he was nearly as emotionally exhausted as she was. Congressman McDonald had been his best friend as well as his boss. Nonetheless, he personally escorted her from speech to speech. No matter how composed she might be before audiences, she would break down in the automobile and sob uncontrollably, while Toles handed her Kleenexes and tried to keep driving. During the campaign she stopped eating, lost thirty-five pounds, and came close to collapsing.29
The nonpartisan election was held on 18 October 1983, just a month and a half after the downing of KAL 007. Kathy McDonald led the crowded field with 25,486 votes. She failed to win a majority, however, and was forced into a runoff with Darden, who came in just behind.
with 22,894 ballots. Dave Sellers, with 20,970 votes, finished third, and the rest were far behind. Darden was a moderate and a Democratic team player, far to the left of the McDonalds. Sellers quickly endorsed the frontrunner, recognizing that her philosophy was in line with Cobb Republican thinking.

The endorsement did her little good, however. Kathy McDonald knew all along that no one could organize a campaign or talk to voters as effectively as her husband. She suffered from the fact that she was a native Californian who had lived in northern Virginia since her marriage. Moreover, religious conservatives who backed Larry had trouble supporting a mother with young children. Democrats throughout the district came together behind Darden, and on 8 November gave him 60 percent of the runoff ballots (56,267 to 38,949). Mrs. McDonald carried Dade, Walker, and Catoosa, the northernmost counties in the district, while Darden carried everything else, including Cobb by fourteen thousand votes.
Buddy Darden, family and friends in campaign photo in late 1980s (left to right: Jamison Howard, daughter Christy, son George, Thomas Carter, Buddy, wife Lillian, Phil McCurdy and mother-in-law Dorothy Budd (Darden family collection)
In her concession speech Kathy McDonald pledged to continue fighting for “the cause of restoring a free republic.” But she added, “It’s difficult to put your full heart into something when half of it is broken.” Stating she fulfilled her responsibility by running for her husband’s seat, she admitted she was “probably the happiest person here tonight—I’ll get to come home to Georgia.” The Marietta Daily Journal praised her as an intelligent woman and hard campaigner, but seemed pleased that Darden had won, describing him as a solid conservative who would maintain a strong defense, work for a balanced budget, and “make [his constituents] proud.” Thus, the McDonald era came to a close in north Georgia, with congressional power shifting back to traditional, pragmatic Democrats. In the Reagan era, however, the Democrats were no longer Cobb’s majority party. The more conservative Republicans seemed to have the future on their side. As we will see, the GOP, led by a Cobb County resident, would take control of the Georgia congressional delegation in the 1990s.31
Shift in Cobb’s Economic Center — From Air Force Plant No. 6 to the Platinum Triangle

Lockheed’s Financial Difficulties

With the Vietnam War still raging, employment at the Marietta Lockheed plant in September 1969 reached an all-time high of 32,945. Six subassembly plants across the country provided an additional thousand jobs. At this proud moment, the fortunes of the California based corporation fell rapidly. In the early 1970s it came close to bankruptcy and had to make severe cuts in the work force. By 31 December 1977, employment at Air Force Plant No. 6 was down to eighty-four hundred, the lowest year-end total to that time. This radical reversal resulted from company mistakes, overly zealous Pentagon regulators, and growing criticism of the defense industry. Much like the era following World War I, the early 1970s were a time when antiwar and, to a lesser degree, anti-military sentiments influenced Congress to tighten defense spending.¹

Lockheed’s problems started in the mid-1960s after it won the contract to build the world’s largest airplane, the C-5A Galaxy. The Air Force contract called for an initial production of five planes, followed
by another fifty-three in "Run A." If the C-5s met expectations, then
the Pentagon agreed to buy fifty-seven more in "Run B." The company
optimistically put in a low bid of $1.9 billion for designing, engineering
and producing the mammoth new aircraft. Lockheed's competitors,
Douglas and Boeing, proposed 2.0 billion and $2.3 billion, respectively.
In time it would be obvious that all estimates were ridiculously low. The
completed project cost some $5.2 billion, even after the Pentagon
reduced the "Run B" order from fifty-seven to twenty-three.7

Some of the discrepancy between the contract price and actual
cost can be blamed on a dramatic rise in inflation during the Vietnam
years. With the Pentagon signing numerous wartime contracts, defense
industries reached full productivity and the trained work force was
stretched thin, driving labor costs "through the roof."11 Perhaps a greater
problem was human error. Historian Walter J. Boyne, a former National
Air and Space Museum director, blames both Lockheed and the Air
Force for cost overruns. He argues that top Lockheed management
made numerous mistakes that could have been avoided by a better
reporting system and a willingness to listen to foremen and laborers
down the chain of command who knew firsthand when plans did not
work. According to Boyne, "It was perhaps not evident at the time,
even to those at the source of the trouble, but the hard truths about
many subjects—costs, schedules, changes, etc.—were sometimes
blurred by waffled reporting, to the extent that no one knew the exact
status of many critical areas of the program."14

Nonetheless, Lockheed's management problems would have been
less serious, if the Department of Defense had shown more flexibility.
Prior to the C-5A contract, President Kennedy's defense secretary
Robert McNamara and Air Force assistant secretary Robert H. Charles
developed a Total Package Procurement (TPP) plan. To prevent profi-
teeing at taxpayer expense, the TPP required aircraft corporations to
compete for a single contract that would cover everything from research
and development to final production. The problem for the industry was
that it was impossible to predict precisely what it would cost to design
and build a brand new airplane. Moreover, the TPP encouraged an
excessive amount of micromanaging by the Pentagon.5

In 1965 Jack Ferguson was responsible for engineering aspects of
the contract proposal. Realizing the difficulty of building a new plane
from scratch, he worried about the penalties that would be imposed if
the company failed to complete any step on time. He also found objectionable the fact that the C-5 contract, unlike earlier ones for the C-130 and C-141, entailed considerable military second-guessing of what the company did. When the Johnson administration announced that Lockheed had won the contract, Ferguson just shook his head while everyone else cheered. He told those who asked about his glum expression that there were two winners that day and Lockheed was not one of them. From his perspective, Boeing and Douglas were lucky to avoid getting into an impossible situation.6

It was bad enough that Air Force bureaucrats controlled every step; more frustrating was their propensity to change requirements in midstream, forcing the company to make costly alterations. Larry Kitchen first toured the C-5 production line about 1970, when president Bob Fuhrman asked him to become vice president of finance and administration. Kitchen was shocked to find an assembly line where one crew was installing various components and another coming right behind, tearing them out and installing something new under a change order. The engineering department was so overwhelmed with conflicting orders from the Air Force that it had lost control of the process. Despite resistance from the Pentagon and some of his corporate superiors, Kitchen stopped production until engineering had a chance to catch up. In 1971 Kitchen replaced Fuhrman as president. He held the top post for the next four critical years.7

According to Lockheed-Georgia’s vice president of engineering, Dr. Joseph J. Cornish, the company’s worst difficulties resulted from the Air Force’s foolish insistence upon weight requirements made unnecessary by the development of better engines. From an engineering perspective, the biggest problem was the C-5’s huge size—about twice that of the C-141, built for the military earlier in the decade. When a sphere becomes bigger, the surface area increases by the square of the multiple by which the diameter is increased, while weight expands by the cube of the multiple. If, for instance, the diameter of a sphere is increased by a multiple of two, from one foot to two feet, then the surface area increases from the square of the multiple \(2 \times 2 = 4\) while the weight increases by the cube \(2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8\). For Lockheed engineers, the problem became particularly acute in constructing the wings, where an increase in surface gave more lift at the price of much greater weight. To keep the Galaxy light enough to fly, Cornish and his team had to
become cleverer and cleverer, developing such things as flexible wings that rose ten to twelve feet at takeoff.

The Air Force’s bureaucratic blunder came when Lockheed asked permission to go slightly over the contractual weight limits, relying on the development of greater engine thrust to counter the loss of range and efficiency. The company could have installed the better engines for five million dollars. However, the contract called for a series of individual guarantees, and did not allow the manufacturer to offset one by exceeding another. In a decision described by Boyne as “sheer lunacy,” the Air Force told Lockheed to use the better engines if it desired, but to stick to the original weight requirements. To do so, the company was forced to go through an elaborate process of repeatedly dipping wing spars in an acid bath. Unfortunately, the same process that cut weight decreased strength, lowering the wings’ life expectancy from thirty thousand hours to eight thousand. This bad decision cost the company billions.

Boeing profited immensely from losing out on the giant military cargo carrier. Modifying its design for commercial use, it developed the popular 747. The roomy passenger plane presented engineers with similar challenges, but without the added burden of stringent government regulations. The airlines went along readily when Boeing told them that more powerful engines would neutralize the weight problem. Consequently, the 747s generated huge profits for Boeing, while Lockheed lost millions on the C-5.

In normal times, the Lockheed-Air Force controversy might have been resolved more rationally. The late 1960s, however, were anything but normal. With the antiwar movement growing in strength, critics turned on weapons makers as well as policy planners. As a leading defense contractor, Lockheed found itself the subject of negative news reports and congressional investigations. The positive side of the story is that the C-5 was an engineering marvel that quickly proved its worth on Southeast Asian battlefields. Despite a maximum takeoff weight of 769,000 pounds, the Galaxy reached speeds as high as 564 miles per hour. After many runs in Vietnam, C-5s were employed in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, so named for the timing of a surprise Egyptian-Syrian attack upon Israel. The United States used Galaxies to deliver M-48 and M-60 tanks and large airplane sections to the Israeli military.

Unfortunately, the corporation never earned a profit on the C-
5A. Amid a flood of unfavorable publicity, the Air Force in 1970 agreed to renegotiate the contract. Under the new terms the government paid the planning and development costs minus $247 million. Rather than making money, the company agreed to a quarter billion dollar loss! The following year Lockheed faced even greater deficits on its commercial passenger plane, the L-1011 TriStar. Built in California, the beautiful TriStar became a favorite of pilots and passengers, but failed to generate revenues. Operating in a highly competitive market, with a razor-thin profit margin, the Lockheed Corporation was almost driven into receivership in 1971 when Rolls-Royce, the L-1011 engine manufacturer, filed for bankruptcy.12

Lockheed board chairman Dan Haughton flew to England and, in perhaps his finest hour, worked with leaders of the United Kingdom to save the venerable British company. A stumbling block to the negotiations was the question of Lockheed’s own financial future. British Prime Minister Edward Heath favored keeping Rolls-Royce in business under government ownership, but he wanted assurances that Lockheed could afford to purchase its engines. At the time the American aircraft manufacturer was engaged in intensive negotiations with some twenty-four
banks to borrow necessary funds for the TriStar project.

When the bankers insisted upon a government guarantee, President Nixon came to Lockheed's aid, asking Congress to back some $250 million in loans. Joined by much of the national media, Senator William Proxmire, a Democrat from Wisconsin, led the assault on the proposal, characterizing it as a government handout, which it clearly was not. The head of the Joint Economic Committee, Proxmire established a national reputation as a critic of government waste and corruption. He delighted in exposing large corporations that allegedly were fleecing the taxpayers. In the midst of the loan guarantee debate, he brought before his committee a Lockheed whistleblower, Henry M. Durham, who had worked for two decades at the Marietta plant. In summer 1969 Durham had been promoted to general department manager, responsible for production control on the C-5 flight line. Soon after assuming this position he began reporting to his superiors that planes arriving at the end of the assembly line lacked numerous parts, as many as two thousand in one case, despite paperwork showing that almost everything was completed. He argued that production supervisors were deliberately fabricating completion reports to appear to stay on schedule, and that the company was losing millions of dollars by having to reorder absent materials. Over the next couple of years, he gathered further evidence of what he considered massive waste and mismanagement.13

Durham went all the way to the top with his complaints, but failed to gain a sympathetic ear. The company first moved him to another position and then eliminated his job altogether, offering him a downgrade in salary and responsibility. Not long afterward, Durham went public with his complaints, writing to numerous congressmen and various newspapers. One of the few to take him seriously was Senator Proxmire, public enemy number one in Marietta for his vociferous denunciations of cost overruns on the C-5 Galaxy. Proxmire thought that Lockheed was inflating costs to rip off taxpayers. From his point of view, the treatment of Durham seemed part of a cover-up to mask widespread waste and corruption. When the national media picked up the story, many Lockheed workers, their jobs on the line, turned hostile, and Durham was subjected to numerous harassing phone calls. To his supporters, he was a man of courage who had the integrity to tell the truth no matter how unpopular.14
On the other hand, Lockheed managers universally insisted that Durham was an alarmist who distorted everything out of proportion. They claimed that the company had an elaborate process, similar to that of attorneys, for reporting what one did with one’s time. In a plant where managers had to write down everything, it seemed unlikely that production people could overcharge for more than a few minutes or claim that parts were installed when they were not. Some insisted that Durham failed to comprehend standard operating procedure when workers, rather than holding up the assembly line, sometimes left work uncompleted or used dummy parts while the real parts were being fabricated. As long as everything was in place before the test flight, it made no difference if some tasks were not completed at the scheduled time. In fact, it saved the company money. They resented Durham for seemingly playing into the hands of the defense industry’s toughest critics.¹⁵

Fortunately for the corporation and its employees, most national leaders thought that the loan guarantee was a good deal for the country. With thousands of jobs and a huge investment at stake, Congress accepted the corporation’s point of view and passed an Emergency Loan Guarantee bill that President Nixon signed in August 1971. Financial backing having been secured, Lockheed quickly agreed to buy up to $120 million worth of RB.211 engines, and the British government assumed Rolls-Royce’s ownership. The arrangement worked to everyone’s advantage. Rolls-Royce recovered and continued to play a major role in the aircraft industry; Lockheed survived the most serious threat to its existence; and the American taxpayers actually made money. Under the emergency loan act, Lockheed paid the banks the going interest rate and gave the U.S. treasury an extra 2 percent as a guarantee fee. The company eventually returned everything it borrowed; and for its role in backing the investment, the country earned $31 million in fees.¹⁶

**Lockheed’s Recovery in the Last Decade of the Cold War**

While the Marietta plant would never again be as busy as it was in the 1960s, it was able to land several lucrative contracts during the next few
years. In 1978 Senator Sam Nunn announced a $407.5 million agreement to “stretch” the entire fleet of 271 C-141s. The Air Force wanted planes slightly larger than the old StarLifters. Rather than designing a new plane, Lockheed-Georgia proposed adding twenty-three feet and installing an aerial refueling system. The project provided approximately four thousand jobs for four years. By then, another modification project had started. With employment up to 12,600 workers in 1982, the company began modifying C-5A wings, correcting the problems from government-imposed weight reductions a decade and a half earlier.

By this time, Ronald Reagan was president and the U.S. again had embarked upon a massive military build-up. Arguing that C-5As were in short supply, the Pentagon asked for fifty more giant cargo planes. Lockheed hoped to build a new C-5B that would be slightly larger, have more powerful engines, and be capable of flying thirty-four hundred miles without refueling. The corporation’s biggest competitor, Boeing, asked the Pentagon to let it modify the commercial 747 as a military transport. Powerful Senator Henry (Scoop) Jackson (D-Washington State) was sometimes referred to as the senator from Boeing for his untiring advocacy of the corporation’s interests. Despite the Pentagon’s opposition to the Boeing idea, he slipped an amendment into a fiscal year 1983 authorization bill to replace C-5Bs with 747s. Lockheed executives and congressional allies launched a vigorous counteroffensive, lobbying strenuously to protect the Galaxy. On the merits of the case, Lockheed prevailed, winning the C-5B contract just before the end of 1982. With employment soaring to almost nineteen thousand the Marietta plant successfully flew its first C-5B in September 1985. By 1989 the fiftieth and last of the Galaxies was delivered to the Air Force.17

The “bread-and-butter” project of the Lockheed-Georgia plant had always been the C-130 Hercules. Through 1989 the company had delivered to the military some nineteen hundred of various models. In 1994 Georgia workers began constructing the fully computerized C-130J. In the meantime Lockheed-Georgia was developing an important new fighter, the F-22 Raptor, desired by the Pentagon as a replacement for the F-15. The first YF-22 prototype, assembled by Lockheed workers in Palmdale, California, was flown successfully on 29 September 1990. Scheduled for construction in the Marietta plant, the F-22 offered hope that the facility would still be needed in the post-Cold War era.18
The Platinum Triangle and Cumberland Community Improvement District

As Cobb matured, reaching 448,000 in size by 1990, the county became less dependent on Lockheed or Atlanta for its economic health. A proliferation of new businesses in the 1970s and 1980s enabled Cobb to transform itself from a “bedroom community” of Atlanta to a thriving commercial and industrial center in its own right. By 1990 some 129,000 local residents worked within the county, slightly exceeding the 122,000 who commuted to other locales. With a third of the labor force holding managerial or professional positions Cobb, not surprisingly, ranked among the nation’s most affluent places. The 1989 median family income of $48,415 surpassed the U.S. average by thirteen thousand dollars and the Georgia average by fifteen thousand.  

By the early 1980s two parts of the county led the way in providing employment opportunities. The first was Marietta stretching from the downtown courthouse complex to the Lockheed/Dobbins site a mile or so to the south. The second was a relatively new, but remarkably wealthy area labeled the Platinum Triangle at the confluence of I-75, I-285, and U.S. 41, just across the Chattahoochee River from Atlanta and Fulton County. Starting with Cumberland Mall in 1973, the area became home during the next two decades to the Galleria complex, a host of high-rise office buildings, the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, and the Cobb Galleria Centre. 

The Platinum Triangle got its name from K. C. Smith, a resident of Buckhead in north Atlanta, who coined the term in 1979 for the area bound by Peachtree and Wieuca Roads and Georgia 400. He claimed that the Buckhead area was not as flashy as Sandy Springs’ “Golden Ghetto,” but “more precious than silver.” The Cobb Chamber of Commerce appropriated the appellation for the burgeoning Cumberland-Galleria area. Not many years earlier Tip Top Poultry owner Chet Austin had hunted rabbits at this location and gone skinny-dipping in nearby Rottenwood Creek. The Bert Adams Boy Scout camp existed on the site of Cumberland Mall and few individuals lived in the vicinity. By the mid-1980s interstate and federal highways provided such convenient access that a host of firms moved to Cobb’s
Platinum Triangle, creating over thirty thousand jobs. Developer Tom Cousins’ Interstate North, near I-75 and Windy Hill Road, was the triangle’s first high-rise office complex in the 1970s, followed by Johnny Gresham’s North by Northwest and then Charlie Vaughan’s Circle 75. In 1987 Georgia Commissioner of Industry and Trade George Berry proclaimed the Platinum Triangle one of the “most exciting high-rise office park developments anywhere in the United States.”

A widely read book of 1991, Joel Garreau’s *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*, identifies the Cumberland Mall area as one of four “edge cities” (along with Midtown, Buckhead, and Perimeter Center) north of downtown Atlanta. Garreau argues that edge cities are the third wave in a late twentieth century redefinition of urbanism. The first wave started after World War II when large numbers of people left downtown for the suburbs. The shopping mall characterized the second wave, as department stores and specialty shops followed their customers out. The third wave began when the “means of creating wealth, the essence of urbanism—our jobs” moved out too. Garreau says that he coined the term because these urban centers function like cities, but are on the edge, as “a vigorous world of pioneers and immigrants, rising far from the old downtowns, where little save villages or farmland lay only thirty years before.”

In the early 1980s John Williams, the founder and CEO of Post Properties, helped originate the idea of a special tax district for the Platinum Triangle where property owners could finance transportation and other improvements beyond those provided by state and local governments. An Atlanta native, Williams graduated from Georgia Tech with a degree in industrial management. In 1971, at age twenty-six, he formed Post Properties and began building large luxury apartment buildings. The visionary entrepreneur designed places noted for their beauty, with ponds, walking trails, and lush landscaping, featuring an abundance of tulips, hollies, and Bradford pear trees. Working eighty to one hundred hours a week, Williams by 1990 had built fifteen Post complexes in Cobb County and nineteen more in other parts of the metropolitan area. In that year Post was Cobb’s sixth largest taxpayer ($2.1 million). In 1993 Post went public on the New York Stock Exchange with a $270 million stock offering. Five years later it was one of the five largest public apartment companies in the nation with a capitalization of $2.6 billion.
Post Village, clock tower landscaping (photo by Jeffrey B. Gribble, president of Industry, for Post Properties)
Post Riverside, Post Properties (photo by Kathy Scott)

Post Riverside, (photo by Jeffrey B. Gribble, president of Industry, for Post Properties)
Williams was not content just to build apartment complexes. His commitment to public service included two terms as chairman of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce (1985 and 1992) and a term in 1998 as chairman of the Metro Atlanta Chamber. Along with his wife Donna, he contributed generously to worthy causes, giving millions of dollars to such educational institutions as Georgia Tech, Kennesaw State, and Southern Polytechnic. In 1986 the couple made a quarter million dollar “anonymous” donation to Marietta for the renovation of Glover Park in the center of town.

Recognizing that traffic congestion in the Platinum Triangle could bring growth to a standstill, Williams and other Chamber officials began working toward a solution. About 1982 the Post Properties CEO took his concerns to the dean of the Cobb legislative delegation, Joe Mack Wilson. They sat down with commission chairman Ernest Barrett, who was nearing the end of his two decades in office. The
three came up with the idea of a community improvement district (CID) governed by a board that could impose taxes on district property owners. In the previous decade Joe Mack Wilson had spearheaded through the legislature a similar project for his hometown, creating a Downtown Marietta Development Authority with the power to tax local merchants and landlords to finance such things as brick sidewalks and the placement of electrical wires underground. Chairman Barrett carried the concept to the Cobb Chamber and helped win an endorsement from the local legislative delegation.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1985 the Georgia General Assembly put a constitutional amendment on the ballot, permitting the creation of tax districts where business owners wanted them. The CID board would have the power to tax district property owners up to 10 mills a year for six years. At that point the plan could be renewed for another six years or terminated. Barrett’s replacement as commission chair, Earl Smith, designated John Williams as the first chairman of the proposed community improvement district. His charge was to sell the plan to other business owners in the two thousand acre district. The legislation required Williams to gain the endorsement of some twenty large companies that collectively accounted for three-fourths of the district’s real estate value. Then he had to win the approval of a majority of all 130 commercial property holders. According to Chamber president Phil Sanders, planners on his staff insisted on the latter requirement to make sure that the wealthiest companies did not impose an unwanted tax on smaller proprietors. Sanders claimed that staff members spent nearly a year building a consensus behind the plan.\textsuperscript{25}

It was easier to persuade the large owners than the small. By the end of 1987 Williams and his allies had accomplished the first task. In early 1988 they circulated consent forms to the smaller property owners and gradually accumulated the required signatures. Georgia’s first CID worked even better than its founders envisioned. By 1993 it had taxed itself some fifteen million dollars for road improvements around Cumberland Mall and the Galleria. The money went for engineering and design and to attract matching grants from the Cobb, Georgia, and U.S. departments of transportation. Without significant opposition, the owners agreed twice in the 1990s to continue the CID for additional six-year terms.

In the early 1990s the Platinum Triangle became the home site
for a new Cobb County convention center. Based on a 1989 task force study commissioned by the Cobb Chamber, business leaders recommended the approximately fifty million dollar facility as a means of bringing tourist dollars to the area. Phil Sanders described the current Cobb Civic Center on South Marietta Parkway as “a nice gym” but not equipped to attract convention business. Six Flags general manager Spurgeon Richardson (a future president of the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau) supported the Cobb facility as a means of bringing Atlanta’s surplus convention business north of the Chattahoochee. He pointed out that Atlanta was the nation’s third-largest convention city, with more business than downtown hotels could handle, giving a conveniently located Cobb County site a chance to bring conventioners to the suburbs.26

In 1991, after several years of planning, the Cobb-Marietta Coliseum and Exhibit Hall Authority, chaired by John Williams, picked the Galleria specialty mall as the best site for the new convention center. The location seemed ideal with I-75 leading to downtown Atlanta and with both I-75 and I-285 providing direct routes to Hartsfield International Airport. Moreover, the upscale Stouffer Waverly hotel already existed next to the convention center. The decision was not without opposition. Wily politician Joe Mack Wilson, having lost his legislative seat in 1988, became mayor of Marietta the following year. As the city’s representative on the authority, he argued for a convention center near downtown Marietta. The old populist portrayed Williams and the Chamber as money-grubbing capitalists who had little interest in the county outside the Platinum Triangle. According to Wilson, the citizenry needed to recognize before it was too late that Williams was “the one running this county, not the commission.” In rebuttal, the Post Properties founder argued that Wilson was just an old-school boss, reflecting an era when the county was “dominated by what I’d call – I don’t want to say Tammany Hall – but basically a small group of courthouse politicians and Marietta.” Williams perceived that economic and political power had shifted away from the county seat. He argued, “The economic heart of this county today is this area [the Platinum Triangle].... This is the edge city. The ‘OMs’ [Old Mariettans] can holler about it and scream about it and not like it, but it’s a fact.”

Wilson nostalgically remembered the original set-up of the
Marietta-Cobb Coliseum and Exhibit Hall Authority in 1980 when Marietta appointed three board members and the county commission appointed the other three. He regretted that Rep. Johnny Isakson, a champion of business and suburban interests, had sponsored legislation in 1986 that took away two of Marietta's seats, giving them instead to the Cobb Chamber. The 1986 amendment also eliminated one of the county commission's picks so that the Cobb Municipal Association could have representation. Consequently, by 1991 the board consisted of Marietta mayor Wilson, commission chairman Phil Secrist, Smyrna mayor Max Bacon (chosen by the Cobb Municipal Association) and three businessmen (Williams, selected by the county commission; and Spurgeon Richardson and hotel developer E. Earl Patton, Jr., representing the Chamber).  

Joe Mack Wilson lost the battle over the location of the county convention center, but may have won the war that really interested him. He was able to use the question of center funding to do a little political horse-trading. The county commission planned to borrow the money for the project and retire the bonds through revenues from a 5 percent hotel/motel tax and a 3 percent liquor tax. Some members of the public feared that those taxes would not be enough if there were cost overruns on the convention center. After hearing numerous complaints, the commissioners made clear that under no circumstances would they dip into property tax revenues to pay for land purchase and construction expenses. The beauty of the hotel/motel levy was that hotel guests (people passing through) paid it rather than local voters.

Early in 1991, the Cobb legislative delegation pushed through the General Assembly an amendment that allowed the county to collect up to 8 percent on hotel/motel bills. Although Mayor Wilson was no longer in the legislature, he still had friends there. When Chamber lobbyists went before the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, the chairman told them they had to take care of Wilson. To persuade the Marietta mayor to accept a Galleria location, the convention authority agreed to let Marietta use a portion of the hotel/motel taxes collected inside the city limits to build a separate municipal conference center on Powder Springs Street. Thus, the county ended up with two convention centers, a larger one at the Galleria and a smaller one in Marietta, constructed on the site of the ante-bellum Georgia Military Institute and the recently relocated Marietta Country Club.
Meanwhile, the county commission used 5 percent of the tax collected in unincorporated areas for the big convention center and placed the extra 3 percent in the general fund, holding it in reserve to cover unexpected cost overruns.

After months of negotiations Cobb County signed a contract in April 1992, purchasing for ten million dollars the Galleria specialty mall's top floor and sixteen surrounding acres of land. The Cobb County site took its name from the famous Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, Italy. Opened in 1867 to commemorate a victory over Austria, the original Galleria consisted of a series of shops and stores with a four-story façade covered by a huge glass vault. Over a century later, it remained the center of Milan's economic and political culture. Conceived in 1978 by Childress Klein Properties, Cobb's Galleria consisted of a number of high-rise office buildings and a specialty mall. Childress Klein was a huge real estate company, with commercial properties throughout the southeast. After the deal with the county, Childress Klein continued to own and manage the office buildings and the first floor of the specialty mall, where it maintained a movie theater and several restaurants and shops. In May 1992 Cobb employed the Pinkerton and Laws Company to rip off the top of the mall and build a new 280,000-square-foot second floor, featuring a 108,000-square-foot exhibit hall, a 25,000-square-foot presidential ballroom, and meeting rooms. As part of its ten million dollar purchase, the county also built a parking deck adjacent to the convention center.

While construction began, a vehement squabble broke out over the name of the convention center. Childress Klein owned the name Galleria and was willing to authorize its use only if the site was called Galleria Centre. The company did not want Cobb County as part of the title, preferring to identify the site with Atlanta. When the coliseum authority seemed willing to go along, it came under attack from local officials, who resented the implication that the name Cobb was bad for marketing. Ultimately, the General Assembly decided the issue, passing a resolution naming the facility the Cobb Galleria Centre. It opened on 15 January 1993 and was instantly a huge success. Facility managers had no trouble booking conventions and other events, and during the first year revenues surpassed two million dollars, exceeding projections by 83 percent.
Aerial view of Galleria and Cumberland Mall, looking toward airport at Dobbins, 1978 (Childress Klein Properties, developer of Atlanta Galleria)
Shift in Cobb’s Economic Center — From Air Force Plant No. 6 to the Platinum Triangle

Renaissance Waverly Hotel and Galleria complex with interstate highway in background (Childress Klein Properties, developer of Atlanta Galleria)
After the emergence of a Town Center CID in 1997, the Platinum Triangle group renamed itself the Cumberland CID. Its biggest project was the completion of the Kennedy Interchange to provide an additional exit off I-75 into the Galleria-Cumberland Mall area, relieving congestion at the I-285 interchange. The Cumberland CID contributed some $6.8 million to the $77.5 million state and federal project that included widening 2.7 miles of I-75 to four lanes in each direction and adding an HOV lane from Mount Paran Road to I-285. Thanks to Cumberland CID support, the new ramps from I-75 to Cumberland Boulevard opened in late October 1998, six months ahead of schedule. The rest of the Kennedy project was completed in the spring of 1999. The Cumberland CID also worked in the late 1990s to improve conditions for pedestrians by building sidewalks and championing a $2.3 million pedestrian bridge that connected the Cobb Galleria Centre to Cumberland Mall by links over U.S. 41 and over a side road circling the mall. The success of the system can be measured in the list of communities that decided to imitate the Cumberland CID. With the creation of the Midtown Improvement District in March 2000 the number in the metropolitan Atlanta area grew to eight. Marietta attorney Lynn Rainey, who did the legal work for many of the metro CIDs, credited the Platinum Triangle project as the inspiration for those that came later, noting that projects such as the Kennedy Interchange “would never have happened without it.”

With the Platinum Triangle emerging as Cobb’s economic nerve center, Lockheed’s travails seemed to cause the county little more than minor headaches. By the early 1970s, Cobb surpassed two hundred thousand in population; twenty years later the county was well over twice that large with no signs of slowing down. Cobb was fortunate not to be dependent on one industry. The construction trades flourished, as subdivisions sprang up everywhere. Rush hour traffic across the Chattahoochee and around I-285 demonstrated the continuing importance of Atlanta as a source of employment. At the same time, opportunities expanded inside Cobb with the proliferation of small factories, retail stores, restaurants and hotels, tourist sites, schools, medical facilities, and office parks. As we will see in later chapters, Cobb’s economic health was critical to the maturation of the educational infrastructure and the development of a strong two-party political system.
Educational Maturation in the 1970s

The Transformation of Southern Tech

At mid-century the seventh congressional district from the Chattahoochee to the Tennessee border lacked a state-supported institution of higher education, and public schools offered little more than the basics. Two decades later the situation was much different. As noted in earlier chapters, local officials of the post-World War II generation had a splendid record in expanding educational offerings. They cooperated in bringing Southern Tech to Marietta, created Kennesaw Junior College, started the Marietta-Cobb Area Vocational-Technical School (the current Chattahoochee Technical College) and provided a more diverse public school offering. By the late 1960s the leadership of Cobb County began demanding the conversion of Southern Tech and Kennesaw Junior College into four-year schools. The 1960s and 1970s saw these institutions mature considerably.

The opening of Southern Technical Institute (STI) in Marietta in the fall of 1961 was a major step in the growth of higher education in Cobb County. Starting in DeKalb County after World War II, the
Georgia Tech division provided technicians for Georgia industries. By the time the school moved to Marietta, however, educators and business leaders wanted more than a two-year program offering technical degrees. In the late 1940s Southern Tech had few rivals, but a decade and a half later vocational schools could provide businesses with the technicians they needed. Created in 1961, the Cobb-Marietta Vocational-Technical School offered classes with similar course descriptions and identical required textbooks. STI responded by moving from associate of science to associate of engineering technology diplomas.

In the 1960s technology education advanced far beyond where it had been a decade earlier. The initial concept was that the technician would possess sufficient practical and abstract knowledge to bridge the gap between craftsmen and engineers. By the 1960s advanced American industries needed engineering technologists to communicate between technicians and graduates of research-oriented engineering schools. To differentiate its curriculum from vocational offerings, Southern Tech upgraded its requirements. For example, calculus became a necessary course for almost all majors. Increasingly, the two-year program proved inadequate. Similar schools in other parts of the country were going to four-year engineering technology programs. To remain current with national trends, the Southern Tech faculty and administration began in the mid-1960s to advocate senior college status.

The idea was championed by a leading trade organization, the Associated Industries of Georgia, and by STI’s parent institution, Georgia Tech. To the chagrin of Southern Tech boosters, George L. Simpson, Jr., the University System chancellor, opposed the idea. Southern Tech historian Richard Bennett suggests that the primary problem was a personality conflict between Simpson and Georgia Tech president E. D. Harrison. The proposal went nowhere until Harrison resigned in 1969. After Arnold Hansen ascended to Georgia Tech’s presidency, the Marietta school’s proposal won the endorsement of the chancellor and the Board of Regents. In March 1970 they agreed to elevate STI beginning with the fall quarter of that year.

Walter O. Carlson, a Georgia Tech administrator, transferred to the Marietta campus as Southern Tech’s first dean. A strong administrator, he was nonetheless hampered by his decision to maintain his Tucker home on the other side of Atlanta. Although Carlson failed to establish many community contacts, associate dean Hoyt L. McClure
helped to fill the void. McClure had headed the two-year school since 1959, lived in downtown Marietta, and was widely respected. For the most part Carlson supervised academic programs, while McClure dealt with non-academic issues. Throughout its history as a two-year school Southern Tech had been a part of Georgia Tech's engineering extension division. STI's first director, Lawrence V. Johnson, headed the extension division from 1959 to 1970. After the Marietta institution started offering bachelor's degrees, Georgia Tech dissolved Johnson's old position, but not its function. He received a new title as associate dean of Georgia Tech's engineering college with an office in Marietta, where he continued to coordinate programs between the two schools. Even after his retirement in 1972 he worked on a part-time basis to promote Southern Tech in the community and throughout the region.1

Despite the elevation to four-year status, STI experienced identity problems throughout the 1970s. The Board of Regents moved slowly to raise faculty salaries to the level of other four-year institutions. Consequently, the Marietta school had difficulty recruiting talented, experienced professors. Faculty morale suffered further from the administration's attempt to apply Georgia Tech tenure and promotion guidelines, despite the two campuses' different missions. Georgia Tech professors had relatively light teaching loads so they would have time to do significant scholarship. Southern Tech faculty taught far more students and, consequently, had less time to write books and articles or present at professional meetings. To weigh their research as heavily as teaching and service was highly unfair.

Communications with Georgia Tech suffered from the lack of regular intercampus mail and from a chain of command that required Southern Tech's dean to report to his counterpart in Georgia Tech's college of engineering, not directly to the president, as STI directors had done when it was a two-year school. Memoranda from the Marietta campus went through several layers of bureaucracy before reaching the top. Administrators, faculty, students, and alumni all experienced a sense of powerlessness as their requests were altered or overturned before the Georgia Tech president ever saw them.

The budgeting process was particularly unsatisfactory, since the Marietta school had to submit its financial requests to Georgia Tech administrators and could not independently take them to the Board of Regents. Since the parent institution had different spending priorities,
STI suffered the role of stepchild when it came to new buildings and programs. According to Joe Mack Wilson, the senior member of the Cobb legislative delegation, "[Southern Tech] was under the domain of Georgia Tech. And I'm talking about domain. Georgia Tech treated them like a damn orphan, give them old secondhand equipment, old damn wore out junk." Increasingly, faculty and alumni suggested that Southern Tech needed a complete separation from the North Avenue campus. As early as 1959-60, before Southern Tech finalized the move to Marietta, Georgia Tech president Harrison had offered Southern Tech the option of becoming independent. At the time, the STI faculty rejected the offer, believing the school lacked sufficient maturity to survive alone. After Southern Tech achieved four-year status, attitudes changed radically. In 1973 Dean Carlson proposed to the campus community several possible options: the status quo, independence, or total absorption into Georgia Tech as a separate college or extension campus. No one seemed happy with the status quo, so campus debate focused on the last two alternatives.

When Governor Jimmy Carter visited STI later that year, he voiced his support for independence. The future president urged students to organize. During the 1973-74 school year STI students met several times with Georgia Tech's president, Joseph M. Pettit. Student opinion was far from unanimous, however. The student government association conducted an unscientific poll in 1974 that elicited about 250 responses. Only about three-eighths favored independence, while the majority championed absorption into Georgia Tech. Most seemed to think that their degrees would mean more if they were from a unit of the Atlanta institution. Responding to the poll, student government president Jeff Tucker called on President Pettit to create a new administrative structure allowing STI's dean to report directly to the president rather than the dean of the engineering college. Pettit, however, rejected the idea.

Over the next several years, support for independence grew dramatically. Another unscientific student poll in late 1974 found students divided almost evenly on the question of separation. The following year an informal poll completed by most of the faculty found 82 percent wanting independence, only 12 percent favoring absorption into Georgia Tech, and just a handful favoring the status quo. Dr. Robert
Hays became the most outspoken faculty advocate of independence. The former chair of the English department, Hays published extensively and was a national leader in the technical communications field. As a senior faculty member he possessed sufficient stature to express his opinion without fear of reprisals. In 1975 the faculty elected him chair of an ad hoc committee to study the relationship between the two campuses. The committee produced a seventy-page “Critical Issues” document and arranged a meeting with President Pettit. The Georgia Tech administrator made a few minor concessions, but opposed any significant change in the status quo. From that time on the relationship between the two campuses steadily deteriorated. Despite resistance from the Atlanta school, Southern Tech created a separate fund-raising foundation in 1976, headed by L. Glenn Dewberry, an STI alumnus who had risen to the presidency of Atlantic Steel. In early 1978 the faculty adopted a resolution calling for a regents’ study committee to investigate whether the school should be absorbed into Georgia Tech or made independent. Shortly afterward, the student government passed a similar resolution. The Board of Regents responded by directing Chancellor George Simpson to create such a committee. When he failed to act immediately, Representatives Joe Mack Wilson and Johnny Isakson led a delegation of students and alumni to Governor George Busbee’s office and gained his support. Under political pressure, Simpson finally created a committee with equal representation from Georgia Tech and Southern Tech.

After meeting for a year, the committee, failing to reach a definitive conclusion, merely compiled for the chancellor the pros and cons of independence or absorption. When the regents held their May 1979 meeting in Marietta, both the alumni association and the student government advocated separation. On 8 May 1979 Marietta Daily Journal editor Bill Kinney, who had played a central role two decades earlier in bringing Southern Tech to Marietta, wrote in favor of independence. Chancellor Simpson remained unsympathetic, but a few weeks after the Marietta board meeting, he resigned for reasons unrelated to the Tech crisis. The new chancellor, Vernon Crawford, was a former Georgia Tech vice-president, but his son attended STI and kept him informed about the Marietta campus.

Under Crawford’s leadership the controversy moved toward solution. The new chancellor asked President Pettit to provide a detailed
report on how he would absorb Southern Tech into the greater university. Pettit responded with a poorly conceived plan that called for a multi-campus institution that, despite a few name changes, basically maintained the status quo. The failure to make a strong case for absorption helped simplify Crawford’s decision. By late 1979 Dean Carlson, a Georgia Tech loyalist, accepted the inevitability of secession and resigned. Shortly afterward, the STI faculty in a secret ballot voted overwhelmingly for independence. The final step occurred at the 11-12 December 1979 board meeting, where Chancellor Crawford argued for separation, claiming that the process could be completed for a one-time cost of one hundred thousand dollars. The board went along with the chancellor’s recommendation and started a search for Southern Tech’s first president. Independence became official on 1 July 1980. Two months later Dr. Stephen R. Cheshier, formerly the chair of Purdue University’s electrical engineering and technology department, assumed the presidency. Thus, Southern Tech embarked upon a new era of its history, no longer shackled by its previous second-class status.4

Four-Year Status for Kennesaw College

From the time it opened in 1966, Kennesaw Junior College offered general education classes designed to transfer to senior institutions. Starting in 1968 KJC added a terminal, two-year nursing program. The college did not offer vocational or technical courses, because the Marietta-Cobb Area Vocational-Technical School and Southern Tech already filled those roles. Kennesaw’s niche was in the liberal arts. Believing it was destined to become a four-year school, the administration set out from the beginning to recruit a senior-college faculty. Doctoral degrees counted for more than experience, and faculty hired without Ph.D.s were strongly encouraged to finish their graduate work.

Community leaders were determined to see Kennesaw offer bachelor and graduate degrees. When President Horace Sturgis first addressed a local civic club, the initial question following his speech was, “When are we going to be a senior college?” The chancellor and Board of Regents, however, envisioned Kennesaw as a permanent feeder institution for Georgia State University. The long-range plan was for junior colleges to surround Georgia State from the north (Kennesaw),
south (Clayton), east (DeKalb, later Perimeter College) and west (today's Atlanta Metropolitan College), with a diverse, cosmopolitan student body coming together for upper level and graduate classes.\textsuperscript{5}

To overcome resistance from the chancellor's office, the local power structure had to exercise all the political strength it possessed. Three local delegations visited the board without success. The first group, consisting of legislators and Chamber of Commerce representatives, made its presentation in 1971. Its spokesperson was Senator Cy Chapman. A second delegation, headed by Senator Jack Henderson, appeared before the regents two years later. As mentioned in Chapter 17, the conversion of KJC to senior status was one of the pledges George Busbee made to local powerbrokers in exchange for their support during the 1974 gubernatorial campaign. Since the 1940s the Board of Regents had been a constitutional entity, theoretically independent of the governor. However, the governor appointed board members to staggered, seven-year terms and presented the university system's budget recommendations to the General Assembly. Chancellors and boards, therefore, took governors' wishes seriously. After his election, Busbee made it clear to his appointees that he favored Kennesaw becoming a four-year school.

In 1975 the third and next-to-last delegation approached the regents. Spokespersons were former legislator Harold Willingham and retired Arrow Shirt Company president Robert T. Garrison. Willingham had played a central role in bringing both Southern Tech and KJC to Cobb County. Garrison headed the KJC Foundation, an organization formed in 1969 to raise private funds for scholarships and other worthwhile academic purposes. Meanwhile, Representative Joe Mack Wilson saw to it that the legislature put funds in the budget to finance the conversion. He received strong support from Joe Frank Harris of Cartersville, the chair of the House Appropriations Committee, a future governor and a KJC foundation member. They put one hundred thousand dollars in the 1975-76 budget, and two hundred fifty thousand dollars in the next fiscal year budget. The regents did not request this money and were not happy that the legislature was forcing their hand. But they now knew they could count on financial support if they voted for the change.\textsuperscript{6}

In the meantime, students were exercising their influence. June Krise, a student government association senator and later student president, helped organize a petition drive in which activists invaded local
shopping centers, gathering ten thousand signatures of individuals who wanted to see a senior college in Cobb County. The “Four-Year Kennesaw” committee held a rally, distributed “Four-Year” T-shirts, and lobbied the Chamber of Commerce. By documenting a public demand, the students proved helpful to the civic leaders in their negotiations with the Board of Regents. Personal contacts played a central role in the four-year fight. Prominent Cobb countians argued Kennesaw’s case to regents they knew. A delegation planned to present Kennesaw’s case at the board meeting on 14 April 1976. President Sturgis was concerned that the board would again take no action. Believing that the college’s friends deserved an answer, Sturgis contacted the regent from the seventh congressional district, Judge James D. Maddox of Rome. Maddox pledged that the matter would be placed on the agenda for full discussion.

At the 14 April 1976 meeting Garrison again headed the local delegation. After he spoke, Representatives Al Burruss and Joe Frank Harris said a few words. The regents discussed the matter for two hours. KJC argued that Cobb was Georgia’s third largest county and the growing population deserved a better educational system. No county in the northwest Georgia service area possessed a four-year liberal arts school. Opponents countered that the regents were under a court order to desegregate the state’s universities. While minorities had been free to attend any state school since 1961, the historically black colleges had few white students and the historically white institutions were still overwhelmingly white. Civil rights advocates worried that Kennesaw was located in a county that was 96 percent Caucasian and its advancement would slow efforts to promote an ethnically diverse academic climate. It was soon obvious that proponents outnumbered opponents. At the end of the debate, Maddox made the motion to grant four-year status, with the change to take effect in fall 1978. The motion passed by a vote of eleven to two, and Kennesaw became a senior college.7

For the next two years the Kennesaw family worked to prepare senior-level courses and programs. In September 1977 “junior” was dropped from the name, and the institution became simply Kennesaw College. Junior-level courses began in Fall Quarter, 1978, with senior classes initiated the following year. The first bachelor’s degrees were awarded in June 1980. Having overseen Kennesaw’s transition, Horace Sturgis announced his retirement, effective 31 December 1980. The institution had just completed a successful accreditation visit from the Southern Association
of Colleges and Schools. The new library (eventually named for Dr. Sturgis) was almost complete. After forty-six years in education, he felt the time was right to bow out. "We set out to build a quality institution and I think we have done that," the retiring president concluded.  

Origins of Life University

The vocational school, Southern Tech, and Kennesaw College were tax-supported institutions providing a variety of educational opportunities. In the 1970s a private chiropractic college added to the pedagogical diversity. The founding president, Dr. Sid E. Williams, was a native of Rome, Georgia. After his family moved to southwest Atlanta, he attended Tech High School, then played football in the early 1950s at Georgia Tech. Along with his wife Nell, he enrolled in Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa. Following their graduation, they set up practice in Georgia, developed other business and professional interests, and in 1974 gained approval from the Georgia Department of Education to operate a chiropractic school in Marietta.

In January 1975 Life Chiropractic College offered its first classes
to twenty-two students enrolled in a single doctor of chiropractic degree program. Fifteen years later, in 1989, the name was shortened to Life College to reflect the opening of a school of undergraduate studies. Although most students enrolled in the doctoral program, undergraduate studies in areas such as business administration allowed Life to establish an intercollegiate athletic program and other traditional undergraduate activities. By 1997, when the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission granted university status, Life University had grown to over four thousand students and was the largest chiropractic university in the country. The athletic program, a host of public services, and extensive television advertising gave the institution national visibility. Unfortunately, these activities were quite expensive and perhaps carried the school away from its real mission. By the end of the century questionable administrative practices would threaten the institution’s accreditation.  

Growth and Controversy in the County School System during the 1970s

As noted in Chapter 12, the transition in 1965 to an elected county school board and appointed superintendent made the latter vulnerable to shifting political currents. Much like parliamentary prime ministers, superintendents had to maintain a four to three majority on the board to survive. Under the old system, superintendents were guaranteed four-year terms, dominated school boards, and usually had little trouble being reelected. Paul Sprayberry served sixteen years and could have lasted longer if he had chosen to run again in 1960. His successor, Jasper Griffin, served a full elected term and then a little over two years more at the pleasure of the board before being forced to resign in 1967. For the rest of the century, county school superintendents would come and go in rapid succession.

When Griffin was forced out in May 1967, longtime administrator J. Milton Lewis served as acting superintendent while the board searched for a replacement. In September 1967 the school superintendent of Huntsville, Alabama, Dr. Alton C. Crews, accepted the post. A highly regarded professional, Crews put considerable effort into plan-
ning and curriculum development. In October 1969 he helped orches-
trate a successful fifteen million dollar bond referendum for school
expansion. That year the board unanimously renewed his contract for
an additional two years. As Crews made changes, however, he created
enemies, and many of his proposals lost by four to three votes. Carl
Harrison, who joined the board in 1971, claimed that four members (Joe Bird, Sollie Cole, Lloyd Perry, and Ray Gary) voted down the superintendent’s recommendations on forty different occasions over a sixteen-month period. On the divided votes, Harrison teamed with Jack Darnell and R. J. McCurry in Crews’ behalf.  

The superintendent attributed the problem not to ideological differences, but to the majority’s attempt to interfere with details properly left to staff. The board was supposed to set policy, while the superintendent and his staff implemented it. A typical dispute between Crews and the board occurred in October 1971 over the hiring of a string instruments teacher for the east Cobb schools. Crews regarded personnel decisions as his prerogative. Since string instrument teachers were hard to find, he moved quickly to employ an eligible candidate who became available. At the next board meeting, chairman Joe Bird complained that the elected body had not authorized the position and the music program had greater needs. He argued that the system should follow the recommendations of a comprehensive study concluded several years earlier that called for at least twenty additional music specialists at the elementary level. Until every elementary school had a music specialist, Bird insisted that the system not waste precious resources on a program that affected only a small number of students in a few schools. Since the music teacher had already signed a contract, the board had to go along, but insisted that the musician circulate among all the campuses. Left unresolved was the question of what was policy and what was administrative detail.  

Fed up with the never-ending power struggle, the superintendent submitted his resignation on 26 April 1972, asking that his contract be terminated at the end of June. Soon after, he became superintendent of schools in Charleston, South Carolina. Crews’ announcement prompted a large number of Cobb countians to speak publicly in his behalf. Carl Harrison grew in stature as the superintendent’s most ardent defender. Barbara Hellman, the president of the twenty-two-school Jesse Coleman PTA Council, praised the outgoing superintendent for his support of parents and teachers. The president of the East Side Elementary PTA, Nancy Bickley, organized a pro-Crews rally in front of the school board offices on Waddell Street. Buddy and Lillian Darden and Bill and Dot Dunaway wrote a public letter to the Marietta Daily Journal, praising Crews for his leadership and asking him to stay.
The *Journal* wrote an editorial lauding the superintendent and condemning the school board majority. The teachers in the Cobb County Association of Educators, headed by Richard Keefe, described Crews as "a capable and dynamic educational leader...who has gained state and national reputation."  

A citizens' delegation, led by Frank Duncan, Wallace Pickel, and Lynn Cunningham, appeared at the next board meeting to present a petition calling for the resignation of the four board members blamed for Crews' departure. Board chairman Joe Bird had already announced he would not run for reelection. Perhaps fearing the voters' wrath, the other three Crews opponents eventually made the same decision. Crews backers Jack Darnell and Carl Harrison won reelection; when the new board organized, they were unanimously chosen chairman and vice-chairman, respectively. Joining them were new members Harold Posey, Winn Crump, John Frey, Sam Whitfield, and former South Cobb High School principal Bill Smitha.  

J. Milton Lewis served as interim superintendent once more until the board could choose Crews' successor. Moving with remarkable speed, it announced the replacement, Kermit S. Keenum, in February 1973. The new head was well known in the county. Just thirty-seven years old, he was formerly the principal of Awtrey Junior High School and currently an assistant superintendent for administration. Keenum's rise to the top was a rags-to-riches type story. Born during the Great Depression, he was one of seven children of sharecropper parents in the Mississippi Delta. Before he was out of high school, the family had lived and worked on fourteen different farms. After a tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force, he returned home to get married and enroll in a local junior college. His wife Billie came from the same farming community. While he attended school, Keenum grew cotton on a rented farm and his wife worked in town as a waitress. In those days the aspiring teacher farmed from daybreak until five in the afternoon, attended evening classes until ten, studied till midnight, and then started all over the next morning. He transferred from the community college to Mississippi State University and did not stop until he earned an M.S. in social science education. Fresh out of college, he began his teaching career in 1960 at Marietta High School. Three years later he was the assistant principal of North Cobb High School, and then principal of Awtrey. At the invitation of Alton Crews, he moved in 1969 to the central office.
where he was first an administrative assistant and next an assistant superintendent. One of his many virtues was an ability to bring together people of all backgrounds. After the bitter divisiveness of the recent past, the board majority hoped Keenum could restore harmony to a fractured system.
Of the sixteen applicants for the position, eleven possessed doctorates. Keenum was in the minority that did not. However, the board majority opted to place greater weight on people skills and familiarity with Cobb County. Sam Whitfield and Bill Smitha cast dissenting votes. In an open board meeting, Smitha tried to read the resumes of the other applicants to back his claim that Keenum was not the most qualified candidate. The majority cut him off, asserting that the names of unsuccessful candidates were private and their credentials not open to public inspection.15

Keenum proved to be an effective superintendent for eight years before leaving voluntarily in 1981 to head the Glynn County System in coastal Georgia. His administration spent much of its time dealing with rapid growth. In east Cobb, Walton High School opened in 1975. One of his major problems was keeping up with the double-digit inflation of the era. As construction costs accelerated dramatically, the board persuaded the voters in 1979 to approve a twenty million dollar bond referendum for additional schools. By that time the Cobb system consisted of sixty-five institutions housing 53,500 students. In 1977-78 scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) averaged 879, well above the state average of 818, but slightly below the national total of 897. Based on the 1969 comprehensive study of the Crews era, the county replaced junior high schools (grades seven through nine) with middle schools (six through eight) and began putting greater emphasis on the basics. In 1972 schools in Austell and Smyrna, named respectively for Dr. Luke G. Garrett, Sr., and Jasper Griffin, became the county's first two middle schools.16

Societal issues, however, seemed to generate more emotions than the question of whether students could read and write. In 1979, for instance, the county board by a five to two vote decided to give students the option of skipping high school biology classes on the origin of man. Board members Bill Smitha and John McClure cast the negative votes, arguing that biology teachers should be required to teach creationism as well as evolutionary theory. In an emotional outburst McClure charged staff members with "disloyalty" for making curricular changes without first consulting the board. He suggested that anybody who objected to teaching creationism should look for work elsewhere.17

The board and the community also grappled with the question of sex education. In October 1979 Keenum recommended a unified sex
education program for the middle schools. Previously, some schools taught sex education in physical education classes and others in science. A few conscientious instructors devoted up to three days to the topic while others dismissed it in ten minutes. Keenum's staff spent two years developing a plan where sixth-grade teachers would spend four days on sex education, seventh-grade teachers a week, and eighth-grade teachers eight days. Under Keenum's proposal participation in the classes would be limited to those students with parental permission. Smitha and McClure, accompanied by John Frey, objected. McClure argued that schools should teach patriotism and self-respect while sex education should be taught at home. The superintendent responded, "It would be great if this could be handled in the home...but it's pretty obvious that
this is not being done." Board members Barbara Harris, Jack Darnell, and Sam Whitfield supported the superintendent, but with the elected leaders sharply divided, Keenum withdrew the proposal.18

The superintendent suffered at least one more embarrassment before he left Cobb for Glynn County. In 1980 President Carter's Justice Department sued the county over the shortage of black teachers and the lack of female principals and assistant principals. Keenum argued that the suit failed to take into account the progress Cobb had made, with the number of women in leadership roles jumping in the last eight years from under 8 percent to about 30 percent. Nonetheless, Keenum and the school board entered into a consent decree to increase minority hiring and promotion and do a better job of providing employment records to the federal government. After eight years away from Cobb County, Keenum would come back in 1989 for a second term as superintendent. Shortly after his return, he had the satisfaction of seeing U.S. District Judge Marvin Shoob rule that Cobb had met the court's affirmative action requirements and was no longer subject to the court's jurisdiction.19

The Marietta School System
in the 1970s

By the 1970s some people had begun to question whether a separate Marietta school system was still merited. Eighty years earlier, when the Marietta system was created, the difference between the county seat and the countryside was immense. The city had a larger per capita tax base and was more willing to fund secondary education and a full nine-month school term. In the second half of the twentieth century, as suburbs replaced cotton fields, the residents of unincorporated areas were just as affluent and just as committed to quality education. Yet, Mariettans saw virtue in preserving tradition and in maintaining local control of a relatively small system.

The Marietta city council had the ultimate power over educational matters, appointing school board members, who in turn chose the superintendent. Unlike the county, Marietta was able to maintain continuity through superintendents who served long terms. Loyd Cox held the post of Marietta's superintendent throughout the turbulent
years from 1965 to 1981, when the schools desegregated and went through the turmoil of the Vietnam era, with teen rebelliousness at an historic high. The son of southern sharecroppers, Cox came from a background similar to Kermit Keenum’s. After serving in the navy during World War II and the Korean conflict, he earned a master’s degree in school administration from the University of Alabama. He started teaching in Dalton, and then devoted twenty-eight years to Marietta, starting as a teacher at Marietta High before becoming an assistant principal, principal, and, finally, superintendent. In addition to helping the schools desegregate smoothly, Cox placed a renewed emphasis on vocational education, both at the senior high and middle school levels.²⁰

Cox was aided during his administration by one of Marietta High School’s most popular principals, Edna Poole Lee, who in 1973 became the school’s second woman principal. Lee came to MHS as a math teacher while Mary Swain was still the principal. A native of rural Banks County in northeast Georgia, she became a teacher shortly after her graduation from Piedmont College. For her first job, in Tate, Georgia, she taught high school math, coached boys’ and girls’ basketball, and ran a summer recreation program, financed by the Georgia Marble Company. After five years she moved to Gainesville, Georgia, where she took a Girl Scouts director course and became the head of a Girl Scouts summer camp. She also helped veterans earn their G.E.D. at night, and earned a master’s degree at the University of Georgia in her spare time.²¹

When Edna Lee reached Marietta, she had a reputation as an excellent teacher and administrator, who was the first to arrive in the mornings and the last to leave in the evenings. Nominated by the Georgia Department of Education, she received one of nine National Teachers Awards given by Look Magazine in 1962. She was also the STAR teacher of Georgia one year, having been nominated by STAR student Brad Martin. In the 1950s she taught math full-time at Marietta High School, then spent her after-school hours counseling and helping students gain admission to college. When Henry Kemp replaced Shuler Antley as superintendent in 1959, he asked her to organize the school’s first guidance program. Eventually, she moved out of the classroom, devoting her efforts completely to guidance work. As pupil personnel director, she went into all the Marietta schools to supervise the testing program and place children, when necessary, into special education.
Edna Poole Lee [Rensink] (Rensink interview, Collected Interviews, Vol. IV, Kennesaw College Oral History Series, Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Kennesaw State University)
Arriving at work at 6:30 A.M. and staying until late at night, she did whatever it took to accommodate parents' work schedules.

By 1973, when Lee became principal of Marietta High School, schools everywhere were enduring the student rebelliousness that began in the troubled sixties. Several students had unsuccessfully sued the Marietta system over its dress and hair-length code. The maintenance of discipline had become harder than ever. Lee had a reputation as a compassionate teacher and counselor, but she had always been a stickler for strict adherence to school rules, arguing that learning could not take place in the absence of discipline. Even before she became principal, she began calling the long hair students into her office, one at a time. Ordering them to sit down, she took out her scissors and, without asking, cut their hair to the proper length. If they needed to shave in order to be readmitted to school, she pulled out a razor and performed the operation.

As principal, she impressed upon students that they belonged to a school family and that whatever they did was a reflection on the institution. The school produced a handbook at the beginning of the school year detailing student conduct. According to Lee, the school buildings were painted shortly after she became principal; when she left, there was not a mark on them, because students knew that they would have to pay for any property they defaced. By this time, drugs had become a problem in the schools. Whenever a student was caught, Lee notified the parents and the police and suspended the student for ten days. For a second offense, the pupil had to face the school board as well as the police. Fortunately, the threat of enforcement seemed to control the behavior of most students, and Lee recalled having to make a case against only a few students. Lee also demanded strict compliance with system policies on the part of teachers. As principal, she spent much of the day walking the halls and keeping up with what teachers were doing in their classrooms. She expected them to work as hard as she did and weeded out the few who lacked a love for their students. Like Mary Swain before her, when she retired in 1981 she left behind many admirers among students, parents, and colleagues.
Creation of the Cobb County Youth Museum

The schools benefited immensely from the support they received from parents and other volunteers who gave generously of their time and money on a variety of educational and extracurricular programs. One of the best examples of volunteer effort was the work of the Marietta Junior Welfare League in establishing the Cobb County Youth Museum. In 1962 Sylvia and Conley Ingram made a visit to a children's museum in Jacksonville, Florida. Impressed by what she saw, Mrs. Ingram made a report to her League chapter. The members elected her chair of a committee to study the feasibility of a similar museum for Cobb County. Joining her on the Youth Museum Survey Committee were Florrie Corley and Estelle Bogle. They visited or corresponded with numerous youth museums around the country, met with local school officials to determine how a museum could fit their needs, and explained the project to a variety of area service clubs. In June 1964, the League voted to support the project, and the following month the youth museum was incorporated as an educational resource center for the local school systems.

The group wrote for advice to the Boston Children's Museum, one of the top organizations of its kind in the country. The Boston museum sent a sample suitcase, filled with objects on a particular subject that children could see and touch. In an era when classroom teachers had relatively limited access to supplementary teaching materials, the suitcases provided ways to illustrate points they were trying to make. Starting in 1964, the Youth Museum Guild began producing its own suitcase exhibits to distribute to teachers, on request, for two weeks or for as long as they were needed. The first suitcase contained objects, maps, and photos on Spain. For a number of years Sylvia Ingram and Florrie Corley co-chaired the guild.

It soon became apparent that the youth museum could have a greater impact if it had a building to house permanent exhibits. Judge James Manning was willing to sell ten acres adjacent to Cheatham Hill at the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park. On 12 April 1970 the Cobb County Youth Museum opened a thirty-five hundred square foot contemporary building that blended well with its wooded environment. The non-profit organization hired Colonel George
Kneen to oversee the museum's construction. After it opened, he became executive director. He held that position until 1978 and was succeeded by Anita Barton, who remained executive director into the next century. The director coordinated the efforts of volunteers from the museum guild and Junior League who helped with such functions as designing and scripting exhibits, staging original puppet shows, and serving as docents and hostesses. Memye Tucker was particularly helpful with the puppet productions.

The first exhibit was entitled “Transportation: From Paddles to Planes” and featured such events as the Great Locomotive Chase and the growth of Bell Bomber. The museum changed exhibits every two to three years. Later displays were built around themes such as “Becoming
American: The Immigrant Experience” and “Journeys into New Worlds.” A participatory museum, the Cobb County facility involved children in role-playing, allowing them to dress in historic costumes and to act out brief skits as they moved from one well-researched setting to another. Designed to supplement the academic offerings of area schools, the museum volunteers conducted two guided tours a day. By the end of the century about fifteen thousand students, teachers, and other adults toured the facility each year.

The youth museum was funded by a variety of sources. In addition to grants, admission fees, and charitable donations, the museum had a contractual relationship with the Marietta and Cobb County school systems. They were by no means the only school districts to visit the exhibits. Throughout the late twentieth century, the museum remained booked to its maximum capacity, with classes arriving from throughout north Georgia and as far away as Alabama. In the summertime, a host of day camps and church and civic groups made use of the facility. The youth museum provided an outstanding example of the continuing importance of volunteerism in the latter years of the last century.
In 1984 the top position in county government passed for the first time into Republican hands. With Ernest Barrett, the last Democratic commission chairman, departing after twenty years, the Marietta Daily Journal endorsed Earl Smith as the candidate most likely to continue "a no nonsense, practical approach to the problems of Cobb County, especially the troublesome issues of transportation and zoning." In a parallel column Bill Kinney remarked that Cobb in the mid-1960s still had a few unpaved roads, lacked libraries and parks outside the cities, and had more houses in unincorporated areas on septic tanks than sewer lines. He exclaimed, "The contrast between then and now is dramatic indeed. Look at the population, the homes, the churches, the commerce and industry, the parks, libraries, and - grr - the traffic!"

A native of Whitfield County in northwest Georgia, the new commission chairman moved to Cobb in 1961. The following year he started E. Smith Heating and Air Conditioning. Beginning with one employee and a used pick-up truck, he built a thriving business. Even
after he became commissioner, Smith started each day at the company office for two hours before going to the courthouse. His wife Rachel and son-in-law Barry Abernathy managed day-by-day operations in his absence.

Smith's involvement in Republican politics dated back to the 1964 Goldwater campaign. For twenty years he helped build a two-party system by campaigning for other Republicans. George Langford, the first GOP county commissioner, appointed Smith to the planning and zoning board; he served from 1971 to 1974, rising to the chairmanship. In 1982 Smith headed a Cobb County Citizens Advisory Task Force that proposed ways for the county to save up to six million dollars through more efficient business practices. A man of few hobbies, Smith had an impressive resume of civic involvement. He was a charter member of Eastside Baptist Church, was president of a Lions Club and the James T. Anderson Boys Club, served as director of the Cobb Chamber and the Southern Tech foundation, and was chairman of the advisory board for the Cobb-Marietta Vocational-Technical School.

By the time Smith took office, about six out of every seven Cobb countians drove alone to their places of employment, with an average commuting time of twenty-six minutes. Every county commissioner since the 1940s had made road improvements a top priority. Yet the demand for better highways seemed always to outstrip the county's capacity to provide them. Despite (perhaps because of) an excellent interstate network and the investment of numerous public dollars in connector roads, the number of vehicles on Cobb's highways grew at a faster rate than county engineers could accommodate. At the end of the 1980s the morning rush hour stretched from six until ten and resumed for several hours each evening. Not surprisingly, Earl Smith in the 1984 campaign made the county's traffic problems his first priority. He advocated a major road construction program, a countywide privately owned bus service, park-and-ride lots, express lanes, and an outer loop around Atlanta that would link to I-75 north of Cobb County and take traffic off Cobb's highways. He also promised to make zoning hearings more impartial and to establish a 911 emergency system.

Smith's 1984 opponents in the GOP primary included east Marietta attorney Jim Peters and former ally George Lankford, who served fourteen years on the county commission before resigning in May to run for the top spot. Despite his long service, Langford had
alienated some voters by his allegedly lax ethical standards. The east Cobb Republican barely avoiding prosecution in the 1978 Super Bowl gambling scheme, and he maintained close connections with controversial developers who appeared frequently before the commission with zoning requests. Putting the best possible spin on his questionable associations, Langford claimed that developers supported him because he was pro-growth in contrast to Smith whom he labeled as "no-growth." Langford warned that "the good life [would come] to a screeching halt" if Smith won.

In the August Republican primary numerous Democrats crossed over to give Smith a 63-percent majority. Austell mobile home dealer Frank Wyatt won the Democratic nomination, but he was relatively unknown, poorly financed, and no match for the GOP nominee. In the November general election Smith swamped his opponent, emerging with 73 percent of the total. The 1984 campaign provided solid evidence of how far the GOP had come and the depths to which the once-dominant Democrats had fallen. Republicans in practically all races benefited from President Ronald Reagan's coattails, as the popular president won a landslide reelection victory over Walter Mondale.4

The Local Option Sales Tax and the Road Building Campaign

When Earl Smith took office in January 1985 he headed a commission that consisted of three Republicans (Smith, Emmett Burton, and Barbara Williams) and two Democrats (Harvey Paschal and Butch Thompson). For the first time in ages, no commissioner had more than four years seniority, and none had held public office prior to the 1980s. Nonetheless, the commission came up with an ambitious agenda. Smith conducted a public opinion poll that indicated the electorate's receptivity to a tax increase, if the funds were earmarked specifically for roads. In past administrations commissioners had utilized bond referenda to finance road construction. Smith and the new commission opted for a one percent sales tax.

The idea originated with Joe Mack Wilson who chaired the powerful House Ways and Means Committee in the mid-1980s. Dealing
Butch Thompson (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
with tax legislation, Ways and Means is perhaps the most important committee in the General Assembly. Speaker Tom Murphy gave Wilson the assignment as a reward for service in a recent, bitter reapportionment battle. Murphy and Wilson had served together since their initial election back in 1960. Recognizing Wilson as a loyal party man, the speaker considered him the ideal person to head the reapportionment committee following the 1980 census.

Wilson traveled to Washington to visit with Justice Department officials and came home thinking he knew what the law required. To comply with the 1965 Voting Rights Act, Georgia Democrats proposed a plan that increased black representation in the fifth congressional district from 49 to 58 percent. The black caucus in the legislature, however, wanted 60 percent. The Marietta jeweler did not see much difference between 58 and 60 and tried to persuade Murphy and other white Democratic leaders to accept the modest increase. When they would not budge, Wilson, as a good party man, went along and pushed the 58 percent plan through the legislature.

Wanting the symbolic 60 percent, African-American plaintiffs sued and won in the federal district court for the District of Columbia, where cases under the Voting Rights Act originated. In the process Wilson was portrayed as an unreconstructed racist. One of his critics, Representative Dorothy Felton, was a north Fulton Republican. A half-decade earlier she stopped by Wilson’s desk one day to tell him that black Democrats in Atlanta were giving her a hard time. Felton jokingly asked Wilson to annex her district into Cobb County. A populist by nature, Wilson viewed her as a hated “country club Republican.” So he responded with a cruel, flippant put-down. Using a racist epithet for which he later apologized, the earthy, old-school Democrat said, “Dorothy, there’s some things worse than niggers, and one of them is Republicans.” When Felton made the remark public during the reapportionment battle, she added fuel to a public perception of Wilson as an insider in a bigoted Democratic establishment that was determined to dilute black voting strength. Wilson denied the charge and cited the considerable support he received from black Marietta voters, but his credibility was undermined and the Georgia reapportionment plan was doomed. Under court order the legislature redrew the boundaries of the fifth district to increase black representation not just to 60 percent, as the black caucus originally demanded, but to 65.
During the reapportionment debate, Speaker Murphy had announced that Wilson would take over the appropriations committee as soon as his job on reapportionment was completed. When Wilson became controversial, Murphy yielded to political pressure and withdrew the appointment. But after the controversy disappeared from the newspapers, the speaker gave the Cobb County Democrat an even better assignment as chair of Ways and Means. Shortly after taking over the tax-writing committee, Wilson began pondering ways to help counties like Cobb finance badly needed local projects. He eventually formulated a solution of letting jurisdictions vote on local option sales taxes for a fixed amount of time with all the funds committed to specific, locally defined problems. He proposed the idea to political ally Al Burruss of Marietta, the majority leader of the house, second in power only to Tom Murphy. At first skeptical, Burruss on reflection became the driving force behind the idea's adoption in the General Assembly. By 1985 Johnny Isakson had risen to the post of minority leader in the house. He saw to it that the GOP supported the bill.

On 5 February 1985 the proposal sailed through the house by a vote of 102-66. All ten members of the Cobb delegation voted for it. The Wilson-Burruss bill allowed counties to collect tax revenues for four years, with the funds designated for road improvements. The only significant opposition came from the Fulton County delegation, where the sales tax was already 5 percent, two percentage points higher than that of Cobb and most other Georgia counties. Arguing that regressive sales taxes hurt poor people, Atlanta Representative Billy McKinney counseled that property taxes were a fairer way for Cobb to pay for roads. Representative Dick Lane of unincorporated Fulton feared that his county's taxes might go up to 6 percent with Atlanta residents forcing suburbanites in north Fulton to pay for unwanted road improvements in downtown areas. The Fulton County delegation tried unsuccessfully several times to amend the bill to leave out counties of 580,000 (Fulton's size) or more. Wilson and Burruss opposed their amendment, arguing that it was unconstitutional. The chairman of the appropriations committee, Bubba McDonald of Commerce, also attempted to stop the Wilson-Burruss bill, fearing that Georgia would never be able to raise the statewide sales tax for schools if some counties had local option sales taxes for roads. Nonetheless, most politicians found attractive the notion of implementing tax increases through referenda, rather
than making officeholders take the blame for rising rates. At 10:30 A.M. on Wednesday, 27 February 1985 the state senate passed the Wilson-Burruss bill, but attached another measure to it. Sponsored originally by Tom Kilgore, a Douglasville Democrat, the alternate plan would allow counties to adopt a 1 percent sales tax for up to five years for almost any capital improvement project including the retiring of old bonds. Under the senate proposal, counties could take their pick of either plan or neither. The senate also approved a series of clarifying amendments, authorizing, for example, the use of road taxes for the relocation of utilities near roadways. These additions made the bill less acceptable to key house members and threatened to hold up final approval. The Cobb delegation was on a deadline. The county board of education had already called a twenty-seven million dollar bond referendum for 2 April 1985. The commission wanted to hold a road tax referendum on the same day, but by law it had to announce the election at least a month ahead of time. If Governor Joe Frank Harris did not sign the act by Friday, the Cobb electorate would have to wait for a later date to approve the plan.

Despite their distaste for the Kilgore option, Burruss, Wilson, and Isakson resolved to push the senate measure through the house. They enlisted the support of Speaker Murphy, who instantly declared a two-hour adjournment while the Cobb countians prepared a printed version to place on representatives’ desks. When the legislators returned, the printers were still working, so Murphy permitted a question-answer period to kill time. Burruss later claimed he was “sweating blood” while he worried how long he could delay matters. At 3:00 P.M. printed copies arrived and Murphy gavelled the house to order. After a brief debate, the measure passed 92-68 with all the Cobb delegation and twenty of twenty-six Republicans statewide backing the bill. The following morning Governor Harris signed it into law.

According to Wilson, Earl Smith snatched up the document and “came running home with the bill in his hand.” A few hours later the county commission voted unanimously to put the issue on the 2 April ballot. Although Wilson rarely praised Republicans, he conceded in this case that one had to “give credit to Earl Smith. He got out and explained it to people and told them what they were going to get for their money, and it sold.” In a 25 February speech he told the Cobb Chamber of Commerce that the tax cost less than the traditional bond
referenda that saddled the county with steep interest payments for long periods of time. He argued optimistically, "Historically, we have held bond referendums for roads to open the county up for development, but the one thing we're going to do now is build roads to move people."9

County officials estimated that the sales tax would bring in $177 million dollars over four years. The Georgia Department of Transportation promised another two hundred million, covering the full cost of widening state highways and half the cost of improving county roads. With few exceptions city officials endorsed the plan. Leaders from the southern part of the county expressed concern over Chairman Smith's failure to prioritize the proposed projects. Austell's mayor, John Collar, claimed that voters in his area were cynical, because they believed they had not received a fair share of previous road projects. Collar, however, backed the sales tax as the "best option available." Marietta's mayor, Bob Flournoy, and the entire city council offered support with the exception of Betty Hunter, whose working class ward in the South Loop-Fairground area contained a number of retirees and others on fixed incomes. She argued that a regressive sales tax would be particularly burdensome to the underprivileged and those who "rely on monthly Social Security checks and have very little income as it is." She further maintained that Marietta seemed always to be at the end of the list of county road improvements. On the other hand, councilman John Hammond, who represented a working class ward with a large black population, favored the sales tax because it hit all segments of society and not just property owners. Further, part of the sales tax revenue came from tourists, reducing the cost of the program to residents.10

To generate public support, each county commissioner appointed three representatives to a road improvements committee. Life of Georgia officer Leon Hames and Smyrna accountant Jim Perry chaired the group. With support from the Cobb Chamber and numerous civic leaders, the tax plan received the blessings of 63 percent of the voters on 2 April 1985. The electorate also gave approval to the school bond issue, providing money, among other things, to build the future Pope High School in the eastern part of the county. At a victory celebration hosted by the road improvements committee, Earl Smith exclaimed that the local leadership had "offered Cobb County something that the entire Southeast will look at to see how lucky we are." East Cobb com-
missioner Barbara Williams singled out for praise roads improvement chairs Hames and Perry, county manager Jim Miller, and the engineering firms Hensley-Schmidt and the RBA Group. She saw the results as confirmation that most local residents liked where they lived and were willing to pay to keep a high quality of life.\textsuperscript{11}

\section*{Town Center}

During the Smith administration, Cobb's northwestern sector grew phenomenally as a result of the opening of the county's second enclosed mall. Town Center conformed to historian Lizabeth Cohen's description of the modern American mall, as a product of planners and architects who aspired to build in the countryside a perfected downtown business center without the "anarchy and ugliness" of multi-owner structures. Instead of numerous architectural styles and a diversity of signs and colors, malls followed the single vision of their design team. Since malls were privately rather than publicly owned, managers controlled who had access and when. Unlike democratic city streets, malls, according to Cohen, proved hostile to beggars, the homeless, prostitutes, and anyone who threatened to run off shopping customers. With their private security forces suburban shopping centers became consumer-friendly places for the elderly on their morning walks, young mothers with children in strollers, and others who desired safe, hassle-free environments.

Cohen argues that suburban malls, despite the claims of their developers, could not replace town centers in all respects. As consumption centers accessible primarily by automobile, they tended to exclude the poor. Moreover, they had little tolerance for free speech. On the public street corner anyone with an opinion could express it. In the privately owned mall, security guards were instructed to stop soapbox orators or activists attempting to place leaflets on shoppers' cars. For champions of diversity and free expression malls seemed a poor substitute for the old town squares.\textsuperscript{12}

Nonetheless, the founders of Cobb's second enclosed mall billed it as a new "Town Center." About twelve miles north of Cumberland Mall, the area began to boom when I-75 was completed in 1977. A few years later the southern portion of I-575 opened. The new interstate
highway ran from I-75, about a mile south of the future mall, to Cherokee County and, ultimately, the north Georgia mountains. These two public works projects had a tremendous impact on northwest Cobb, south Bartow, and Cherokee counties. Just as nineteenth century cities grew up around railroads, late twentieth century shopping malls flourished near interstates. Cobb owed a huge debt to the federal government for the great influx of federal dollars for highway construction.

Almost as soon as the two interstates were completed, work began on the three-hundred-acre regional mall. The developers liked the name Town Mall, because they correctly anticipated city-like commercial and residential growth around it. Project manager Wayne Shackleford remarked, "As a nation we grew up around courthouse squares and city halls, but today we're growing up around regional malls because they're becoming the center of [economic] activity."1

Town Center was built on the site of the old Roberts farm. The Roberts family arrived in the county not long after its creation. About 1835 Wiley and Rhoda Roberts settled a little over a mile south of Big Shanty (Kennesaw) on the old Cassville Road (later the Dixie Highway). Of their seven children, John (1816-1889) and several brothers established farms along Noonday Creek. John married a distant cousin, Lucretia Jane Roberts (1819-1857), who gave birth in 1844 to Alfred McAfee Roberts, the first of the couple’s nine children. After Lucretia died, John married her sister Augusta, and fathered three more children. John and Lucretia are buried in the Roberts family cemetery not far from the site of the Cobb County Airport. Augusta survived John and was still paying taxes on a 220-acre farm at the turn of the century.

John and Lucretia’s son, Alfred McAfee Roberts, fought in the Civil War, then came home to farm the land from Greer’s Chapel Road to where Town Center would later be constructed. He is listed in the 1880 agricultural census as owning a 241-acre farm, of which 136 acres were cultivated, with most of the rest forest. The property was valued at the time at fifteen hundred dollars. In 1879 Roberts’ main crops were corn and cotton; he harvested a thousand bushels of the former and sixteen bales of the latter. His granddaughter, Alfie Virginia Estes Chastain, lived on the farm with him for a few years before her 1925 marriage to Howard Chastain. By the early twentieth century the future site of Town Center was pastureland. Alfred’s son, Grady
First Republican Commission Chairman

Roberts, operated a sawmill on the north end of the current Town Center. Further west, two sharecropping families worked part of the land, paying Grandfather Roberts half of their cotton and corn. The old Roberts farmhouse remained until the corridor along Barrett Parkway was developed.14

A county commissioner and county administrator in the Barrett era, Harry Ingram lived on Roberts Road at the future intersection of Barrett and Busbee Parkways. After Town Center was built, a Mexican restaurant called Rio Bravo opened in the backyard of the old Ingram farm. In 1936 Ingram’s father had moved an old school house from Bells Ferry Road and remodeled it for the family home. To acquire an education, young Harry traveled all the way to Canton Highway to attend Blackwell Elementary School. Later, he graduated from Acworth High School. At the time, Roberts Road and all around it had dirt surfaces. On occasion, county work teams smoothed out the ruts. After serving on the Smyrna city council in the early 1960s, Ingram moved back to the home place and lived there until he sold the property to Town Center.

The mall project was a joint venture of Cadillac Fairview Shopping Centers, Ltd.; D. Scott Hudgens Company; and Corporate Property Investors. Cadillac Fairview’s manager of land development, Wayne Shackleford, previously served as Gwinnett’s county manager. In the 1990s he would head the Georgia Department of Transportation. To facilitate the project, Cobb County ran sewer lines up Noonday Creek to the back of the property and built a four- to six-lane parkway, roughly following the route of old Roberts Road, from Bells Ferry, past the mall site, to U.S. 41.

Since none of the Roberts family lived along the road any longer, Ingram recommended that the new connector be named for the commission chairman who played the central role in Cobb’s development over the past two decades. In 1983 it officially became Ernest Barrett Parkway. By that point county engineers were already planning to extend the road westward from U.S. 41 to Dallas Highway and beyond, linking up with the proposed East-West connector on a route through relatively undeveloped terrain to Cumberland Mall. Those projects, however, would become mired in controversy and remain unfinished until the late 1990s. In the meantime, the Town Center developers paid for the construction of a 1.8 mile, two-million-dollar access road run-
ning parallel to I-75 along the west end of the mall from Barrett Parkway to Big Shanty Road. Dedicated on 22 July 1985 in honor of Georgia’s most recent ex-governor, George Busbee Parkway was completed later that year, in time for the opening of the mall. According to Wayne Shackleford, it served an important function in keeping local travelers off the interstate. A little over a decade later Busbee Parkway would be extended by the county several more miles to Wade Green Road.15

Longtime Marietta resident and Daily Journal columnist Bill Kinney described the construction of Town Center as “the largest earth moving job since grading was done for the Bell Bomber Plant in the early 40s.” By the summer of 1984 teams of workers had clear-cut and leveled some three hundred acres of terrain. After another year and a half of construction, Phase I opened in February 1986. Later in the year Phase II opened, bringing the floor space to 1,280,000 square feet. Of the seventeen regional malls around Atlanta, only the recently renovated and expanded Lenox Square, with 1,415,000 square feet, was larger.16

Prior to 1984 all the enclosed malls had been located inside I-285, the perimeter highway around the city. That year, Gwinnett Place Mall, off I-85 North at Pleasant Hill Road, became the first outside the perimeter. Town Center was the second. The three original anchors were Macy’s, Rich’s, and Sears, with Mervyn’s opening later in 1986. About 150 specialty stores and restaurants occupied the rest of the space. With large courtyards containing palm trees and marble fountains and with thirty thousand square feet of skylights, Town Center provided pleasant surroundings for shoppers. While the new mall had some of the same chain stores as Cumberland, both seemed to prosper. Local residents supported both, but Cumberland increasingly pitched its advertising to northwest Atlanta, including Buckhead and Sandy Springs, and Town Center became the mall of choice for north Cobb, Bartow, and Cherokee.17

In 1986 about three thousand people worked in the various stores and shops at Town Center. According to Rich’s personnel manager, Mike Grindell, about 90 percent came from the surrounding area. In Cobb County only Lockheed, the county school district, and the Cumberland/Galleria area provided more jobs. To attract women as their primary customers, mall administrators attempted to maintain a
safe and aesthetically pleasing environment. Following a national
trend, the mall hired many women, some in high management posi­
tions, including initial Town Center manager MiMi Wilson, marketing
director Becky Kosalac, assistant marketing director Jennifer
McKenzie, and security supervisor Betty Davis. MiMi Wilson came to
Cobb County in 1985 from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where she had
spent the past five years managing three shopping centers for the
Crown American Corporation. The vast majority of female employees,
however, worked part time for relatively low wages and limited bene­
fits while they adjusted work schedules around family responsibilities.
The major department stores and the specialty shops preferred part­
time workers, as a way to cut labor costs. They employed relatively few
workers for slow daytime hours and more on weekends and other peak
customer times.18

Town Center’s economic impact went far beyond the number of
jobs generated by the mall itself. As the developers predicted when they
named the project, Town Center became the heart of a tremendous
commercial expansion. Within a decade Barrett Parkway filled with
restaurants, banks, movie theaters, auto dealerships, and a wide variety
of retail stores. A mile to the west of Town Center, Cobb Place was built
as a typical strip shopping center, anchored by Service Merchandise,
Uptons, and Lechmere’s. To the east Town Center Village opened in
1987 with Haverty Furniture and other tenants.

The rippling effects of Town Center were not limited to Barrett
Parkway. In the early 1980s, just before Town Center opened, county
commissioner Butch Thompson built the Wetherbyrne Woods subdivi­
sion adjacent to Pinetree County Club not far from Chastain Road, just
one exit north of Barrett Parkway. He saw the area as an ideal place to
build since land values ran more than ten thousand dollars an acre
under the prices in east Cobb and houses typically sold for 10 to 15 per­
cent less. Even though newcomers generally had long commutes to
work, they at least could shop close to home after the new mall was
completed.19

Nearly a number of residential and commercial projects were
underway on lands belonging to the Chastain family. Alfie and Howard
Chastain operated a 310-acre farm located on both sides of Chastain
Road extending west from Bells Ferry Road. In 1952 they built two
lakes on their property, stocking them with fish. From a little store on
Bells Ferry they sold bait and other supplies to people who wanted to pay for the privilege of fishing in their lakes. Howard died in 1959, but Alfie operated the store for about thirty-five years before selling the property to George S. Morgan Development Company, the builder of the Chastain Lakes subdivision. On the eve of Town Center’s opening, a real estate agent reported that homes in the $140,000-$250,000 range were selling briskly. According to Kennesaw native Mary Helyn Hagin, “We’ve known for years we’ve been sitting on a gold mine and it seems the whole world has found out about north Cobb in the past two years.” Meanwhile, the heirs of Emory Winn Chastain, Sr., formed Chastain Development Ltd. The State bought part of this land for I-75. Most of the remaining estate ran between I-75 and I-575 and would eventually be sold off for such developments as Chastain Center and Town Park, two large office park complexes. Explaining the economic impact of the interstates and Town Center, developer George Morgan remarked that he had seen area real estate values “literally go through the roof,” as land for commercial properties increased twenty times and for multifamily housing ten fold.

Despite constant road improvement campaigns, the surface streets in the vicinity of Town Center were extremely congested by the late 1990s. Especially was this true along Barrett Parkway and Chastain Road. In the early 1980s the new I-575 had such little traffic beyond the Chastain exit that it reminded one of a pleasant country lane. Indeed, the author’s wife, Kathy Scott, occasionally went jogging up the interstate from the Bells Ferry exit around 9:00 in the morning. Over the next few years, developers built one subdivision after another to take advantage of the improved accessibility to I-75 and downtown Atlanta. After the construction of the massive Towne Lake community in south Cherokee County, I-575 handled so much morning traffic that cars often backed up to Chastain Road and sometimes all the way to the Cherokee County line. By 1997 an estimated two hundred thousand cars and trucks a day converged on the I-75/I-575 intersection. On weekdays some forty-five thousand vehicles traveled down Ernest Barrett Parkway, with more arriving on the weekends.

To deal with the area’s mushrooming growth, business owners in a nine-square-mile area around Barrett Parkway came together in April 1997 to form the Town Center Community Improvement District. Despite some initial opposition from national firms such as Wal-Mart
and Target, the commercial interests enthusiastically agreed to a five-mill tax to provide revenues for such things as road design studies. One of their first projects was to pay for environmental and engineering studies that enabled the county to increase the number of turning lanes from two to four on the I-75N exit ramp to Barrett Parkway. The director of the Cobb DOT, Jim Croy, described it as "a local project that serves a local need." In the late twentieth century the Town Center area had joined the Platinum Triangle and Lockheed/Marietta as the three main employment centers in Cobb.21

The Creation of a Public Transportation System

As the local economy produced more and more jobs, the Cobb Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations began pressing for a public transit system. They hoped that buses and vans would take a few cars off the roads, reducing congestion and air pollution. More realistically, they saw publicly subsidized buses as a way of allowing people without automobiles to get to work. The Cobb electorate had no more interest in MARTA in the 1980s than two decades earlier; instead the commission hired a Virginia consulting firm to investigate the costs of an independent system. The consultants predicted start-up costs of $6.2 million, with a third coming from federal and state sources. Claiming that officials could not "forever asphalt Cobb County," Earl Smith noted that the required penny sales tax for MARTA would cost taxpayers forty-eight million dollars a year, but an independent bus line would cost only three million, leaving "45 million reasons why we should go with our own system in the beginning."22

In a special referendum on 9 June 1987 the electorate narrowly approved the concept 11,816 to 11,109. Held at the beginning of summer vacation season, the election brought only 14 percent of registered voters to the polls. The majority in Marietta and east Cobb supported the system. The greatest opposition came from districts in west Cobb that were some distance from the likely start-up routes. The voters seemed swayed by promises that property and sales taxes would not be needed to launch the first buses. According to the sponsors, the federal
Urban Mass Transit Authority (UMTA), the Georgia DOT, rider fares, and county business license fees would cover all costs. After the successful referendum Dr. Craig Aronoff, holder of the chair of private enterprise at Kennesaw State and vice-chairman of the Chamber's transportation committee, remarked that Cobb had conceived a unique means of public transportation—a publicly owned, privately operated system that would be "a model for the nation, for Gwinnett and for the other counties." 23

With Rachel Shrauner the initial director, county personnel spent the next two years planning the start of the system. By that time Earl Smith was out of office and Phil Secrist had become commission chairman. In January 1989 the commission agreed on the name Cobb Community Transit (CCT). The next month the commissioners, following the recommendation of the Cobb transit advisory board, awarded ATE Management and Service Company a $16.4 million, five-year contract. CCT started on 10 July 1989 with five local routes and thirty-six buses. In October it began express, non-stop routes during rush hours from local park-and-ride lots to a MARTA station in Atlanta. Starting modestly, the system by 1999 carried 2.7 million passengers a year on thirteen local and two express routes. From the beginning all buses accommodated wheelchairs. In 1994 the county initiated CCT Paratransit Service, a fleet of minibuses for individuals who needed home pick-ups. Coupled with the county's progress on road improvements, CCT gave Cobb a remarkably modern and efficient transportation network. 24

Thea Powell and the East Cobb Civic Association

Despite Cobb's healthy economy and transportation successes, Earl Smith's governing coalition began to unravel about halfway through his term. For the first two years, the chairman could usually count on the support of Barbara Williams and Butch Thompson. On numerous occa-
sions Emmett Burton cast a lone negative vote, but occasionally Harvey Paschal joined him, forcing the majority to pass their agenda by a lone vote. When Barbara Williams decided not to run for reelection in 1986, the Smith alliance seemed jeopardized.

A Republican, Williams took an eastern district post held by a Democrat, Wit Carson, when the Smyrna real estate broker engaged in an ethically questionable land transaction. Although Carson was exonerated by a grand jury, he lost the Democratic primary to Jerry Smith, who in turn lost to Williams in the general election. Four years later Carson switched to the Republican Party and tried to regain his old seat. In the primary Carson led a crowded field of seven candidates with 32.4 percent of the vote, followed closely by Thea Powell with 31.1 percent. Since no one received a majority, the top two vote getters met in a September runoff.

During the weeks leading up to the rematch, the whole commission became involved. Viewing the election as a referendum on his initiatives, Chairman Smith mailed a letter to the registered voters of east Cobb endorsing Powell. Barbara Williams actively campaigned for her, and Butch Thompson said he was leaning in her direction. In contrast, Emmett Burton and Harvey Paschal favored Carson. Burton claimed to be a friend of homeowners and thought that Smith, Williams, and Thompson were tools of the developers. A former president of the East Cobb Civic Association, Powell had the support of several developers who considered her an open-minded person, but her background was as an advocate for homeowners. She claimed twenty-two victories in twenty-four tries in battles before the county commission to stop unwanted zoning changes, and she vowed her first task in office would be to revise the comprehensive land use plan with "lots of community involvement." A resident of the Chimney Lakes subdivision, Powell stated in her campaign literature that the commission should "listen to homeowners" and serve as "a watch dog that will fight irresponsible development."

Burton scoffed at her claims, arguing that a five-year-old could have won some of the cases and that Powell was too willing to negotiate away homeowners' interests in exchange for buffer zones that the county could not enforce. In his letter to voters Earl Smith revealed that he had asked Powell to run. Describing her as a person of integri-
Thea J. Powell (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
ty, he asserted, “Her only interest is that of the taxpayer and homeowner, unlike her opponent who is in the commercial real estate business.” To Smith’s great delight, Powell emerged victorious, carrying 57 percent of the vote against Carson. The chairman, however, should not have been overly enthusiastic. While Powell willingly accepted Smith’s aid, she warned that she would not align with anyone, but would consider the facts of zoning cases and do her best to represent homeowners.25

Powell’s East Cobb Civic Association (ECCA) was incorporated on 28 January 1982, and originally consisted of representatives from twelve subdivisions. After Larry Ceminsky, a property owner from the Princeton Lakes subdivision, called the first ECCA meeting to order, another Princeton Lakes resident, Sandra Brown, was elected charter president. East Cobb was booming at the time, and the agenda of practically every county commission meeting included zoning requests from developers with plans for new subdivisions, apartments, condominiums, or shopping centers. Fearing that roads and schools would be overburdened and major thoroughfares saturated with tacky stores and garish signs, nearby residents often reacted with dismay.26

Home to many professionals and business executives, east Cobb was one of the wealthiest and most attractive locations in Georgia. The 30068 zip code area, east of the 120 Loop and between Upper and Lower Roswell Road, led the state for a number of years in median household income. Attracted by large lots, lakes, trees, and some of the best real estate buys in the Atlanta area, residents did not take lightly challenges to property values and quality of life. Most of the early ECCA activists lived near Johnson Ferry Road in the vicinity of the upscale Merchants Walk shopping center. By the 1980s Johnson Ferry became one of the county’s most congested roads, as apartments, offices, and retail stores proliferated. The immediate event leading to the creation of the ECCA was a zoning petition for a high-density development backing up to the Princeton Lakes subdivision just east of Johnson Ferry on Roswell Road.

Most of the members of the East Cobb Civic Association were political novices when they joined. The early presidents were housewives who could afford the time to sit through all day commission meetings. Thea Powell was a homemaker and new resident of the Chimney Lakes subdivision when her homeowners’ association asked her to be a one-person community action committee. Her responsibilities included
representing the neighborhood at East Cobb Civic Association meetings. At the time, Chimney Lakes was concerned about a developer's plans for the Shallowford Falls shopping center at Shallowford and Johnson Ferry Road. Powell knew almost nothing about the zoning process, but she visited the Cobb County planning and zoning department and found two staff members, Mark Danneman and Ed Thomas, who were willing to teach her. She learned how to research cases and began attending zoning hearings, where she quickly gained a sense of what was appropriate zoning and what was not. After serving for a year as secretary of the ECCA, she became the organization's second president in December 1984.

Powell and the ECCA gained credibility with commissioners and developers by their willingness to engage in rational negotiations. The ECCA recognized in its bylaws that “development of properties in the East Cobb area is inevitable; therefore, the Association shall pursue a cooperative planning effort to promote quality and integrity of community development while maintaining safety, and the aesthetic appearance of the surrounding areas.” After the organization gained a reputation for meeting developers halfway, the commission started tabling zoning requests until builders and their attorneys talked to the ECCA. On rare occasions a developer would contact the group and agree to any stipulations, if the ECCA would not oppose his zoning.

As the East Cobb Civic Association became a power in county government, an increasing number of homeowner associations asked to belong. In fall 1983 it added its seventeenth subdivision member when Loch Highland on Mabry Road joined. By May 1986, when it held a well-attended land use forum, it was up to forty-one association memberships. Representative Johnny Isakson credited the group with accomplishing “something that has never been done—not a reaction to a particular issue but an educational forum to begin the process of developing a land-use plan.” With ECCA officers in demand as advisors to various homeowners’ groups, vice-president Pam Subalusky took the lead in developing a zoning information booklet that was used for years by individuals trying to comprehend the zoning process.

In the same month as the land use forum Thea Powell resigned as president of the East Cobb Civic Association to launch her campaign for the county commission. One of her last tasks was to invite the executive board to lunch to plan the transition. Powell's vice-president Lynn
Christian was also resigning to run her campaign, so the secretary, Dotty Bonds, became the ECCA’s third president. Thea Powell was the first county leader to emerge through the East Cobb Civic Association, but she would not be the last. In the 1990s Sam Olens followed the same route from president of the ECCA to the county commission. Shortly after the turn of the century he would be elevated to the commission chairmanship. A few of the ECCA members who held important appointive positions were David Hong on the Atlanta Regional Commission; Lynn Christain, Jerry Dawson, and Michael Paris on the Cobb County planning commission; and Nancy Bickley with the Cobb clean commission.  

**Division on the County Commission**

In the November 1986 election Smith lost his western district ally, Butch Thompson, but the departure was not critical, as Thompson’s replacement, Chuck Clay, sided with the chairman on most issues. Helped by a ten thousand dollar contribution from the Georgia Republican Party, Clay ran on a slogan of “Neighborhoods Count,” made his finances public, and criticized Thompson for his 923 real estate transactions during eight years in office. Arguing that the incumbent, a west Cobb sewer contractor, had lost objectivity, Clay called for more planning and a county code of ethics. Clay’s victory gave the Republicans a four to one majority, with Harvey Paschal the lone Democrat, but support or opposition to Smith had more to do with his leadership style than his political party.

By the beginning of 1988 the rift on the commission was receiving considerable media attention, with Burton and Paschal accusing the chairman of running a one-man show. The most divisive questions involved road improvement projects. Everyone was frustrated by the slow rate of progress in widening roads funded by the 1985 one-cent sales tax. Of 135 proposals on the drawing boards only thirty-two were completed by early 1988. In the meantime inflation had added seventy million dollars to the price tag for the rest.

To the chagrin of fellow commissioners, Smith issued press releases in January 1988, produced in part by a public relations firm hired to help him prepare for his reelection campaign. He pledged completion of
121 projects, many not yet approved by the commission. Burton, Paschal, and Powell publicly condemned the press statements as inappropriate. Increasingly, critics referred to “Earl’s world” where the chairman went his own way and supposedly kept an enemy’s list of those who crossed him.31

In April Smith mailed seven thousand fliers to homes in east Cobb, announcing the county DOT’s plans for widening Johnson Ferry Road. Paid for by his reelection committee, the letter advocated improving a five-mile stretch to the Fulton County line from four to six lanes with a twenty-four-foot raised median. Neither Powell nor Burton, the eastern district commissioners, supported the project, because business owners near Merchants Walk thought that the widened road would encroach too much onto their properties. They did not object to the extra lanes, but considered a twenty-four-foot median excessive. Businessman Bill Marett, a former head of the Cobb Developers Association and leading critic of Smith, claimed that the expansion would take half the parking lot at the Cobb American Bank and Trust Company on Johnson Ferry, where he was president. He opposed the raised medians, claiming they occupied too much space and limited motorists’ opportunities to turn left. Cobb DOT director John Wade, however, noted that some thirty thousand cars a day traveled the corridor and that the number would probably double by the early twentieth century. From his perspective the raised medians increased safety and improved traffic flow.32

In May the board came close to firing Wade. In executive session to discuss another issue, the commission, according to Chuck Clay, almost turned into a “pre-ordained lynching” when Emmett Burton called for the DOT chief’s ouster. His job was saved temporarily when the board voted three to two merely to instruct county manager Patrick Salerno to “correct the problem with John Wade.” As Smith saw his influence wane, he was unable to protect Wade, who resigned later in the year.33

On 12 July 1988 a majority of the board took a step described by the chairman as “irresponsible” when they voted to reduce the width of medians from twenty-four to sixteen feet. By that time the commission was down to four members, Chuck Clay having resigned to run for a state senate seat vacated by the death of veteran legislator Carl Harrison. Smith cast the only dissenting tally in a measure described by
Harvey D. Paschal (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
Emmett Burton as giving “people back their yards and businesses back their parking lots.” Smith lashed out at Burton for “protecting the special interests of Bill Marett” and for playing “petty politics with the state’s most successful county road program.” The commissioners disagreed on the cost of the change. Smith and Wade charged it would cost the county a million dollars and delay for up to six months some fourteen projects that engineers would have to redesign. On the other hand, the three-member majority claimed they had saved $2.6 million by reducing the amount of land the county had to buy for rights-of-way.34

Two weeks later the same three who voted for the sixteen-foot medians approved a reversible lane on Johnson Ferry until such time as the road could be widened. Chairman Smith abstained. In the end, bickering among board members kept the county from making immediate progress on Johnson Ferry. After all the commissioners of 1988 were gone, the county would widen the road, but would not create a reversible lane or median.35 Smith served as chairman in a time of phenomenal growth and deserves considerable credit for the progress of these years. But he had the misfortune of following Ernest Barrett, one of the county’s most successful coalition builders. As we will see in the next chapter, Smith went down to defeat in 1988 in perhaps Cobb’s greatest political upset of the late twentieth century.
The Elections of 1988: Culture Wars and Political Upsets

The Religious Right and the 1988 GOP Rift

The year 1988 proved to be a turning point for local politics, as several stalwarts of both parties went down to defeat and the dominant GOP struggled to define what it believed. Most Cobb County Republicans were economic conservatives, but they divided on social issues such as school prayer, abortion, and minority rights. When the party started growing in the 1960s, the Goldwater and Callaway campaigns said very little about social issues. Back then, religious conservatives were not organized politically and were as likely to be in the Democratic Party as the GOP. The religious right’s beginning as a political movement dates from a 1978 tour by Howard Philips and Ed McAteer of the Conservative Caucus. They traveled around the country to enlist the support of such prominent conservative clergymen as Charles Stanley, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson. In 1979 Falwell founded the Moral Majority, the most influential voice of the Christian right for the next decade. These religious conservatives had their first political success when they mobilized fundamentalist church members
for Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign.1

In February 1983 Falwell traveled to Cobb County for a breakfast meeting with local supporters at the Waverly Hotel in the Platinum Triangle district. Despite snowy weather the event drew over two hundred people, mostly clergy and a sprinkling of politicians. State senator Joe Lee Thompson introduced Falwell. At the time Thompson was a Democrat, but he would switch to the GOP a few years later. State senator and future governor Roy Barnes also attended. Rev. Marvin J. W. (Doc) Frady, pastor in 1983 of Calvary Baptist in Smyrna, held the post of northwest Georgia representative for the Moral Majority. Energized by the February breakfast, he organized his own two-day workshop at his church in June. Featured speakers included Ron Godwin of Moral Majority, congressman Larry McDonald, General Daniel Graham, and vice-president Toddy Ellis of Eagle Forum, a pro-family group founded by Phyllis Schlafly, perhaps the most influential activist in the successful battle against the Equal Rights Amendment. In addition to giving a conservative perspective on current social problems, the workshop provided training in how to lobby for change. Frady later recalled that he "received black marks" from his critics for holding the program in a church, but "it cut the ice," leading to the eventual acceptability in conservative, white circles of the type of political organizing that black churches had done for years.2

Christian right leaders worked to elect President Reagan, but they grew frustrated when the administration put other matters ahead of the conservative social agenda. In 1988 they resolved not to back mainstream politicians unless they saw a firm commitment to their causes. Unenthused by a potential George Bush candidacy, they rallied around Pat Robertson, a prominent Virginia clergyman with a worldwide television ministry. Robertson began raising money and building a campaign team two years before the election. In 1987 he chose Brant Frost, a thirty-year-old Macon resident, to run his Georgia campaign. In late summer Frost established his headquarters in a Cobb County office park on Windy Hill Road. For the next thirteen months he built the Robertson campaign around conservative organizations and white and black conservative churches. His strategy was to produce a large turnout of committed Robertson supporters at the Republican precinct caucuses in early 1988.3

When the Robertson camp brought large numbers of conserva-
tive Christians into Republican ranks, mainstream GOP leaders reacted with alarm at the thought that the newcomers might take over the party apparatus. In the old days, when the Georgia GOP rarely won, activists were attracted by the hope of controlling the party machinery or receiving patronage jobs when a Republican occupied the White House. Such leaders were more interested in being elected to their party's executive committee than they were in winning elections. They were not interested in building the party, because more members meant more competition for party jobs. Some people of this mind-set still toiled in the party as late as 1988 and viewed newcomers with suspicion. On 6 February 1988 Georgia's ten largest counties, including Cobb, held Republican precinct caucuses to choose delegates to county meetings. Under party rules, anyone could participate who paid a small membership fee and was registered to vote in the district where the caucus was held. The smaller counties bypassed the precinct stage, beginning with countywide conventions the following month. In most parts of the state the GOP was historically so weak that delegate slots to county, district and state meetings went begging. When the religious right showed up in their church buses, they threatened to overwhelm the party regulars. On 6 February the Robertson forces clearly dominated seven of the ten counties holding precinct meetings.

In Cobb County, where the Republicans had been strong for several decades, the Christian conservatives were not so overwhelming a presence. Still, the majority of delegates elected from the precincts to the county convention were pledged to the Virginia televangelist. Sometimes the party's established leaders used their superior knowledge of parliamentary procedure to outmaneuver the novices. For example, Cobb GOP chairman Jim Hokannen barely managed to maintain control of his home precinct by seeming to side with the Robertson people in selecting a precinct chairman. Ten people showed up for the meeting, five committed to the televangelist and five to other candidates. Knowing that the chair could vote only in case of a tie, Hokannen shrewdly helped to elect a Christian right chairman. Then, Hokannen joined with his mainstream allies on all subsequent votes so that they carried their slate of delegates by five to four, while the chair looked on helplessly.4

By 1988 Carolyn Dodgen Meadows was a veteran of three decades of Republican politics going back to the Goldwater era. A Jack
Kemp supporter, she perhaps had reason to stick with the party regulars against the Robertson forces. Nevertheless, her sense of fair play drove her toward the Robertson camp. In her Post Oak precinct the February caucus was held in a private home rather than a public place, as the party rules mandated. After having difficulty finding the house, she confronted a homeowner who first tried to bar her entry, and then tried to keep her from presiding. Eventually, Meadows prevailed in enforcing party rules and, despite the hostile atmosphere, helped the gathering choose a representative slate of delegates.6

The Cobb County Republican Convention met on 12 March 1988 at Lassiter High School in the eastern part of the county. Four days earlier Georgia voters had gone to the polls to declare their preferences in the presidential primaries. Both statewide and in Cobb County, George Bush easily won the Republican contest, with Bob Dole finishing second, Pat Robertson third, and Jack Kemp fourth. In Cobb Robertson received just a little over five thousand votes out of a thirty-nine thousand GOP total. For the first time in Cobb's history, more people voted in the Republican than the Democratic presidential primary. On the Democratic side, Al Gore carried the county over Jesse Jackson and the eventual Democratic standard-bearer, Michael Dukakis.6

Georgia's delegates to the Republican national convention were bound to support the primary winner on the first four ballots. So when Cobb County Republicans gathered in their convention on 12 March, they realized that their actions would have no impact on the presidential nominating process. Vice President Bush had carried every county in Georgia and would receive all the state’s votes at the national convention later that summer. Robertson delegates, however, hoped to use their positions to move the Republican Party in a more conservative direction on social and moral issues. From their perspective, the soul of the party was at stake.

Carolyn Meadows warned the Robertson people that the party establishment might use subterfuge to bar their entry if they made themselves too conspicuous. Nonetheless, many of the Robertson delegates showed up at Lassiter High School wearing their campaign hats and buttons. The party regulars arrived early enough to chain all but one entrance. Then, when attendees tried to register, they challenged the credentials of some 107 delegates, alleging they were not properly registered to vote in the precincts from which they were elected. Those
barred included anyone wearing Robertson paraphernalia and a number of other delegates unknown to the GOP old-timers. Apparently, the old guard thought if they could disqualify at least one hundred Robertson backers, then they could maintain control. Those whose credentials were questioned were escorted into a hallway that lacked bathrooms, concession stands, or places to sit down, and were confined there for two hours while the convention got under way. The party establishment called quickly for a vote to disqualify delegates from sixteen precincts where Robertson backers held a majority. With few exceptions the Cobb GOP credentials committee had approved these individuals the previous week. Nonetheless, in a vote of 151-147 the convention found them ineligible to serve.7

Carolyn Meadows' husband Robert, one of the disqualified delegates in the holding area, had the foresight to bring a portable phone, still something of a novelty in 1988. He called the county fire marshal to report that the doors were illegally chained in violation of the fire code. The fire department showed up instantly to take the locks off the doors, allowing the detained delegates to leave. They went outside where they joined a number of dissenters who walked out of the convention in protest over the leadership's highhanded tactics. In the afternoon the disenchanted held a rump convention in the Lassiter parking lot.8

When the rival meeting convened at 2:40 P.M., Don Barbour was elected chairman and Carolyn Garcia secretary. A Robertson delegate, Barbour presided over the selection of a slate of delegates to the seventh district convention. The list prepared by the rump convention was far more inclusive than that chosen by the party regulars. The insiders elected only their friends, while the rump delegates chose both dissenters and representatives of the party leadership. Over the next month the two sides talked to each other but failed to resolve their differences. When the seventh district convention met in April, the regulars were admitted and the rump delegates excluded. Again, the Robertson forces and their allies held a rump convention. The seventh district dispute was repeated in half the districts in Georgia, leaving a bitterly divided party going into the May state convention in Albany.9

Both sides showed up in Albany in a combative mood. On the first day, Friday, 20 May 1988, the regulars admitted about four hundred delegates while excluding some 969, mostly Robertson supporters from
around Georgia. These were products either of rump assemblies or of regular conventions in counties that had supposedly not advertised their meetings properly in local newspapers. Even with the wholesale exclusions, about one hundred Robertson people managed to gain entry the first day, while a few regulars were thrown out with the Christian right. As the thermometer approached one hundred degrees, the plight of the protestors outside the civic center attracted considerable media coverage. The head of Robertson’s Georgia campaign, Brant Frost, jumped up on a big rock in the midst of the shrubbery on the front lawn. With a loud speaker he urged his supporters not to lose heart, while an elderly lady down below shouted, “That’s right young man! Stand on the rock, brother, stand on the rock!”

Realizing they were losing the battle of public opinion, the regulars decided on Saturday morning to let everyone inside, but to confine the 969 to the tiered seats rather than the convention floor and to keep them from voting. The result was bedlam inside the hall. Despite the presence of a private security force hired to keep order, the disenfranchised began holding floor demonstrations. Delegates such as Carolyn Meadows and national committeeman Carl Gillis kept going to floor microphones to make motions to let everyone vote, but chairman John Stuckey banged his gavel and ruled them out of order. Meanwhile, the Christian right began singing such hymns as “Amazing Grace,” “We Shall Overcome,” and “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” The selection of the last, written by an abolitionist to encourage Civil War northerners, supports the common assumption that few Robertson delegates had deep roots in the South. Despite her sympathies with the Christian right, Carolyn Meadows, the product of an old Cobb County family, sang “Dixie” while the rest sang the “Battle Hymn.”

Meanwhile, Atlanta attorney Matthew Patton sought an injunction to prevent party heads from denying credentials to elected delegates. A former party chairman, Patton entered the case in the Superior Court of Dougherty County, where the state convention was being held. On Saturday afternoon Judge Loring A. Gray issued the injunction. When a Robertson supporter burst into the hall with the news, the delegates responded with cheers and applause. At the podium Chairman Stuckey declared the judge’s action unconstitutional and adjourned the meeting. About three hundred delegates departed with him, but about a thousand remained, including those who had previ-
ously been excluded. They reconvened the meeting and elected Patton to take Stuckey's place. Staying well into the evening, the attendees chose their national convention delegates and national committee members. For Republican national committee woman and committee man, the group recommended Carolyn Meadows and incumbent Carl Gillis. Neither was originally a Robertson backer, but both had supported the dissidents when they seemed to be treated unfairly.11

As a result of the divided state convention, two competing delegations went to the national convention in New Orleans. Melodie Clayton, daughter of longtime Cobb GOP activist Doug Howard, testified before the party's contest committee on behalf of the regulars. Later to become a state court judge in Cobb County, Clayton was active in George Bush's 1988 campaign and served on the state credentials committee at the Albany meeting. Since Bush had the nomination sewed up, the only suspense at the New Orleans convention was over the rival Georgia delegations. The Bush people had hoped to work out a compromise between the two factions before the convention, but the level of distrust was so great that a friendly resolution proved impossible. Matt Patton argued the case for the Robertson camp, with Carolyn Meadows one of his chief witnesses. In the end, the contest committee decided to seat twenty-six of the Robertson delegates and twenty-two of the regulars, giving the former a clear majority. Shortly afterward, the Georgia delegation met and by narrow votes formally elected Gillis and Meadows as Georgia's national committeeman and committeewoman.

Some of the regulars blamed future President Bush for not taking their side in the credentials battle. The executive committee of the Cobb GOP sent a resolution to the convention denouncing the Bush campaign for treachery, and Cobb chairman Jim Hokkanen, one of the unseated regular delegates, left New Orleans vowing to sit out the election. Defeated Republican committeewoman Marguerite Williams of Thomasville was so angry that she demanded the return of a recent ten thousand dollar contribution. Switching parties, she would become a major supporter of Democrat Zell Miller, a future Georgia governor and senator.12

In time, the two Cobb County camps patched up their differences enough to work for George Bush's fall election. At the urging of Pat Robertson, the Christian right worked enthusiastically for a Republican victory. Yet hard feelings lingered. Carolyn Meadows soon
discovered that she was "cut out of the loop" in Washington and had only limited influence with Bush staff members. Despite her role as the state's national committeewoman, she was denied the opportunity to serve as a delegate to the 1989 Georgia Republican convention. The Christian right failed to show up for February 1989 precinct meetings in the numbers of the previous year. Consequently, the party regulars reasserted control. At the county convention in March, Hokkanen was reelected as chairman, and the regulars easily elected their slate of delegates to district and state meetings over the list of Meadows and the Robertson people.

The GOP held its 1989 state convention at the Cobb County Civic Center, where the battles of the previous year continued. John Stuckey had decided to step aside as party chairman, but the regulars were able to elect Alec Poitevint of Bainbridge in a heated contest with Matt Patton. While Patton had championed the cause of the Robertson delegates in 1988, Poitevint had been a major Bush supporter who lost his seat at the 1988 national convention when the contest committee sided with the dissidents. Despite the Poitevint victory, the regulars lost two other key contests, both involving Cobb County's Clayton family. Longtime party activist Wally Clayton was defeated for the post of convention chairman by former congressman Ben Blackburn of Atlanta, a candidate of the Patton camp. Upset by this defeat, the Cobb delegation exploded when Clayton's wife Melodie lost a contest for first vice chairwoman to Adrienne Susong of Conyers.

The convention moved onto the election of a second vice-chairperson. At this point the Cobb delegation, led by Melodie Clayton's father, Doug Howard, staged a walkout. According to Adrienne Susong, the departure resulted from the fact that the regulars had lost control of the convention and were about to suffer another defeat. By denying the convention a quorum, they effectively stopped all official action, allowing the Poitevint-dominated executive committee to fill the remaining positions at a later date. The Cobb County regulars, however, argued that they were simply trying to protect the democratic process. A pioneer in building the Cobb GOP, Howard had been an activist since the 1960s. He suspected corruption when he noted that fourth district representatives cast about forty more ballots in the Susong-Clayton race than in any of the previous contests. The walkout was a protest over the arbitrary action of presiding officer
Blackburn in letting the results stand.

These contentious inter-party battles seemed to negate whatever advantages the Republican Party gained from bringing the Christian right into their ranks. While longtime party members such as Carolyn Meadows saw the recruitment of religious conservatives as a promising avenue for party growth, both pro-business and libertarian GOP members seemed uneasy about a trend toward social conservatism. For them, the Republican Party was about limiting government intrusion into people’s lives, not increasing it, as the religious right seemed to want. As the GOP went through growing pains it seemed a long way from the unity that would allow it to become the dominant party in Georgia. Just as the Democrats a generation earlier had divided between liberal and segregationist wings, the Republicans now seemed hopelessly splintered among business progressives, libertarians, and religious conservatives. Nonetheless, the GOP at century’s end managed to produce a distinguished group of local leaders whose impact extended far beyond the county’s boundaries. In later chapters we will review the accomplishments of such state and national figures as Newt Gingrich, Bob Barr, Johnny Isakson, and Bill Byrne.¹¹

The 1988 Commission Elections

In August 1988 Cobb County held primary elections for a variety of national, state, and local offices, including the commission chairmanship and three of the four district posts. The polls showed Earl Smith way out ahead; so he gambled he could take time from his reelection bid to help friends in other contests. He had no Democratic opposition, and his only challenger in the Republican primary was lightly regarded historian and businessman Philip L. Secrist. Of the commission incumbents only Thea Powell, who had been elected to a four-year term in 1986, could sit out the 1988 election. Emmett Burton and Harvey Paschal had opposition in their reelection bids, and a number of candidates entered the non-partisan race to finish Chuck Clay’s term, after the west Cobb Republican resigned to run for the state senate. To Earl Smith it seemed clear that the outcome of these contests would determine how effectively he could lead in the next four years.

Smith’s decision to meddle in other races proved to be a colossal
political blunder. By opposing Burton and Paschal he energized their supporters and unwittingly convinced ordinary voters that the majority of commissioners were right to reject his lead. The result was a huge anti-Smith backlash that worked to the benefit of challenger Phil Secrist. A native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Secrist grew up in rural Blount County, Tennessee, where his father was an electrician for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Graduating from high school in 1946, he joined the Marine Corps. Upon his discharge in 1948, he won a football scholarship to the University of Tennessee where he played under the legendary coach General Robert R. Neyland. In 1949 he married his wife Katherine (Kay) Kimsey, a Tennessee girl who studied engineering for two years at Tennessee Tech, worked as a draftsman and wing supervisor on the secret atomic bomb project at Oak Ridge, and completed a B.A. degree at U.T. shortly before their marriage.

The future Cobb commission chairman finished a bachelor's degree in social studies education at the University of Tennessee in 1952. Having gone through the ROTC program in Knoxville, he was commissioned in the army as a second lieutenant and spent the next two years at Fort Benning. While Phil completed his military obligation, Kay began her teaching career at nearby Columbus, Georgia. Out of the military, Phil earned a master's degree in 1955 at Auburn, and then embarked on a coaching and teaching career, first at Atlanta's Hoke Smith High School and then after 1961 at Marietta High. During those years he discovered that he enjoyed history much more than coaching. A popular teacher, he involved young scholars in research on the Civil War and local history. By 1972, when he acquired a doctorate from the University of Georgia, he was employed at Southern Tech, where he served off and on as a history professor from 1970-1984. At the same time, Kay taught in the Marietta public school system, chairing the math department at Marietta Junior High School and ending her teaching career at Lockheed Elementary School.14

After earning his doctorate, Secrist turned down a chance to be a department chairman at Southern Tech, opting instead to be social science coordinator for the Cobb County school district. That job lasted only a year, with Secrist leaving in frustration over what he perceived as an over-emphasis on athletics. He was particularly angry that talented history teachers had trouble finding jobs while schools hired an abundance of coaches and gave them history classes to teach.
Philip L. Secrist (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
By the 1980s Phil and Kay had gone full time into the historic preservation business. In 1981 they started Historic Trammell Square, an apartment complex of five buildings consisting of the late-nineteenth century home of Judge L. N. Trammell and several old houses moved to the south Marietta site. A few years later, they turned the historic Marlow and Stanley houses on Marietta’s Church Street into bed and breakfast inns.

On the eve of the 1976 national bicentennial celebration the Marietta and Cobb County governments made grants to the Cobb Landmarks Society to inventory local historic sites. The society chose Secrist to do the study. In addition to writing brief histories and architectural descriptions of local landmarks, Secrist produced a historic county map that was still in print at the end of the twentieth century. From 1979-82 he served as historian for the historic review board of the Downtown Marietta Development Authority; then in 1985 Earl Smith appointed him to the newly created Cobb County historic preservation commission. By the time he decided to run for the county’s top spot, Secrist was highly regarded as a preservationist and Civil War authority.

Despite his reputation in preservation and education circles, Secrist was virtually unknown in the business community and had not considered running for chairman until Frank Duncan, a fellow historic preservation commission member, approached him. Secrist agreed to be a candidate, mistakenly thinking Duncan wanted him to run for chairman of the preservation commission. A successful business owner, Duncan was married to county school board member Carolyn Duncan. He immediately went to work setting up a campaign committee and raising contributions. The next day he called Secrist to tell him what he had done. Not wanting to look foolish, the astounded candidate stumbled through the conversation, authorizing Duncan to go ahead. When he told his wife Kay that he planned to challenge Earl Smith, she told him he had lost his mind.

Early in the campaign Atlanta Journal/Constitution reporter Katie Long asked Secrist why he was running, since he had no experience in public office and seemed to have little chance of winning. The candidate said he did not expect to win, but thought the exercise was a valuable learning experience. In late July the Marietta Daily Journal endorsed Earl Smith, citing his integrity and leadership in bringing about “the most ambitious and far-reaching road program in the county's history.” The
paper dismissed Secrist as a minor candidate with no record of public service. A few days before the election Bill Kinney suggested in his weekly political gossip column, “It’s the Talk Around Town,” that the election might be closer than people expected, since Smith had committed a political “no-no” by choosing to “meddle in other races.” But Kinney and all other political experts assumed Smith would be reelected.16

To the shock of everyone except Phil and Kay Secrist and a handful of supporters, the history professor and preservationist pulled off one of the biggest upsets in Cobb County history in the 9 August 1988 Republican primary. Earl Smith’s political consultant, Jim Lovejoy, claimed all his polls showed the chairman taking three out of every five votes, just the opposite of the final outcome. Indeed, when the first tallies came in, Lovejoy suggested that the election officials had mixed up the results, giving Smith’s votes to Secrist. While Smith largely ignored candidate forums and relied on mailings prepared by his public relations staff, Phil and Kay Secrist went anywhere in the county they could find a group of potential voters. Smith spent over one hundred thousand dollars on his campaign and Secrist less than fifteen thousand, but in the end the ability to raise money did the chairman little good. About a week before the election Secrist sensed that the tide had turned when his phone began ringing constantly with citizens calling to offer support. About this time an old friend, Fred Bentley, one of Cobb’s shrewdest political analysts, made a campaign contribution and told Secrist that he was going to win. Alienated by all the squabbling on the county commission, the public cast a large negative vote against the incumbent. Secrist also benefited from the numerous former students who had fond memories of his classes. His margin of victory (60 percent to 40 percent) was astounding.17

The candidates that Earl Smith supported did about as badly as he did. In the eastern district, Smith’s biggest critic, Emmett Burton, faced two opponents, Yardy Williams and Richard Castellucis, both engineering professors at Southern Tech. Smith supported Yardy Williams, the husband of former commissioner Barbara Williams. For Harvey Paschal’s western seat, Smith leaned toward Lockheed labor-relations attorney R. L. Jacobs, one of four Republican candidates hoping to take on the Democratic incumbent. Smith, Williams, and Jacobs shared the same paid political consultant, Jim Lovejoy, a favorite of Republican officeholders, because of his sophisticated use of computer technology to pro-
vide accurate voter lists and targeted mailings.

Emmett Burton won reelection without a runoff, taking 53 percent of the Republican primary vote. The chairman’s favorite, Yardy Williams, came in second with only 31 percent. To opponents, Burton seemed an eccentric obstructionist who stood in the way of the county roads program and other progressive changes. To friends, he was an independent voice, who could be trusted to stand for homeowners against developers. Suspicious of power, the majority of east Cobb voters viewed Burton as a watchdog who kept a sharp eye on the chairman and staff. They resented Smith’s attempt to influence the race and Williams’ perceived negative campaigning. Burton benefited from a large crossover of Democratic voters. After the election, he gloated he had been opposed by “three people from the House of Representatives, two banks, the largest developers in the county, the chairman of the commission and the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce.” In the Democratic primary an African-American candidate, Thomas R. Carter, qualified to run against Burton in November. East Cobb, however, had become a Republican stronghold, and Carter, an IBM systems analyst, had little chance, losing in the fall by more than two to one.18

In the west Harvey Paschal ran without opposition in the Democratic primary. Chairman Smith’s choice, R. L. Jacobs, emerged victorious in the Republican primary, defeating former Smyrna mayor Hoot Gibson in a runoff. Jacobs counted on Earl Smith’s assistance and the coattail effect of a popular George Bush at the head of the GOP ticket. But Georgia Power retiree Paschal had made many friends during his tenure as commissioner and was widely admired for the good works he performed through the Cobb Street Ministries that he ran with his wife Carol. During the program’s five-year existence it had provided food and shelter for over five hundred families. In the November general election Paschal managed to win by a little less than a thousand votes out of fifty-eight thousand cast.19

To fill the last two and a quarter years of Chuck Clay’s term, a special election was scheduled a month after the primary. Earl Smith favored Harry Ingram, the former commissioner and current manager of the Cobb water system. When he held office in the 1960s Ingram was a member of the Democratic Party. Although party preferences were not listed on the ballot in this non-partisan race, Ingram had recently switched to the Republicans. His chief rival, Harriet L. Smith, was pres-
Harriet L. Smith (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
ident of the Cobb Democratic Women and was the widow of former district attorney Ben Smith. A third candidate, Wayne Bishop, was formerly a captain in the Marietta fire department.

In the 30 August 1988 three-way race, Harriet Smith and Harry Ingram each took slightly under 40 percent of the ballots, with Wayne Bishop finishing with slightly over 20 percent. Although Ingram was the best known of the three candidates, his reputation had been somewhat sullied by a scandal in the water department, where two of his engineers became subjects of an FBI and federal grand jury investigation. The two employees were accused of taking bribes from an area equipment supplier, who happened to be a friend of Chairman Smith. The businessman supposedly gained an unfair advantage in the bidding process on a forty-eight million dollar expansion of the Sutton wastewater treatment plant at the Chattahoochee River. Ingram's own integrity was never questioned, and, in fact, he had played a whistleblower's role the previous year when he first suspected favoritism in the bidding process. As department head, however, he bore the ultimate blame for wrongdoing in his jurisdiction. So he was vulnerable to attack from his opponent, who called for his resignation. In September Harriet Smith won with relative ease, garnering 57 percent of the votes. On 23 September she was sworn in as the new western district commissioner.

Despite Cobb's shift to the GOP, west Cobb voters chose two Democrats, Harriet Smith and Harvey Paschal, for the five-member commission. With Thea Powell and Harriet Smith in office the commission included two women for the first and last time in the twentieth century. After several years of bitter division, Secrist promised to "stop the bickering" on the commission. During the next four years the board continued to act at times like a dysfunctional family, but Secrist was a little more successful than his predecessor in bringing people together. Following the election, Smith realized that he could accomplish little more and resigned, effective 16 November 1988, a month and a half before the end of the term. The remaining commissioners chose Secrist to fill the spot, giving the new chairman a head start on his administration.
Chapter Twenty Six

The Secrist Administration and Historical Preservation

Cobb Landmarks and the Origins of a Preservation Movement

An ardent preservationist, commission chairman Phil Secrist spent his public career trying to save as much of Cobb's material heritage as possible. Learning from his predecessor's mistakes, he shunned dictatorial decision-making and sought to build consensus through compromise. On occasion he disappointed fellow preservationists, who thought he was backing away from the strong positions he held as a private citizen. Secrist, however, was acutely aware of the weakness of the preservation movement, and accomplished a great deal simply by bringing to the table historical issues that previous administrations had ignored.

As late as the 1970s there was no voice for preservation in Cobb County. By then, the county was growing so fast that numerous historic sites were endangered. The western part of the county was particularly rich in Civil War history related to the battle of Kennesaw Mountain. All six incorporated cities had historic downtowns containing architecturally significant homes, office buildings, and shops. Such structures
were endangered by population growth, road-widening projects, and customer desertion to malls and shopping centers.

After the old courthouse was demolished in the 1960s to make way for a modern complex, history-minded local residents such as Jennie Tate Anderson, Fred Bentley, Sr., and Phil Secrist began discussing ways to prevent such needless destruction in the future. In the early 1970s Anderson chaired the county's bicentennial committee, charged with planning the local celebration of the nation's two hundredth birthday. One of the committee's projects was the creation of the Cobb Landmarks Society. The Cobb-Marietta Junior Welfare League served as a sponsoring organization. Attorneys Fred Bentley, Sr., and Russell Grove filed incorporation papers with the Georgia Secretary of State on 24 January 1974. The following month Landmarks held its first meeting at the old Chamber of Commerce building on U.S. 41, just north of Allgood Road.

The initial board of trustees included some of Marietta's most prominent citizens: James T. and Jennie Tate Anderson, Ernest and Jackie Knight Barrett, Fred and Sara Moss Bentley, James W. and Florence Fleming Corley, George and Lily Grace Dozier, George Griffin, Justice Conley and Sylvia Williams Ingram, Wilder and Peggy Elder Little, Philip and Kay Kimsey Secrist, Warner and Bonnie Crispin Smith, John and Chrys Malone Street, and Steve and Virginia Horne Tumlin. Bonnie Smith presided at the opening meeting and was elected vice-chair, while Jennie Tate Anderson became the first chairperson. The group set as one of its first goals the completion of a survey of local historic sites. The Marietta city council appropriated $750 for a city study and the county commission approved up to $3500 for the rest of the county. On Fred Bentley's motion, Phil Secrist was selected to head the study.

Another successful effort at preserving local history involved the gathering of old photographs. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the Georgia Department of Archives & History contacted local historical societies throughout the state for help with its Vanishing Georgia project. The archives offered to travel wherever they were invited to copy historic photos on the spot, as people brought them in. At the 6 March 1980 meeting, the Landmarks board voted to participate. The Cobb County Library System also served as a local sponsor. Landmarks co-chair Sylvia Ingram spearheaded the effort, along with Sarah Fortson and Sheila Brush. At the time the Vanishing Georgia collection had
only one Cobb County photograph—of the Leo Frank lynching. On 28-29 May 1980 archives staff members drove their van, equipped with photographic equipment, to the Kennesaw House in Marietta, where area residents brought in over eight hundred pictures. According to the state archives director, Carroll Hart, Cobb surpassed all other counties in the number of images copied. Some are used in this book.3

By this time, Cobb Landmarks was embroiled in a number of battles over endangered Marietta sites. As the state planned the South Marietta Parkway, DOT engineers wanted to follow the most direct route from the Cobb Civic Center at Fairground Street to the Powder Springs Connector, adjacent to the Confederate cemetery, a mile to the west. Their proposal would send the new highway directly through the Bostwick-Fraser house. Built in the 1840s of Greek Revival design, the structure became the home of Anne Couper Fraser and her adult daughters, who lived there in 1864 while Union troops operated a field hospital in the front yard. The path of the road also threatened the ante-bellum home of Dr. M. G. Slaughter and a house built in the 1890s by U.S. Senator Alexander Stephens Clay, where Lucius Clay spent his boyhood years.

Bentley and Secrist took the lead in persuading the state to follow another route. During 1976 attorney Bentley attended a number of meetings with the Georgia DOT, the Department of Natural Resources, the Marietta city council, and the Georgia Historical Commission. In October 1976 Cobb Landmarks arranged a general membership meeting with the DOT and Marietta representatives. Secrist spoke on the historical and architectural significance of the endangered properties, and the DOT explained alternative routes. Ultimately, state engineers designed a wide curve that tunneled around the historic properties, leaving the Bostwick-Fraser house isolated on top of a hill, but still in private hands. In the 1990s these structures would provide the nucleus for the Atlanta Street-Frasier Street Historic District, the fifth Marietta district placed in the National Register of Historic Places.4

Not all of Landmarks’ efforts were so successful. After the Marietta city government moved to new facilities on Lawrence Street, the old city hall on Atlanta Street became expendable. The front part of the building dated back to 1910 when J. J. Black built it as the headquarters for his lumber company. The back part was once Black’s Opera House. In early 1980 Jennie Tate Anderson and Conley Ingram repre-
James T. Anderson, Jr. (Anderson family collection)
sented Landmarks before the Marietta Board of Lights and Water, the building’s owner, and persuaded that body to delay demolition while a study could be made of its condition and potential for adaptive reuse. With his wife Sylvia, Judge Ingram served at the time as co-chair of Landmarks.

Anderson brought noted Atlanta architect Norman D. Askins to the site. He concluded that the building was structurally sound and wrote the city that the old opera house, with its tin ceiling and large windows, would make an attractive reading room for the main library, situated in the old post office next door. After a structural engineer indicated that the building could be renovated for somewhere between a quarter and a half million dollars, Anderson began lining up prospective buyers. Her efforts were wasted, however, when the city went ahead with its original intention of destroying the building, despite lacking plans for the vacant space.

Not long afterward a crisis surfaced regarding an important ante-bellum house belonging to Marietta’s First Presbyterian Church. The childhood home of Alice McLellan Birney sat at the corner of Church Street and Kennesaw Avenue. The church had used it in the past for Sunday school classes, but its condition had deteriorated, and some members wanted it destroyed. The issue was particularly troubling for Cobb Landmarks as several trustees were members of First Presbyterian. On 9 September 1982 the society sent a letter to the church, offering to help in seeking a suitable solution. At the next Landmarks meeting Jim Corley announced the formation of a Birney house foundation to raise money to restore the structure as a residence for missionaries on furlough. The society agreed to give up to twenty-five hundred dollars for architectural and legal fees and fundraising to preserve the structure.

By early 1983 the foundation had twenty-seven hundred dollars in cash and pledges and formally petitioned the church for permission to restore the property for the proposed use. In a congregational meeting on 30 January 1983, however, the church voted not to accept the offer. The Birney house foundation was forced to return the contributions it had collected. Fortunately, the story had a happy ending when Michael and Joan Foster responded to the church’s offer to give the house to someone who would move it. They relocated it to a lot in the 300 block of Kennesaw Avenue and restored it as a family residence. A byproduct of the effort was that Jennie Tate Anderson elected to donate
her returned contribution to Cobb Landmarks with twenty-three hundred dollars going into a history publication fund to provide an update to Sarah Temple's *First Hundred Years*. That seed money is the genesis of this book.6

By the end of the 1980s Cobb Landmarks was moving in new directions. A preservation society, it had always been interested in more than material culture. To reflect its larger concerns, the board in March 1987 voted to add “historical society” to the end of the name. Soon Cobb Landmarks & Historical Society (CLHS) took the first step toward establishing a house museum, when the historic William Root house, home of Marietta’s first pharmacist, became available. On 24 July 1844 Root bought the lot on the northeast corner of Church and Lemon Street. Shortly afterward, he divided a house on the west side of the Square with fellow merchant Nathaniel M. Calder, who served at one time as justice of Cobb’s inferior court. Root rolled his section down Church Street to his new lot, added to it, and made a fine Plantation Plain style middle-class residence. Calder and his wife Lucretia moved their section to Haynes Street, where they lived for several years.
An Episcopalian, Root was a founding member and leader of St. James Church across the street. After Root’s death, the house was moved a short distance down Lemon Street in the early 1890s to make way for the Clarke Library. Over time, the house was divided into apartments and deteriorated.

By the 1980s the Root house was owned by Mayes Ward funeral home, situated nearby on Church Street. Owner Bill Bullard planned to destroy the old building and use the lot for extra parking. However, he and his wife, Peggy Pittard Bullard, offered to give it to Cobb Landmarks, if the society would move it. In early 1989, after an evaluation of the structure by preservation architect Lane Greene, the CLHS board of trustees approved a letter of agreement with Bullard. Marietta mayor Joe Mack Wilson offered a site at the southeast corner of the Marietta Loop and Polk Street, and on 1 March 1990 the house was moved approximately two blocks across the railroad tracks to its new home. Board member Larry Wills conducted further architectural studies and supervised the first phases of restoration. James W. Corley, Jr., coordinated the effort to research and renovate the structure. After several years of intense effort and an expenditure of roughly $265,000, Landmarks completed the restoration, replacing a back shed room and detached kitchen, and furnishing the house with period furniture. Representing southern middle-class life in the ante-bellum era, the museum was opened to school tours in fall 1996 and to the general public at regular hours the following February. Following several years as a volunteer, Maryellen Higginbotham was employed as Root house curator in June 1997. The building provided office space for the curator and Landmarks executive director Elizabeth (Libby) Bell and her replacement, Daryl Barksdale. By the turn of the century about three thousand guests, including close to two thousand school children, visited the house each year.

As the Root house project neared completion, the society gained title to another historic structure, the Power Cabin in east Cobb near the Chattahoochee River off Lower Roswell and Hyde Roads. The remote property was accessible only by a dirt country lane through the farm of J. C. Hyde. Built in the 1840s by George Abner Power, the cabin and a 320-acre farm stayed in the family through several generations. In 1947 four siblings, George, Charles, Royce, and Winifred Power, inherited the estate intact from their widowed mother. George
seemed to have the greatest sentimental attachment to the old home place, and, when the children divided the property, he took the 80.7 acres that included the cabin. In the early 1970s Power rented the empty cabin to a tenant, Morning Washburn, who lovingly preserved it over the next several decades. After George died in 1995, his widow Ginny was determined to preserve the property, so she sold it at far below market value in 1997 to the Trust for Public Land, a nonprofit organization committed to conserving green spaces throughout the country. The Trust quickly gave the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area a title to all of George Power’s inherited lands, except the cabin and 2.5 acres. It took longer to find someone willing to restore and maintain the Power cabin. In early 1999 the Trust entered into an agreement with Cobb Landmarks. The Trust provided an endowment to cover restoration costs, and Landmarks agreed to preserve the structure. After the completion of restoration work in 2002, Washburn continued to reside there, but she and the historical society opened the cabin on occasion to groups wanting to understand a bygone time.
The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area also held title to forty acres of the adjacent J. C. Hyde homestead, but the deed recognized that Hyde enjoyed life tenure to the property. This deal had been negotiated almost a decade earlier by Brenda Burnette of the Trust, seventh district congressman Buddy Darden, and others. J. C. Hyde and his brother Buck had lived on the property since 1920. They pursued a simple life style, growing vegetables with a mule, and lacking such modern conveniences as running water. As subdivisions sprang up around them, they passed up numerous opportunities to sell the land to eager developers. When Buck died in 1992, he left his half of the farm to J. C. The Internal Revenue Service soon sent the heir a bill for over a half million dollars of inheritance taxes. At that point the Trust for Public Land came to the rescue, purchasing enough land (forty acres) to allow the proud farmer to pay his tax bill. Then, the Trust sold the property to the federal government for the eventual use of the Chattahoochee recreation area. Among the largest green spaces remaining in east Cobb, the Hyde and Power estates were of inestimable value to historians and conservationists and offered a unique opportunity to interpret farm life of an earlier era.7

The Downtown Marietta Development Authority and Historic Review Board

Operating independently of Cobb Landmarks, the Downtown Marietta Development Authority (DMDA) played an essential role in revitalizing and preserving the central business district. The downtown area was already showing signs of economic decay in the 1960s when Mayor Howard (Red) Atherton proposed paving Glover Park to provide extra parking for shops near the Square. While the mayor ultimately backed away from that unwise scheme, local merchants continued to worry about a declining customer base. After the opening of Cumberland Mall in 1973, downtown retail sales dropped precipitously and vacant storefronts began appearing. The decline reflected a nationwide trend away from downtown shopping districts to enclosed malls and discount stores, such as Wal-Mart and Home Depot, that provided ample parking adjacent to major highways.8
Two Marietta businessmen-politicians, Joe Mack Wilson and Red Atherton, came up with an innovative solution to Marietta's problem. After Atherton joined Wilson in the state legislature, they drew up a constitutional amendment that permitted the creation of a downtown development authority. In selling the idea to business owners, Wilson and Atherton received strong support from fellow Marietta Kiwanis Club members. Architect Dan Bridges, for instance, spoke knowledgeably to fellow businessmen about revitalization efforts in other communities; and George Green, the head of the Marietta Housing Authority, helped attract federal urban renewal dollars. Approved by the voters in 1971, the DMDA had the power to impose taxes on local merchants and landlords for public improvement projects. In June of that year Mayor Dick Hunter assembled these two groups of taxpayers, and they elected the original eight-member authority, consisting of the mayor, the county commission chairman, three elected property owners and three elected merchants.9

After an aborted attempt to build a parking deck, the board remained inactive for several years. Then in April 1975 Jack Crowder, the chairman of the Marietta Kiwanis Club's Public and Business Affairs Committee, called a meeting of downtown landlords and merchants to hear architect Edward L. Daugherty propose a redevelopment study. The concept was well received, and the local business people agreed to pay a third of the cost of the $62,500 study, while city and county governments financed the rest.

Completed in January 1977, Daugherty's Marietta Square Redevelopment Study recommended ways to improve the appearance of the downtown, using its history to distinguish it from the new plastic malls. Marietta planning director Phil McLemore was so successful in attracting some $1.2 million of federal grants that in August 1978 the authority asked him to become the first full-time director. The DMDA used the federal grants and a large gift from the Marietta Board of Lights & Water to put all electrical wiring underground, to upgrade sewer lines and storm drains, and to install pebble concrete and brick walkways and granite curbing. Along the sidewalks the DMDA placed old-fashioned street lamps and large granite planters for trees and shrubs. The authority completed the first phase of the street improvements on the West Square in 1980.10

Simultaneously, the DMDA made progress near the railroad
tracks just west of Glover Park. In 1977 it used a federal community development block grant to purchase the ante-bellum Kennesaw House and adjacent Thomas Warehouse. A state historic preservation grant for $125,000 helped the authority begin to renovate the buildings. While the land it sat on was valuable, the Kennesaw House had so badly deteriorated that its appraised value was zero. The DMDA was fortunate to sell the old hotel to Harrison Merrill, a preservation-minded developer, who invested some $1.5 million, turning it into office and commercial property. In the 1980s he would invest an additional five million dollars in three warehouses along the railroad tracks between Mill and Polk Streets and the old Atherton Drugstore and Anderson Chevrolet building on Powder Springs. Merrill was perhaps too visionary, overextending himself financially. Before the decade was out, he found himself in trouble due to an inability to keep sufficient space rented. In the end the DMDA had to reassume ownership of the Kennesaw House, and Merrill left the county. Despite his personal difficulties, Merrill deserves credit for making significant improvements to Marietta's historic infrastructure.

The DMDA was also active in the restoration of the 1898 passenger depot next door to the Kennesaw House. Since its inception in the nineteenth century the Western & Atlantic Railroad had been state-owned. The City of Marietta leased the old depot from the state for a nominal yearly rate. The DMDA persuaded Bill Swearingen, the owner of several Atlanta restaurants, to renovate the building for an eating establishment. By November 1978 Swearingen and his partners had spent some $350,000 on renovations. The authority helped Swearingen acquire certified historic building status, entitling him to depreciate his investment rapidly for income tax purposes. The restaurant stayed in business for only a few years, but Marietta continued to maintain the structure as the headquarters of the DMDA and the Marietta Welcome Center. Meanwhile, the DMDA provided brick pavement to the alleys between the railroad tracks and the Square and the large courtyard behind the depot. After Red Atherton died unexpectedly in September 1977, the city and the DMDA erected a memorial and named the courtyard Atherton Square in recognition of his vision in restoring the downtown area.

To preserve a turn-of-the-century appearance to the Square, the authority asked the city council to create a historic board of review with
control over façades and signage in the historic district. That board consisted of the eight DMDA members plus an appointed historian and architect. While property owners gave up some control over the outward appearance of their buildings, they gained significant tax advantages if they were willing to make improvements. Under the federal tax laws of the era, property owners first negotiated loans with local banks. Then they brought their plans to the DMDA for approval. After the historic board of review approved the façade changes, the DMDA played a middleman's role, sanctioning pass-through loans from the lender to the authority to the loan recipient. This mechanism freed the bank from the necessity of paying federal income taxes on the interest payments it received from the downtown property owners, thus permitting a lower interest rate. According to the minutes of a May 1978 meeting, community activist Jennie Tate Anderson voluntarily visited downtown merchants, selling them on the advantages of façade restorations. In the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s almost thirty million dollars of improvements were made through these pass-through loans. Among the first were Goldstein's Department Store on the South Square and Fletcher's Jewelry and Coggins Shoe Store on the west side.11

The activities of the DMDA were never without controversy. In the fall of 1977 the McDonald's restaurant chain approached Herbert Goldstein, the owner of the Strand Theater, to determine whether he was interested in leasing the space for a fast-food restaurant. Unfortunately, McDonald's found the 1935 movie house inappropriate for its operations. The national firm wanted to tear down the Strand and build a standard McDonald's on the site. When the historic board of review found that plan unacceptable, the restaurant chain provided a slightly more acceptable alternative. By this time both McDonald's and the DMDA were under attack, the former from people who saw the loss of the Strand as a blow to the Square's historic integrity, the latter from merchants who thought McDonald's could stimulate downtown revitalization. In the end McDonald's decided that the corporation did not need bad publicity and withdrew its application, but the experience understandably frustrated those who lamented a lost business opportunity.12
Preservation and Revitalization in Incorporated Cobb County

Despite such controversies, the Downtown Marietta Development Authority proved a model for other cities interested in revitalizing their declining inner cities. Phil McLemore moved from the directorship of the DMDA to a similar position with the South Cobb Development Authority, where he helped the town of Austell receive a quarter-million dollar matching grant for downtown revitalization. The city spent about two hundred thousand dollars to provide badly needed sidewalk and sewer repairs and extra parking spaces. McLemore was also instrumental in developing a preservation plan to turn Mableton's ante-bellum Mable House into a community and cultural center. The Plantation Plain farmhouse served as the home of the South Cobb Arts Alliance. In 1989 Mary Green and Janie Ayres donated a farm building constructed about 1925 by their father, Leonard Williams, to cure sweet potatoes. The sweet potato house was the first of several outbuildings planned for the Mable House to interpret farm life in early Cobb County. McLemore and the South Cobb Development Authority proposed a multipurpose community building and a large amphitheater on the back of the property. After Mableton native Roy Barnes was elected governor in 1998, these plans came to fruition. Cobb's parks and recreation department constructed a new community center and received a multimillion-dollar state grant to renovate the house and build the amphitheater.19

In 1991 former mayor Harold Smith and his wife Betty took the leadership in creating a Smyrna history museum and filling it with artifacts collected over a lifetime. The city gave them a small building constructed by the Jaycees a quarter century earlier for the Smyrna health department, but Mayor Max Bacon promised to provide a more spacious structure when resources permitted. In 1999 the city tore down the building as part of its redevelopment plans and placed the history museum in a new building on Atlanta Street, backing up to the Western

Downtown Austell, 2003 (photo by Kathy Scott)
Mable House (photo by Kathy Scott)

Mable House Amphitheatre (photo by Kathy Scott)
& Atlantic railroad tracks. Opening on 24 April 1999, the Smyrna Museum was identical on the outside to the old Smyrna depot, but, unlike the former train station, it contained a full basement that served as a storage and meeting room.

Under Mayor Bacon's leadership, the town moved the building that once housed the famous Aunt Fanny's restaurant to a location next to the museum, where it served as the Smyrna welcome center. Few commercial structures of architectural or historical significance survived in Smyrna into the late twentieth century; so Bacon, the council, and city administrator John Patterson resolved to build a modern downtown around newly conceived Village Green Circle, just off Atlanta Street. A Cobb County architectural firm, Sizemore and Floyd, designed the project, starting with a spacious public library and community center featuring meeting rooms and an indoor walking track. In addition to a new city hall, police station, and fire station, the public-private enterprise included retail and residential properties. While Smyrna was behind other Cobb municipalities in historic preservation, it won a number of national awards for the beauty of the downtown and became a showcase for other members of the National League of Cities.14
Another South Cobb community, Powder Springs, carried out a major redevelopment project in building a new government square just off Marietta Street that included a community center-city hall, parking, extensive landscaping, and improved rear façades of historic buildings along the main street. Through the efforts of Sarah Frances Miller and the Seven Springs Historical Society, Powder Springs created a local history museum in a 1940s house, donated by the Georgia Power Company and moved by the city to a downtown park near the original springs. The society gave the structure a log cabin façade, placed rotating exhibits in the various rooms, and used the front entranceway for public programs.

Marietta created a first-rate local history museum through the energetic efforts of Dan Cox, who sold the idea to Mayor Joe Mack.
Wilson in the early 1990s. While Cox served on the city council from 1994-97, he got the museum up and running. The city and the DMDA agreed to give him the second floor of the Kennesaw House. A descendant of pioneering Marietta settlers, Cox had an extensive network of contacts that willingly provided museum artifacts. Supported by the hotel/motel tax and other revenue sources, the museum was able to provide a variety of exhibits, covering Marietta history from Indian days to the present.

In the northern part of the county the Acworth city council created a preservation commission that met for the first time in 1987. Unfortunately, the preservationists and city council were far apart in their objectives, and the city ignored the commission for several years. Preservationists such as Janice Cunningham and Marcia Andruzzi became increasingly frustrated, because the commission was supposed to have a design review function, but city officials repeatedly failed to notify them of proposed changes to the downtown area. When the city developed plans to cut a four-lane highway from the Glade Road exit of I-75 to Main Street, Andruzzi was turned into a community activist. While she thought the plan had merit, she pointed out that the route designed by the engineers would destroy several historic commercial structures and cut through Acworth's oldest black neighborhood. Through the efforts of local history-minded people, the original plan was scrapped.

Andruzzi won election to the city council in the early 1990s and was elected mayor in 1997. As alderman, she helped make the preservation commission a more active body. For some time, the city had provided a director for the Acworth Downtown Development Authority (ADDA). When that position became vacant, Mayor Andruzzi helped rewrite the job description so that the next ADDA director provided staff support to the historic preservation commission, the tourism board, and the Acworth Lake Authority. In 1998 a committee of Andruzzi, alderman Betsy Bean, preservation commission member Abbie Parks, and tourism board member Bobbie Robinson recommended Amy Lowry for the ADDA post. Through Lowry's efforts, preservation became a clearer part of the city's planning process. By the end of the 1990s the historic preservation commission was instrumental in stabilizing the ante-bellum Cowen farmhouse and in creating a National Register district along Collins Avenue.
Marcia Andruzzi (Photo by Omni Images, Kennesaw, Georgia)
In her four years as mayor, Andruzzi helped a number of revitalization projects come to fruition. The previous mayor, Bob Gibson, had agreed to set up a façade grant program funded by the hotel/motel tax that provided twenty thousand dollars annually for façade improvements. On a competitive basis, owners of commercial properties could be awarded up to two thousand dollars per project, as long as they invested at least as much of their own money. One project refurbished the rear façades of historic Main Street buildings, backing up to Senator Richard Russell Square, where city hall was located. In general, the grants made the downtown more attractive and pedestrian friendly.

Acworth used its share of the county’s 1994 one percent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) to complete three major road projects. The first, begun under Gibson and finished under Andruzzi, ran Cherokee Street across the railroad tracks from Main Street to Glade Road. Greatly modified from the original design that had concerned Andruzzi years earlier, the route curved around the most significant commercial structure and followed the original roadbed through the African-American community, doing minimal damage to existing housing. Mayor Andruzzi considered a second road project her proudest achievement. After a good deal of negotiation, she worked out a compromise in which the city constructed a Cowan Road underpass below the railroad tracks, allowing traffic to move unimpeded into the downtown area. The mayor worried that the underpass would come too close to the old Acworth mill village, but it destroyed few houses and left Day’s Chevrolet on Main Street with enough space to stay in business at that site.

The final SPLOST project was the remodeling of a downtown parking lot between Main Street and the Western & Atlantic tracks across from the historic business district. This public improvement began as a proposal of the ADDA as far back as the 1960s. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the city tore down the commercial structures where the parking lot would be located. While plans were implemented at glacial speed, the city by the early 1990s had constructed an attractive parking lot that provided ample and convenient parking to downtown businesses. SPLOST funds allowed the city to redesign and repave the parking lot just after the turn of the century. Along with the cleaning up of Lake Acworth these road and façade projects did much to revitalize a beautiful north Cobb city.
The other incorporated community in north Cobb, Kennesaw, hired Phil and Kay Secrist in the late 1970s to prepare a National Register of Historic Places nomination. While Kennesaw had pockets of historic properties, they were separated from each other by other structures that had lost their original architectural integrity or were too new to contribute to a National Register district. Nevertheless, the Secrists were able to identify four small historic districts (Cherokee Street, North Main Street, Summers Street, and the Rig Shanty district that included the Lacy Hotel archeological site, the depot, the Frey gin and warehouse, the city park, and several nearby buildings). The U.S. Interior Department added these districts to the National Register in 1980. Kennesaw had a long history of marketing the story of a Civil War locomotive, the General. Like the Western & Atlantic Railroad, the General was the property of the State of Georgia. On 12 April 1862 northern spies seized the train while the conductor and passengers were making a breakfast stop at the Lacy Hotel in Big Shanty. The Andrews Raiders made a mad, unsuccessful, dash
toward Union lines in Chattanooga, with the conductor and crew members in hot pursuit. Ultimately, Confederate troops tracked them down. Several were hanged, but others were paroled and on 25 March 1863 became the first recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The General returned to service, managed to avoid destruction, and continued to operate on the state-owned tracks. In 1890 Georgia leased the railroad and its rolling stock to the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad, and for the next seventy years that company and its successor, the Louisville and Nashville, displayed the General in Chattanooga. In 1961 the L & N took the General to Louisville, reconditioned it, and sent it on a national tour under its own power. On the centennial of the Great Chase in April 1962, the General returned to Big Shanty, now named Kennesaw, for a visit. Thousands of curious north Georgians turned out for the occasion, and town fathers began planning to bring the engine back permanently. In 1967 the Georgia General Assembly gained a commitment from the L & N, but as the General steamed through Chattanooga the mayor and his deputies seized it. After five years of court battles, Georgia finally won ownership, and in 1972 the General came home to stay.

The Kennesaw city council converted the old Frey gin into a museum to house the famous engine. Phil Secrist prepared the script for a slide show to tell visitors the romantic story of the Great Chase. While the museum never produced the profits predicted by town boosters, it remained for several decades a minor tourist site for school groups and Civil War and railroad enthusiasts. In the 1990s the Glover family donated to the museum the papers of their local family business, the Glover Machine Works, along with several old Glover locomotives and other artifacts. By the end of the century the city was the recipient of a large grant from the state and had begun plans to enlarge the museum with a new orientation toward the history of railroading in the South.16

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The Cobb County Historic Preservation Commission

Through the efforts of Linda B. Cater of Vinings and other preservationists, Ernest Barrett and the county commission on 24 August 1984
approved an ordinance creating a historic preservation commission. Cobb County immediately became a certified local government, the first county in Georgia so designated. Prior to this decision, Georgia's local historic preservation commissions were found only in cities. Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, certified local governments were eligible to apply for federal preservation grant funds unavailable to other communities.

By the time the county preservation commission held its first meeting in March 1985, Earl Smith had replaced Barrett at the top of Cobb's government. Each county commissioner had the privilege of appointing one member to the preservation body. The new chairman picked Phil Secrist. Two decades earlier Smith's air conditioning company had done the work on one of Secrist's houses, but the two men barely knew each other. Smith told Secrist that he selected him on the advice of Ernest Barrett. Other members of the original preservation commission were Linda Cater, Glenda A. Willoughby, Sally D. Thomas, and Frank D. Duncan. The board chose Cater as its original chairperson.

Subject to the county commission's final approval, the preservation group had the power to nominate individual properties and districts for a county historical register. Once a structure was so designated, the owner could make structural changes only after going before the preservation commission for a certificate of appropriateness. The appointed commission could also receive façade and conservation easements from individuals willing to accept certain restrictions in exchange for tax breaks.

The county preservation board took little time placing itself at odds with the elected county commission. In July 1985 it proposed a Concord Covered Bridge historic district squarely in the path of the proposed 2.3-mile Phase IV of the East-West Connector from Hicks Road to South Cobb Drive. The historic district along Nickajack Creek was designed to protect the bridge, Ruff's [grist] Mill, an old woolen mill, and several historic homes. At the urging of numerous residents, the preservationists asked the county to run the East-West Connector as far away from the historic district as possible. Later in 1985 a Jaeger and Associates study, commissioned by the county government, proposed a public park as the best use for the historic area. In May 1986 the county commission unanimously approved a covered
bridge historic district, but with the clear understanding that the designation in no way limited the county's power to build the East-West Connector wherever it pleased.19

In September 1985 the preservation body hired Dr. Darlene R. Roth to conduct a study of historic sites in unincorporated Cobb, going beyond the Secrist survey of the previous decade. Chairman Earl Smith expressed the hope that Roth could produce a definitive list of significant properties, implying that sites left off the list would be deemed of little historical value and not worthy of protection. The preservation board published Roth's study in 1988 under the title *Architecture, Archaeology and Landscapes: Resources for Historic Preservation in Unincorporated Cobb County, Georgia*. Identifying historic properties by land lot, it proved a valuable tool for staff planners in making recommendations to the county commission on zoning requests and vari-
ances. Unfortunately, judgments about historic significance are necessarily subjective, and properties not regarded as significant in one era might seem worthy of preservation later. So the definitive list sought by Chairman Smith proved elusive.\(^2^{0}\)

Shortly after Phil Secrist replaced Earl Smith as the county's chief elected official, the preservation commission submitted a list of twelve historic sites for the Cobb Register of Historic Places. Three of them, the Mable House, Kennesaw Mountain Battlefield, and the Sope Creek mill ruins at the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, were publicly owned or leased and uncontroversial, since the designation in no way limited the county or federal government. Recommendations for four others, the Hill-Pike house in east Cobb, the Causey-Maxham house near Austell, and the Gilgal Church battlefield and Midway Presbyterian Church in west Cobb, had the support of their owners. On the other hand, the owners of the other five properties objected, fearing that the designation would limit their ability to sell them commercially. For instance, Ken Newcomer, the owner of the ante-bellum Cheney-Newcomer house on Powder Springs Road, was an art lover and preservationist who had done a beautiful job of maintaining his house in its original condition. But he objected to a historical designation in deference to the interests of his children and grandchildren, who realized that the county's widening of Powder Springs Road to four lanes had greatly enhanced the estate's commercial value. Owners of the Glover-McLeod-Garrison house (site of a popular restaurant), the Carmichael farm and store, the William Gibbs McAdoo house, and the Braswell-Carnes home expressed similar concerns. Fearing unnecessary controversy and potential lawsuits, the county government decided to reject the preservation commission's recommendation by leaving these entities off the county register.\(^2^{1}\)

**The Secrist Administration and the Preservation Battle over Johnston's River Line**

Two of the most contentious, longest running controversies of the Secrist years were preservation battles in south Cobb, involving a
planned office park and a new road, the East-West Connector. Both battles began before Secrist's election as commission chair. While still on the preservation commission, he first became concerned over a developer's plans for Johnston's river line, near the Chattahoochee. Following the 1864 battle of Kennesaw Mountain, the Confederate troops of General Joseph E. Johnston fell back to an elaborate series of forts and trenches covering 4.5 miles from Mableton to Vinings and running up the north bank of the river and along Nickajack Creek. The outnumbered Confederate Army of Tennessee anticipated that Union forces, under General William T. Sherman, would attack at this point as he drove toward Atlanta. In addition to the trenches, Johnston's artillery commander Francis Shoupe designed thirty-six unique arrowhead-shaped log forts, called shoupades in his honor. Sherman constructed fortifications across from the Confederate line, but decided to cross up river where he encountered less resistance. To stay between the Union army and Atlanta, Johnston abandoned the untested river line. Over the next century and a quarter, the wooden fortifications disintegrated, but much of the earth works, built in flood plains, remained undisturbed even by local farmers. The earthen shape of two Confederate forts, a Union gun fort and rifle pits, and large sections of trench lines were clearly visible long after Yankee and Rebel troops fought through Cobb County.

In 1973 preservationists placed Johnston's river line in the National Register of Historic Places. The national designation, however, was merely honorary and in no way tied the hands of the owners. The site became threatened in 1987 when the New York based Bessemer Securities Corporation proposed a 720-acre industrial park for its recently purchased property near Oakdale Road, Bankhead Highway, and Mableton Parkway. The company claimed that the trenches and earthen forts did not deserve protection since Cobb already had miles of preserved trench lines at Kennesaw Mountain. Civil War historians held an opposite point of view, arguing that the river line was unusual in the care with which it was constructed, in contrast to typical, hastily built trenches.

When Bessemer brought the Discovery project before the county commission for rezoning in July 1987, county land use planners failed to raise an objection, and the Earl Smith-led commission granted Bessemer's request. Afterward, the historic preservation commission
asked that sixty acres of the site be placed on the county historic register. In May 1988 the county commission approved that designation, forcing Bessemer to go before the preservation body for a certificate of appropriateness to carry out its plans.22

When Bessemer asked the preservation commission for permission to grade the site, it was turned down. The company appealed, but lost again before the elected county commission. After a further loss before the board of zoning appeals, Bessemer went to court, claiming their property had been taken without just compensation. In June 1989 Cobb Superior Court Judge Watson White ruled in the company's favor, ordering the county to issue a development permit for the property in question. Supported by friend-of-the-court briefs filed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, Cobb Landmarks & Historical Society, and the Atlanta Civil War Roundtable, Cobb County appealed to the Georgia Supreme Court. Meanwhile, Bessemer continued separate suits in Cobb Superior Court and federal court questioning the constitutionality of Cobb's preservation ordinance.23

Bessemer's problems mounted in December 1989, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers entered the dispute. Part of the Bessemer property consisted of federally protected wetlands. In applying to the Corps for a grading permit, the company failed to reveal the presence of Civil War trenches. When Corps engineers learned of this critical omission, they ordered the company to cease work on its Discovery Project. By this time Phil Secrist had taken over as commission chairman. Dr. Secrist had long been a student of the Civil War and was an expert on local battlefield sites. No one cared more deeply about the preservation of forts and trenches. But Secrist was a conciliator by nature, and he worked behind the scenes with Bessemer vice president Howard Peck to reach an amicable settlement. By 1990 they struck a deal, whereby Bessemer agreed to give the most historically significant forty-three acres to the county for a passive park. In the initial agreement Secrist won company approval for walking-jogging trails beside Nickajack Creek almost all the way to Ruff's Mill. An advocate of passive parks, Secrist saw these trails as something that would be enjoyed by nature lovers, Civil War historians, and exercisers for years to come. In turn, the chairman agreed to drop the historic designation of the remaining acreage, allowing Bessemer to complete a worthwhile project that
promised to bring over seven million dollars of tax revenues to the county each year.

Secrist believed he had done the best he could to protect the historic site and end costly lawsuits that the county seemed destined to lose. He thought the passive park would make the Civil War sites far more accessible than ever before. So he was shocked when he encountered opposition. In hindsight he realized that his first mistake was not keeping fellow commissioners fully informed. When he presented the proposal in a county commission executive session, Emmett Burton raised objections. The suspicious east Cobb commissioner feared the walking trails would bring drug dealers and other undesirables across the river from Atlanta. Lacking a commission majority, Secrist was forced to renegotiate with Bessemer, sacrificing the passive park and settling for far less than he had originally won.

Once he had pleased the other commissioners, Secrist found himself under attack from friends in the preservation community who felt he was giving up too much. Dr. Elizabeth Lyon, head of the Georgia Historic Preservation Section, appealed to the Corps of Engineers, arguing that the Secrist-Bessemer agreement failed to protect the one remaining Union fort on the site. On 2 January 1991 Secrist shot off a strong letter to Lyon, asking her to withdraw from the dispute, asserting that her office “does not and cannot represent the best interests of the people of Cobb County.” On the same day the chairman expressed his frustrations with the county historic preservation commission for disapproving of the compromise. In a heated epistle to the preservation commission chairman, Richard Hutnik, he threatened, “Should the activities of your commission or its members result in lawsuits which adversely affect the well-being and pocketbooks of the majority of the people in this community you can expect your commission to be held accountable.” An East Cobb Middle School history teacher, Hutnik responded that he would not be intimidated. In the end Liz Lyon and Dick Hutnik achieved their purpose. Secrist returned to the bargaining table once more and persuaded Bessemer to protect the Union fort and accept a few more restrictions. Even after the issue was resolved, the county failed to turn the forty-three acres ceded by Bessemer into a passive park. Ten years later and long out of office, Secrist went before the county commission, headed by Bill Byrne, to ask the county to turn the land over to the state. The former chairman spoke in his capacity as a
member of the Georgia Civil War Commission, to which Governor Zell Miller had appointed him. Secrist announced that Lonice Barrett, the commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, was willing to develop Johnston's river line as a historic tour site on a proposed Civil War trail through west Cobb. Byrne and the other county commissioners were more than willing to give the land to the state and set the paper work in motion for the transfer of ownership.24

The East-West Connector

While the Bessemer controversy raged, the East-West Connector fight reached its peak intensity. For several decades, business owners in Powder Springs, Austell, and Mableton had pushed for a limited access highway running in an east-west direction to connect with the interstates and stimulate growth. Since 1973 the proposed road had been part of the Atlanta Regional Commission’s transportation plan. Earl Smith and his fellow commissioners pledged revenues from the 1985 one-percent sales tax to that purpose. Nonetheless, the route raised a number of historical and environmental concerns, especially regarding the historic Concord Covered Bridge, Ruff’s Mill, and the nearby woolen mill ruins.

For years, Phil Secrist had worked to place the covered bridge district on the county historical register. As commission chairman, he continued his efforts to protect this nineteenth-century rural industrial site. However, the county’s long-standing promises to south Cobb weighed on his conscience. Thus, he resolved to work toward a compromise that would protect as much history as possible while expediting the completion of a four-lane divided highway. Under the plan presented by the Cobb DOT, the road would come within one hundred yards of the woolen mill ruins. Secrist wanted the road to tunnel through the area so that people standing at the mill ruins or covered bridge could not see or hear traffic going by. Moreover, he planned a passive historic park and a steel frame to protect the crumbling mill walls from further deterioration. He thought that the diversion of traffic off Concord Road would reduce wear and tear on the historic bridge.25

As was the case with Bessemer’s Discovery Project, the chairman found himself under attack from preservationists who thought he
did not drive a hard enough bargain. In June 1991 the U.S. Corps of Engineers held a public hearing attended by over two hundred people at the Cobb Civic Center. The county needed a certificate from the Corps because the road crossed through wetlands at Nickajack and Laurel creeks. To run the highway where they wanted it to go, Cobb DOT engineers planned to move the course of Laurel Creek slightly. The Corps allowed the county to explain its plans for over an hour before listening to citizen comment. Most of those in attendance, however, had already made up their mind. State senator Hugh Ragan of Smyrna spoke for many of his constituents in denouncing as "absurd and ridiculous" the DOT’s position that there was no other feasible route.

One of the most vocal opponents was Pat Seay, the president in 1991 of the South Cobb Civic Association and later of a group she helped form named PEACH (Preserve Endangered Areas, Cobb’s History). When the county commission decided in November 1991 to begin building 2.6 miles of Phase IV to the edge of the historic district, she likened the issue to Atlanta’s struggle over a presidential parkway to
the Carter Center and pledged to do what it took to stop the road. Shortly afterward, her group hired preservation attorney Robert Remar to seek an injunction against the county’s plans. On the opposite side of the road question, Mableton Business Association president David Koch announced that area civic leaders planned to journey to Corps of Engineers headquarters in Savannah to lobby for a quick resolution of the wetlands dispute so that the bulldozers could start running again.27

Through the rest of Secrist’s term the East-West Connector issue remained unresolved. When Bill Byrne and a different commission took office in 1993, they brought in a new DOT director, Jim Croy, and told him to work out another alignment further away from the historic structures. Near the end of the year Croy began meeting with PEACH, the Cobb Historic Preservation Commission, and other interested groups to involve them in the county’s plans. As part of its mitigation proposal, the county in 1994 purchased about one hundred acres, including the woolen mill ruins, to turn into a heritage park. The county also pledged to stabilize the mill ruins. With these changes Cobb Landmarks, the Georgia Trust, and the Georgia Conservancy wrote letters in support of the county’s proposal. The preservation commission, headed by Secrist appointee Robert Crowe, also sanctioned the road project, conceding, “This is the best we’re going to do.”28

In April 1995 the U.S. Corps of Engineers gave its permission for the project to proceed. Even then the county faced one final hurdle. Just prior to the groundbreaking ceremony for Phase IV, PEACH attorney Robert Remar on 2 June 1995 brought suit in federal court, contending that the Corps improperly issued the wetlands permit and that road construction threatened endangered shiner fish and violated federally mandated siltation requirements. In December 1995, however, Judge William O’Kelley gave the county a clear victory, effectively ending opposition.29

A fifty-five million-dollar project, Phase IV officially opened two years later in December 1997.30 By then the county had begun to implement the mitigation plan that called for a 105-acre Heritage Park and a 12.8-mile Silver Comet recreational trail along the abandoned Seaboard Air Line adjacent to the East-West Connector. The trail took its name from the Silver Comet train that once carried passengers along this route from Atlanta to Birmingham and on to Washington and other east-coast cities. The Georgia DOT bought the Seaboard right of
The Silver Comet Trail, near Concord Road (photo by Kathy Scott)
The East-West Connector, near Concord Road (photo by Kathy Scott)
way in 1992, thinking that the state might eventually run a commuter rail line along its corridor. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the governments of Cobb, Paulding, and Polk counties, and several private non-profit groups helped persuade the state to use the route for recreational purposes. Brenda Burnette of Cobb County had first advocated the idea through the Georgia Rails into Trails Society (GRITS) and the Trust for Public Land.

In 1998 Cobb spent a half million dollars to erect a steel frame to stabilize the stone foundations and show the original outline of the mill ruins along Nickajack Creek. About a quarter mile east of Concord Road in the covered bridge historic district the county built a winding walking path from the Silver Comet Trail down to the mill ruins and the creek. Within Cobb County, the Silver Comet Trail consisted of a fourteen-foot wide asphalt strip, running from Mavell Road near South Cobb Drive to the Paulding County line. The Cobb DOT completed the paving between the summer of 1998 and September 2000. With conveniently spaced parking lots and restrooms the trail overnight became a favorite recreational site for a diverse group of bikers, skaters, joggers, and walkers. Recognizing the Silver Comet's popularity, the city of Powder Springs, shortly afterward, paved its own concrete trail from Wildhorse Park to a link with the longer trail at Carter Road.

The Heritage Park cost two million dollars, while the Cobb County segment of the Silver Comet Trail totaled an additional four million, taken from state and federal grants and the one-percent sales tax. The entire Georgia project was budgeted at fourteen million dollars of which four million came from private sources, including Cox Enterprises, the Woodruff Foundation, and the Blue Circle concrete company. Ed McBrayer and his Atlanta-based PATH Society played an important role in lobbying for the project and in seeing that it extended beyond Cobb to the Alabama border. McBrayer and the PATH group coordinated construction and helped to fund the project in the more rustic, biker-friendly stretches of Paulding and Polk counties. The trail would eventually stretch fifty-seven miles in Georgia. At the end of the century Alabama had begun to extend it from the Georgia border to Anniston, allowing cyclists to ride for about one hundred miles.

Political leaders in Cobb were surprised and overjoyed at the large number of people who used the Silver Comet and the relatively few crime incidents along the way. As a regular biker along the trail, Phil
Bridge trestle over Nickajack Creek, Silver Comet Trail (photo by Kathy Scott)
Secrist saw its success as evidence of a growing interest in passive parks, something almost non-existent a few decades earlier. He joined other preservationists in taking satisfaction at the county’s progress in saving significant historical and natural areas.
Politics and Race Relations in the Late Twentieth Century

The Creation of a Community Relations Council

While county leaders of the 1980s worked enthusiastically to improve the physical infrastructure, they seemed blind to the needs of minorities, even after a series of violent racial incidents. As noted earlier, the percentage of local blacks declined steadily through most of the twentieth century from 30 percent in 1900 to just 4 percent in 1980. Then, the African-American proportion grew again. By 1990 blacks constituted a tenth of the county’s total and at century’s end 19 percent. By 2000 the black population totaled 114,000, equal to the figure for all races just forty years earlier. While African-Americans settled everywhere in the county, they located in greatest numbers from Marietta south. Moving into formerly all white neighborhoods they sometimes experienced nasty receptions. Such was the case when the Cater family moved in 1983 to a new home near Mableton.

A Cobb County native, Mary Ward Cater had helped four years earlier to reactivate the local NAACP chapter and turn it into a countywide rather than just a Marietta organization. In the early 1980s she
chaired an NAACP committee that tried to persuade businesses to adopt a “Fair Share” plan, calling for more minority jobs, joint ventures with minority businesses, and greater funding for community projects. The committee achieved its first success when the Georgia State Bank signed a “Fair Share” agreement with the Cobb NAACP. Cater soon found herself the subject of unwanted publicity. In September 1983 she moved with her husband Allen and two sons to a new house on Pisgah Road. They were the first black family in the vicinity. As they went about their evening chores on the night of 12 October, someone fired a shotgun at their front door. Twenty-four pellets tore through the door and sailed across the living room, smashing into a back wall and window. One struck above the kitchen stove where Allen Cater had been standing moments earlier. Another missed the head of seven-year-old Xenophon by only five or six inches. A second shotgun blast tore out the rear window of the family car and damaged the carport. The police made what the Caters regarded as a half-hearted effort to investigate, but no one was ever arrested.

The family’s problems were not over. In the days following the attack, a tire was slashed and gangs of whites rode by the house, shouting racist epithets and warning the Caters to leave. Rowdies pulled into the driveway, turned their lights off and on, and blew their horns. Others threw firecrackers on the lawn or forced their cars to backfire as they traveled by. For protection the Caters built a chain link fence, requested a streetlight in front of the house, and alternated standing guard in the evenings. Although they paid personally for the fence and streetlight, the Caters could not stop rumors that the county put them up with taxpayers’ money and gave them privileged treatment because they were black. The Caters were not the only African-Americans in the Mableton area to be harassed. Not long after the shooting, Melvin Jenkins, the black owner of a Mableton Church’s Chicken franchise, received a threatening phone call from a man who claimed to be a Klan member. When he later received a bomb threat he decided to close the business for the protection of his employees.1

On 9 January 1985 a similar incident occurred on Latimer Street in south Marietta. Inez and Marvin Heard and their three children had just moved into a working class neighborhood where most people lived in modest World War-II era houses built originally for the aircraft workers. They were the first black family on the block, although African-
Americans lived in an apartment complex on nearby Little Street. In the middle of the night someone threw two Molotov cocktails (whisky bottles filled with gasoline) at the house. One exploded against the carport waking the family. Mrs. Heard grabbed her gun and rushed to the door in time to see a red-haired man running away. Mr. Heard dashed out to the carport to extinguish the fire. He found the second bomb next to a gas meter. When the fire department arrived, one of the firefighters remarked that if the bomb had ignited "that would have been it," meaning that the whole house could have been destroyed.

Marietta Mayor Bob Flournoy told a reporter that he could not recall an event of this type in Marietta in recent years, although he expressed surprise that there were not more racially motivated incidents. He denounced the firebombing as a terrorist attack and asserted that those behind it "need to be caught." Despite an investigation by both the police and the fire department, no state or federal authorities were called in to help and no one was ever arrested. A worker at the General Motors plant in Doraville, Marvin Heard had been looking for a decent neighborhood where his family would be safe. Now his two teenaged girls and twelve-year-old son were so frightened that they cried for days. Shaken by the incident, the Heards moved to a rental house in another neighborhood where a racially mixed family already resided.  

Following the incident at the Cater residence, two clergymen, Bill Collins of the predominantly black Kennesaw Avenue Missionary Baptist Church and David Wayland of the mainly white St. Catherine's Episcopal Church, began urging the county commission to create a human relations council. The county sponsored a public hearing in May 1984. In his last year in office, commission chairman Ernest Barrett sat down with the two ministers, Mayor Flournoy, and Superior Court administrator Bill Herndon to draft a proposal for a county-funded council. Under their plan the sixteen-member body would have a mandate to champion "fair and equal treatment and opportunity for all persons." Under the 1984 proposal, the human relations council would provide a forum where problems and grievances could be discussed, would conduct research, and would advise local governments on human relations issues. Despite Barrett's support, however, opposition from several commissioners kept the plan from being implemented.

The January 1985 firebombing of the Heard home prodded the
newly installed Earl Smith administration to revisit the issue. The majority Republican board seemed willing to establish a voluntary community-relations council, but did not want to pay for it or let it focus on race. Most of the commissioners denied that Cobb had a serious racial problem and preferred to view the assaults on the Caters and Heards as isolated incidents caused by fringe elements out of harmony with most everyone else. Barbara Williams, for instance, blamed the attacks on "sick people" whose actions were detested by all right-thinking people. One of the commission's two Democrats, Butch Thompson, worried that "all the councils in the world are not going to prevent maniacs from creating these instances that happened in Mableton and Marietta."

Chairman Smith drafted a resolution for a voluntary council that, with few amendments, was adopted by the commission at its February 1985 meeting. Without specifically mentioning race, the resolution denounced "any and all acts of violence and injustice, no matter by whom perpetrated, nor against whom enacted." Even this watered-down plan failed to gain unanimous support. Although she claimed to agree in principle, eastern commissioner Williams said she resented being pressured to endorse something for fear she would be tagged a racist. "I am opposed," she said, "to the fact that the media has seen fit to blow something totally out of proportion and attempt to portray Cobb County as racially biased and racially violent, which could not be further from the truth." Initially, the proposal passed four to one with Williams in dissent, but later in the meeting Butch Thompson also withdrew support.

Community activists were disappointed. Rev. David Wayland expressed misgivings about the council's ability to resolve cases of racial injustice if it lacked a professional staff and the support of the commissioners. Randolph Scott, the superintendent of the Martin Luther King National Historic Site and a Marietta resident, argued that a council "without appropriate funding and adequate staffing would only give lip service to very important issues in Cobb." He feared that the commission's lack of enthusiasm for social justice would "send the wrong message to those kooks and nuts out there, that it is open season on people who are not able to defend themselves."

With the commission lukewarm at best and with civil rights leaders pessimistic about the proposed plan, the council did not get off the
ground during chairman Smith's tenure in office. In 1986 he told a reporter that a steering committee had met several times but had not yet nominated council members. The chairman claimed that no one seemed to care. In the absence of any further racial incidents and with the economy booming after the recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s, "the public," he claimed, seemed "to lose interest in the idea."

A racial incident in late 1988 stirred community activists to lobby again for a human relations panel. On a Saturday evening in mid-November white supremacist and convicted bomber J. B. Stoner and about twenty-five Klan members and sympathizers staged a rally in a clearing next to a rural black church not far from Powder Springs in southwest Cobb. They drenched a thirty-foot cross with alcohol and set it on fire, apparently to intimidate the members of the historic Macedonia Baptist Church. The church choir was inside the building
Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery (photo by Kathy Scott)
At the prayer vigil Mary Cater reminded the gathering that the county commission claimed to be unconvinced that the public wanted a human relations council. She said, "We want to show them that there is an interest." Cobb NAACP president Jerry Dodd added, "The Klan incident may cause some of our public officials to realize there is a need." By November 1988 Earl Smith had been defeated for reelection and new chairman Phil Secrist said he was willing to consider the activation of the council. After meeting in December with NAACP leaders, Secrist admitted that the county had an image problem that the council could help correct. Conceding that people in Atlanta tended to view Cobb countians as "rednecks," he claimed that a sounding board with black, white, Jewish, and Hispanic representation could provide valuable input to county government. Over the next year and a half the commission made symbolic steps toward resolving two issues important to local civil rights activists. In January 1989 county employees for the first time were granted a holiday to commemorate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Gradually, the county extended invitations to serve on the Community Relations Council (CRC) to twenty-one individuals, including seven African-Americans. Each of Cobb's six incorporated towns chose a council member. The rest represented the county. Five of the board members were clergymen, including black and white Baptists and Methodists and Rabbi Shalom Lewis of Congregation Etz Chaim. Dan Allen, an IBM executive, was the first chairperson, and Jeri Barr of Cobb County Emergency Aid headed the nominating committee. Despite the lack of a direct budget the council received staff support through the director of the department of central services, Rick Brun. At the first council meeting on 19 February 1990 commission chairman Secrist proclaimed, "The message we're sending to the community is that everybody has a right to be treated justly and fairly."

In the spring of 1990 the council drew up bylaws and established task forces to deal with a wide range of issues. The bylaws created a self-perpetuating body that chose its own officers and recommended to the county commission the names of replacements for those who resigned or rotated off at the end of three-year terms. The council had a broad mandate to promote unity, mutual understanding, and respect for people of all classes, ethnic groups, religions, and conditions. As long as it worked through the system in a non-confrontational manner, it was
authorized to make studies, hold forums, and offer recommendations to the county commission. Issue committees dealt with ethnic and racial diversity; special needs of the elderly, youth, and handicapped; employment and economic development; historical and environmental protection; education; health and welfare; and housing.

The county commissioners did not want the CRC to be viewed exclusively as a race-relations board. Unfortunately, by developing such a wide assortment of concerns, it never developed a focused identity and had little influence on policymakers. For the most part it labored in obscurity, gaining notoriety on only two occasions. In 1992 Governor Zell Miller announced that he favored removing the Confederate battle emblem from the Georgia flag. Adopted in 1956, in the midst of the state's massive resistance to court-ordered school integration, the flag was regarded by many as a representation of Georgia's hostility toward civil rights. On the other hand, the Sons of Confederate Veterans and probably most white Georgians saw it as a symbol of the sacrifices their ancestors had made in the previous century. The issue exposed deep racial and ideological divisions between those who connected the flag with hatred and those who tied it to heritage. The CRC arranged a public forum at the Cobb Civic Center to discuss the issue. Unfortunately, all the forum sponsors favored the flag change and made the mistake of trying to curb contrary viewpoints. For most of the evening the moderator and three panel members answered written questions from the audience, which was required to sit silently. The panelists maintained a measure of objectivity, but their biases were fairly obvious. None articulated the views of those who favored the current Georgia flag that featured the controversial Confederate symbol.

The audience of approximately one hundred seemed to come largely from a variety of southern patriotic organizations. Some knew more Civil War history than the panel members. The vast majority appeared to hold rational, mainstream views. A few were radical, white-rights activists. Throughout the program, one individual in a Confederate uniform stood as if on guard at the back of the auditorium. While the attendees maintained civility, they were obviously frustrated by the limited amount of time at the end of the meeting for a free expression of views. As the evening passed, they became increasingly unhappy with the panel and the community-relations council. Serving as a panel member, the present author was grateful for the number of
armed policemen lining the room and was glad to make a hasty exit when the two-hour program concluded. The meeting demonstrated how emotionally attached many people were to the Georgia flag, but it did little to change minds. No attempt was made to hold further debates. Recognizing the lack of public support, Governor Miller backed away from his proposal. After barely gaining reelection that November, he let the flag issue drop for the rest of his administration.19

A year after the flag forum fiasco the community-relations council found itself in the midst of another polarizing controversy when it took a stand against an anti-gay resolution adopted by the county commission on 10 August 1993. The story of that resolution is a principal theme of the next chapter.10 The focus here is the impact of the controversy on the council’s demise. While the Atlanta Constitution praised the CRC for its courage, eastern district commissioner Gordon Wysong, the sponsor of the anti-gay resolution, criticized the council for trying to make policy rather than “mend fences.” Perhaps in retaliation, Wysong in January 1994 proposed a change in the way that council members were chosen. He thought it was a mistake to let the CRC be self-perpetuating. Under his plan, each commissioner would make appointments to serve at his pleasure.

Rev. Randolph Scott told a reporter, “It doesn’t take a brain surgeon to see what Wysong is trying to do. He’s trying to stifle a second voice. We were established to look into issues and problems in the community—not be a political puppet of the commission.” On 25 January 1994 the commissioners adopted the Wysong plan. At their next regular meeting, they removed about half the previous council. In making his four appointments Wysong added three new members, retaining only Randolph Scott. Later, he remarked that Scott was the only council member who contacted him, and that, “If they are not interested enough to even call, I’m not going to reappoint them.”11

The new council was still a diverse group, including blacks, Hispanics, and representatives of the elderly and disabled. West Cobb commissioner Bill Cooper reappointed the council’s chair, Brenda Gibbins. Nonetheless, the CRC was rarely heard from again and after a few years stopped meeting. In contrast to Cobb, at least one other metropolitan county had an influential human relations commission. DeKalb County’s dated back to 1972. By the early 1990s it had a budget of over one hundred thousand dollars and a two-member staff. The executive
director, Polly Meriwether-Lewis, claimed that it served as an ombudsman between the government and the citizenry and played a leadership role in helping DeKalb develop a model affordable housing program. At the end of the twentieth-century, however, Cobb and most other metropolitan counties seemed little interested in CRCs that took pro-active roles. 

The End of the Secrist Administration

In 1992 Bill Byrne ran for commission chair on a conservative platform. After four years of the Secrist administration, voters seemed ready for a change. In offering for reelection, Phil Secrist could cite a number of positive accomplishments: the construction of the Cobb Galleria Centre and a downtown parking deck, the launching of the CCT bus system, the opening of a new, $6.8 million central library building on Roswell at Alexander Street, and the preservation of significant historical sites. Nonetheless, he had difficulty controlling the commission. The board rarely reached unanimity and sometimes was so divided it could not act at all. During a series of public forums in 1990 Secrist complained of a public perception that the board was "not addressing the real needs of the county."

The commission's poor handling of a county manager crisis contributed to its declining credibility. To his supporters, county manager Patrick Salerno was a trained professional who competently supervised staff and handled administrative detail. To his opponents, he failed to keep commissioners fully informed, did not support his staff, and did nothing in the community. Following a critical annual review in summer 1989, Salerno took steps to improve his image. On 25 September 1989 he wrote the board a five-page letter summarizing his increased participation in public events and his efforts to improve staff morale. It was apparently not enough for a majority of the commission. In an executive session the following day Salerno supporters Secrist and Harriet Smith were shocked to find that the other commissioners had conspired ahead of time to fire Salerno. On a motion by Thea Powell, seconded by Paschal, the board voted three to two to ask for his resignation. The matter was handled so secretley that the Marietta Daily Journal had to sue to view a transcript of the meeting. Salerno offered his resignation, but he expected the board to honor the financial terms
of his contract. The board majority naively thought they could stop paying him immediately. For several weeks they endured public embarrassment as Salerno threatened to withdraw his resignation if his contract was not honored. Finally, county attorney Fred Bentley, Sr., informed the board that they had to pay Salerno his next year’s salary and other benefits. In the end Salerno received slightly under $113,000 to leave. Fortunately for Secrist, a respected retired Southern Bell executive, Mack Henderson, was available, and the chairman was able to persuade the board to hire him to fill the vacated post.14

The public’s skepticism about county leaders can be seen in its lack of confidence in the road-building program. The Secrist administration got off to a bumpy start when the electorate on 4 April 1989 rejected an extension of the one-percent sales tax. The vote was quite close, with the special purpose tax losing by only 112 tallies. Bad weather seemed to contribute to the failure, as an afternoon storm knocked the power out at several polling places, forcing people to cast their ballots by candlelight. Only a little over 10 percent of registered voters made it to the polls. Nonetheless, the tax had the support of most civic and business leaders and was expected to pass easily. The only organized opposition came from Citizens for Cobb’s Future, headed by Richard L. Castellucis, a Southern Tech professor and Republican political activist. That group did not oppose the concept of a special tax for road improvements so much as the manner in which the tax had been administered. Castellucis argued that over seventy million dollars remained from revenues collected under the previous tax, making an extension unnecessary. Kennesaw State professor Craig Aronoff, an advocate of the tax proposal, seemed accurately to access the defeat by remarking, “I don’t think people were saying, ‘We want to stop the roads.’ They were saying, ‘We don’t think you’ve done a good job of managing the program.’”15

The county government rebounded a year and a half later when a well-organized campaign led to a decisive sales tax victory. In 1990, however, neither of the two commissioners whose term was expiring managed to stay in office. One left voluntarily and the other at the hands of the electorate. Deciding that she had pressing family responsibilities, eastern commissioner Thea Powell announced she would retire after one term. Thirty-eight year-old insurance agent Stan Wise was elected to take her place. In the west Harriet Smith ran for reelection, but could not make it through the Democratic primary, where attorney Susan
Brown-Harkins won a 53 percent victory. In reflecting on her defeat Smith attributed the vote total to an anti-incumbent sentiment and her strong support for second amendment gun rights, not a popular position among liberal Democrats. She further concluded that her loss was providential, as she was soon diagnosed with kidney cancer and underwent successful surgery. She eventually made a full recovery, spared from the pressures of office. In the meantime, Harkins went down to defeat in the general election to Delta Air Lines pilot Bill Cooper, a relative newcomer to the county and no relation to the west Cobb school board member and legislator of the same name from the previous generation.16

In 1992 the turnover on the county commission continued. Prior to the Republican primary Stan Wise and Harvey Paschal resigned their seats to run against Phil Secrist for chairman. Paschal had previously been elected in west Cobb as a Democrat, but he concluded that no Democrat could win countywide. In the primary and run-off elections all three commission veterans went down to defeat to landscape architect Bill Byrne, who had never held public office before. Republican Gordon Wysong and Democrat Freeman Poole won special elections to replace Wise and Paschal, respectively. Meanwhile, Emmett Burton decided to retire, opening a seat for Joe Lee Thompson, formerly a Democrat, who won this time as a Republican. After the 1992 election Bill Cooper was the senior commission member, with two years of experience. Everyone else was in his first year. In the same 1992 election where Bill Clinton won the presidency, anti-incumbent attitudes prevailed so much that an ousted officeholder in a neighboring county remarked. “You could have almost put Donald Duck up there and he would have won.”17 Phil Secrist returned to the academic world as a history professor at Kennesaw State University. There he wrote a book on the 1864 battle of Resaca. He continued his public service through the Civil War Commission and other preservation groups.18

The Byrne Administration and Race Relations

Phil Secrist’s successor as commission chairman was a Marine Corps veteran with 760 combat missions as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam.
After returning home Bill Byrne became the Marines' chief test pilot on the east coast. A native of upstate New York, he first became aware of Cobb County when he trained pilots at an army ranger camp near Dahlonega and flew every other month into the Atlanta Naval Air Station adjacent to Dobbins Air Reserve Base. He liked Cobb County and decided to relocate to Georgia after he got out of the military. Before his five years in the Marines, Byrne had graduated from Syracuse University with a major in landscape architecture and a minor in construction management. After moving to Cobb, he put that training to good use. For two years he worked for others; then he formed his own company, Byrne, Helton & Associates, with Benny Helton, a civil engineer. They designed and engineered a number of subdivisions, including Loch Highland in northeast Cobb, and did site planning revisions and landscape planning for the Cobb Civic Center and Jennie Tate Anderson Theater.14

As he attempted to steer his projects through the county's plan review process, Byrne came into frequent contact with commissioners and staff. By the 1980s he was active in other people's campaigns, including that of Phil Secrist in 1988. Two years later he ran an unsuccessful race for a western district commission seat, losing in the Republican primary to Bill Cooper. In 1992 he achieved his first electoral success, defeating Secrist and former commissioners Harvey Paschal and Stan Wise. Once a Democrat, Byrne switched parties when he decided that Republicans were more committed to the family, low taxes, and limited government. In the 1992 campaign he was the most fiscally conservative candidate, pledging to reduce property taxes, stop the growth of the county budget, eliminate funding for the arts, auction off about five hundred county vehicles, and find a new county manager who shared his conservative philosophy and would keep the commission well informed on budgetary matters.20

Like most conservatives, Byrne opposed affirmative action if it meant preferential treatment for women or minorities. From his perspective, the constitution guaranteed equal protection to individuals, not groups; and any attempt to provide special treatment for a class of people, no matter how noble the motive, smacked of discrimination. Throughout his career, Byrne opposed quotas, set-asides for minority contractors, or any other means of helping one group at the expense of another. Nonetheless, his strong opposition to what he regarded as affir-
mative action coexisted with an equally strong belief in equal employment opportunities and the conscious recruitment of minorities for government posts. Indeed, his administration began with the selection of David Hankerson, the first black county manager anywhere in Georgia.21

Hankerson worked his way through the ranks of Cobb County government. He was born shortly after World War II in Burke County, just below Augusta. The son of large landowners, Hankerson learned managerial skills early in life. His parents owned over eight hundred acres, a large farm by any standards but especially for an African-American family in Georgia. Unfortunately, David’s mother died before his second birthday and his father when he was five. An aunt and uncle adopted him. They were sharecroppers at the time, but soon purchased land with a loan from the federal Farmer’s Home Administration. By the early 1960s they owned three hundred acres and rented about seven hundred more. In a typical year they grew about three hundred acres of cotton, all handpicked. One of David’s jobs before school was to drive around the countryside, pick up field hands, and carry them to the farm. When he got home in the afternoon, he headed for the fields and worked there until the laborers quit for the day. Even as a teenager, he stayed busy from five in the morning until nine or ten at night.22

After graduating from Fort Valley State College with a degree in agronomy, Hankerson was recruited by the United States Department of Agriculture and sent to Cobb County. In 1973 Cobb seemed almost like a foreign country to a young man from rural southeast Georgia. The whole Atlanta area was known for its traffic jams and crime problems and Cobb, in particular, had a racist reputation, because of the presence of white supremacist J. B. Stoner and the fact that the black population was at an historic low of 4 percent. Nevertheless, Hankerson was impressed with how well he was received. He soon concluded that the real Cobb County was quite different from its reputation. As part of the Soil Conservation Service, he offered a free service to farmers in combating such things as soil erosion and drainage problems. A few farm owners were African-American, congregated along Macedonia Road in southwest Cobb, Shiloh Road in the northern part of the county, and a few other locations. The vast majority was Caucasian. The new employee feared that race might be a problem in working with white farmers, but he quickly discovered that they accepted him for what he could do
David Hankerson (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
and became his biggest supporters.23

In 1984 the state threatened to put Cobb County on probation for failing to meet the minimum standards of the Erosion and Sedimentation Act of 1975. An expert on soil and water problems, Hankerson was much in demand in helping cities and towns comply. To convince Georgia of Cobb's good intentions, county manager Jim Miller persuaded Hankerson to come work for him as manager of the Development Control Department. The new department dealt with site plan review, site inspections, and storm water. Hankerson helped Cobb maintain its certification and gradually took on increased responsibility, taking over building inspections, then code enforcement, and finally planning and zoning. He was director of the Community Development department when Bill Byrne became commission chair and decided he wanted a change in the county manager's office.24

Byrne's first choice was David Hankerson, but the department head was not certain he wanted a job that took him away from an area of expertise where he had a national reputation. Also, in 1993 Hankerson was not sure that Cobb was ready for a black county manager. Byrne told him that he was concerned only that he be able to get the job done. Both men considered themselves "very conservative." Workaholic Hankerson believed in living simply and rewarding people for what they did, not whom they knew or what they looked like. The two proved to be a good match, and Hankerson held the county manager job throughout Byrne's nine years in office.

Despite the chairman's opposition to affirmative action goals and quotas, Byrne and Hankerson set out to create a work force that resembled the ethnic composition of the county. One of their first steps was to institute sensitivity training to ensure that all employees were treated with respect. They also established an aggressive policy of hiring women and minorities, not only at entry level but at all ranks. Using recruiters to identify talented blacks and Hispanics and making use of NAACP job fairs and other forums, they quickly increased the number of minority and female employees. In some areas, such as the water system, minority employment rose to well over 20 percent of the work force. Implemented with a minimum of publicity, these changes showed what a conservative, suburban, county could do to be inclusive and promote equal opportunity for all citizens.25
While the Byrne administration was establishing an admirable record in race relations, it found itself in a controversy over homosexual rights that brought the county unwanted worldwide publicity. The debate began over funding for a theater company that was praised by community leaders for bringing quality performances to the suburbs. When it treated controversial topics, it did so believing that a function of the arts is to make audiences think. The theater's founders lived quiet lives in a historic Marietta neighborhood and had no desire to be at the center of a cultural war over alleged gay lifestyles and traditional southern community values. How that debate surfaced in Cobb County is detailed below.

Origins of Theatre in the Square

The best theatrical group in the county's history was founded in 1982 as Theatre in the Square. The creators, IBM employees Michael Horne and
Marquee for first production of Theatre in the Square, Mill Street entrance, 11 September-October 9, 1982 (Theatre in the Square)
Palmer Wells, chose Marietta because of their interest in historic preservation as well as the arts. Wells recalled that “having lived in New York I was not prepared for what I discovered in Marietta…. The first time I walked into the Square I instantly fell in love with it…. It is truly a beautiful little southern town square.” Horne and Wells concluded that a downtown theater would benefit from the close proximity of fine restaurants and ample public parking. They took a gamble that Cobb’s theater lovers, rather than trekking into Atlanta, would support a local company, if it put on quality productions. Some of their Atlanta friends told them that they “were crazy for trying to start a theater in the suburbs.” But before long Theatre in the Square attracted actors and patrons from throughout the metropolitan area. Local people who worked in Atlanta preferred to stay close to home for their evening entertainment, and many Atlantans seemed to enjoy the trek north of the river.

The initial theater space was a banquet room (formerly a freight storage space) at Bill Swearingen’s Depot Restaurant, located in the 1898 railroad depot just off the Square. Swearingen gave Horne and Wells a six-month lease, hoping that patrons would eat in his restaurant before going into the next room for a show. With three thousand dollars of personal capital and a small grant from IBM, the two entrepreneurs launched their first production, On Golden Pond, in September 1982. Around a tiny stage they managed to seat the audience in eighty-five straight-back chairs. Actors waited outdoors to make their entrances and on rainy nights sidestepped buckets on the floors that caught raindrops pouring through a leaky roof. A 1985 Marietta Daily Journal article claimed that “a gnat would have difficulty turning around” in the crowded facility. Nonetheless, the company from the beginning experienced critical acclaim and solid support from a grateful community.

By 1985 Theatre in the Square had outgrown the old depot and moved a block away to a Whitlock Avenue site recently vacated by the Lindsey-Galt furniture company. The new location doubled the audience space and had a larger stage and dressing rooms. The Downtown Marietta Development Authority approved a pass-through, low-interest loan to finance the facility’s renovation. Larry Echols of Echols Builders did much of the work for free. When the new theater opened to an enthusiastic audience on 10 July 1985, Marietta Mayor Bob Flournoy proclaimed it “the epitome of what we want around Marietta.”

As Theatre in the Square continued to prosper, Horne, Wells, and
Marquee for Zion! Whitlock Avenue entrance, 1990 (Theatre in the Square)
their board of directors in 1991 started the Alley Stage in a space behind the main theater. There, they put on original and experimental productions. In 1992-93 they added a new lobby and additional seating to the main facility, raising capacity to 225 seats. The annual budget increased from forty thousand dollars the first year to over a million by the beginning of a new century. The theater benefited from a variety of corporate, governmental, and personal sponsors. In 1990 it presented an original work, \textit{Zion!}, written especially for the Marietta stage by Atlanta playwright Beverly Trader. Incorporating popular hymns and spirituals, the play told the story of local African-Americans who became communicant members of First Baptist Church during slave days, and then formed Zion Baptist Church after gaining their freedom. This innovative play helped Theatre in the Square receive the first of several grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).\footnote{4}

\textbf{The Arts Funding Controversy}

Shortly after Phil Secrist became commission chair, the county government began making grants to Theatre in the Square and ten other arts groups. These expenditures became the basis of a simmering controversy. Proponents justified the use of public funds on the grounds that the arts enriched the lives of area residents and stimulated tourism, bringing visitors to Cobb who spent their money in local stores and restaurants. Opponents countered that governments should be restrained in spending the people's money and confine their activities to functions that promote the public health, safety, and welfare. They argued that the arts had always been supported privately, as people bought tickets to performances or purchased art works that appealed to them. A host of educational institutions and private foundations also subsidized the arts. From this perspective, arts groups needed additional taxpayer support only when they lacked sufficient appeal to stand on their own. The critics maintained that government officials were acting as elitists when they thought they knew better than the average citizen what types of art deserved support. Responding to these complaints, the commission by 1991 began cutting back on the amount spent on the arts.

In 1992 Bill Byrne was elected commission chairman on a platform calling for the total elimination of arts funding. After taking office, he
appointed a blue ribbon commission to propose ways of making government operate more efficiently. The Byrne Commission proposed several ways to cut the budget, including personnel reductions and the privatization of the Department of Transportation. Interestingly, the panel did not recommend a reduction in arts grants, which accounted for less than one half of one percent of the county budget. Initially, Byrne proposed reducing arts funding from the current $123,000 to a still substantial $115,000.

As long as the arts debate focused on the abstract question of public versus private funding, participants exercised civility, and the electorate paid little attention. However, in the first half of 1993 east Cobb commissioner Gordon Wysong injected a more explosive issue when he argued that government officials had an obligation to review the contents of performances and limit funding to those that upheld family values. Wysong had first taken office in June 1992, having emerged victorious in a special summer election where less than 5 percent of the registered voters went to the polls. A Georgia Tech engineering graduate, he received his greatest backing from parents who appreciated his extensive volunteer work with youth sports. He was a member of the National Institute of Ceramic Engineers and was president of his own business, Southern Porcelain, Inc., of Marietta. At the time of his initial election most of the public was unaware of his views on “gay rights.”

On an automobile trip to Sevierville, Tennessee, to inspect a composting facility, Wysong, chairman Byrne, and county attorney Fred Bentley, Jr., spent their spare time expressing dismay at the sorry state of affairs in modern America. Like many conservative citizens, they were angry with President Clinton for his “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy toward gays in the military, and they resented the assertiveness of those who flaunted their homosexuality in Gay Pride parades and Gay Olympics. While Byrne and Bentley were engaging in idle chatter, Wysong became motivated to take a public stand against gay rights and for family values.

Back home, Wysong asked Bentley, the son of a longtime county leader and arts devotee, to draft a resolution. Wysong then showed the document to attorney Mark Johnson and to Dr. Nelson Price, the well-respected pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church, one of metropolitan Atlanta’s largest congregations. Taking their comments, Wysong produced a final draft that was far more specific in its denunciation of gays than Bentley’s original version. On 16 July 1993 he placed the proposed resolution on the desks of the other commissioners.
The board had previously discussed a relatively innocuous statement on family values, but nothing as strong as Wysong's document. When west Cobb commissioner Bill Cooper read it, he was shocked. Hurrying to the commission chair's office, he found that Byrne had just received it too. Byrne glanced at the proposal and became as agitated as Cooper. An ex-Marine pilot, Byrne fervently believed in family values and had little use for gay activists, but he saw no purpose in dividing the community unnecessarily. The gay and lesbian couples that lived in Cobb got along with their neighbors, paid their taxes, and made no special demands on county services. They chose Cobb over Atlanta for essentially the same reasons as straight couples and had no desire to call attention to themselves. According to Byrne and Cooper, all of Wysong's fellow commissioners thought the language of the resolution was too strong and tried to persuade Wysong to tone it down. As chairman, Byrne on three occasions delayed action by removing the offensive resolution from the commission agenda. Wysong, however, could not be dissuaded.

Recognizing that he lacked the power to suppress the proposal forever and that it was likely to pass if it came up for a vote, Byrne agreed to negotiate a revised version. As a result, he was able to soften the language to something he could support. Still, it was strong enough to provoke a violent reaction throughout the Atlanta area and the nation. To outsiders, the "anti-gay" resolution reinforced a stereotypical view of Cobb as one of America's most reactionary localities. The revised Wysong resolution identified the traditional family as the institution best designed to rear children, care for the elderly, and maintain "a life-style which leaves citizens independent of their government for support." The document criticized "the life-styles advocated by the gay community" as incompatible with community standards and contrary to state law. It pledged that government officials would do nothing to endorse a gay way of life and that the board of commissioners would not "fund those activities which seek to contravene existing community standards."

When the issue appeared on the 10 August 1993 agenda, supporters of the resolution packed the meeting room. An additional 150 Wysong supporters, mostly members of Roswell Street Baptist and Mount Bethel United Methodist Church, could not squeeze into the crowded hall and adjourned to nearby Glover Park, where they watched the proceeding on television monitors set up on the bandstand. Commissioner Cooper offered an alternative document that contained the same sentiments as
Wysong's, but removed the word "gay." The west Cobb commissioner saw his proposal as more positive, because it praised family values without singling out a specific group for condemnation. The Cooper resolution passed 4-0, with commissioner Freeman Poole joining Cooper, Byrne, and Wysong in voting for it. The fifth member, Joe Lee Thompson, was on his honeymoon and missed the meeting.

Cooper hoped the commission would be satisfied, but Wysong did not let the matter drop. Determined to put the county on record against gay rights, he made a motion to adopt the wording he had worked out in recent days with Byrne. The Wysong resolution passed 3-1, with Cooper casting the only negative vote. If Byrne had voted against it, the Wysong proposal would have failed 2-2 and been delayed at least until Thompson's return. Having agreed to the compromise language, however, Byrne felt honor bound to go along. He later reflected that, "This personally was a very, very difficult issue, because I have a gay daughter, and this issue was a very personal one. But the concept of gay rights was the issue that this resolution focused on." The chairman believed that American society faced a host of social problems caused by liberal policies that carried it away from God and family. He said he was not "opposed to a lifestyle that either people are born to or choose. That's their personal choice. But to tell me and anyone else that I must accept it and I must support it is a concept that I will not adopt." If he had to side with gay rights or family values, he favored the latter. But he later reflected, "That was a volatile debate for many years and a debate within this community that never had to happen and shouldn't have happened."

Wysong justified his action by linking family values to the arts funding controversy. While the other commissioners denied any connection between the two issues, Wysong told a reporter that he received a letter from an angry constituent, denouncing a Theatre in the Square production of Lips Together, Teeth Apart. The letter came from former Smyrna mayor Harold Smith, who had written all the commissioners pleading with them to be fiscally conservative. One paragraph of the letter was devoted to the arts grants. Smith had seen an advertisement for the play in the 22 May 1993 issue of Creative Loafing, a metropolitan Atlanta free publication found in many newsstands. Written and paid for by Theatre in the Square, the advertisement claimed that the play was about "two couples having sexual crises on a weekend at the beach, along with a snake in the basement, a drowned body and gay neighbors 'playing' in the bushes."
Gordon Wysong (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
Bill Cooper (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
Smith sent a copy of the advertisement to the commissioners with a comment that the theater had a right to free speech, but taxpayers should not have to subsidize performances they found objectionable. Although Wysong had neither seen the play nor read the script, he used Smith's argument as a basis for opposing public funding of performances that, in his opinion, undermined community values. 

Theatre co-founder Palmer Wells regarded the Pulitzer-nominated play as a thought-provoking contemporary discussion of a variety of social issues, ranging from homosexuality and homophobia to marital infidelity, terminal illness, and racial prejudice. Looking back at the furor it generated in Cobb, he remarked, "A lot of our subscribers scratched their heads and said, 'What was all the furor about because of that play?'" Theatre in the Square had produced previous plays with homosexual themes or subtexts that the public accepted as legitimate artistic expression. Wells was aware that arts funding was in trouble, but he was surprised to find one of his plays used as the excuse for cutting support to all arts organizations. From his perspective, the anti-gay resolution "came out of nowhere." On this issue Wells and chairman Byrne were in agreement. In retrospect, Byrne viewed the attack on gays as "a political agenda of...one extremist commissioner" that did the county a huge disservice.

Despite the protests of four of the five commissioners, the local and national media jumped to the logical conclusion that arts funding and gay rights were indelibly linked. After approving the anti-gay resolution at the 10 August 1993 meeting, the commission held a public hearing on a proposed amendment to the county code that limited tax dollars to "programming which advances and supports strong community, family-oriented standards." A large number of people spoke, mostly in support. State representative Billy McKinney of Atlanta began the public comment segment. The controversial black activist usually was on the liberal side of public issues, but he came to Marietta to support Wysong. McKinney asserted, "We have watched for a long time as our community standards have gone down, gone down. I'm not a bigot, but I do believe that as the conduct of citizens is degraded we at some point have to stand up and say what our community values are." Rev. Randy Mickler, the pastor of the large Mount Bethel United Methodist Church, used his time to denounce homosexuality as "an abomination in the eyes of God." He added, "I deeply resent that even one dollar of my tax money has gone to support a lifestyle that is abominable." A minority of speakers tried to
defend artistic freedom. Theatre board chairwoman Cherry Spencer-Stark read a resolution adopted by her board of directors asking the commission to maintain the current arts policy that supported artistic freedom. Her husband, Dr. James Stark, warned that arts censorship would cost the county thousands of dollars in legal fees and lost business. Nevertheless, the defenders of Theatre in the Square found themselves on the defensive on this night.10

None of the commissioners seemed prepared for the national, and even international, attention that the resolution generated. Gay rights groups petitioned businesses and professional organizations not to hold conventions in Cobb County. The American Civil Liberties Union threatened to take the county to court over the elimination of arts funding. National newspapers such as the Christian Science Monitor carried stories on the debate. The Crossfire show on CNN aired a segment with Cherry Spencer-Stark and Gordon Wysong. Gradually, the voices of well-meaning people were drowned in the loud demonstrations of extremists on both sides who descended on the Marietta Square either to thank God for AIDS or denounce the KKK (Kobb Kounty Kommission). Palmer Wells of Theatre in the Square recalled the protests being “reported all around the world. We had patrons traveling in Europe that read about it in London and also in Germany. It certainly put us on the map. It’s just not exactly the way you want to get put on the map.”11

As the debate raged, the Marietta Daily Journal carried on the editorial page a column by Commissioner Wysong, justifying his position. The east Cobb ceramic engineer expressed his appreciation for the arts, citing his strong support of a recent (unsuccessful) bond referendum to place a $1.4 million arts center in south Cobb. He argued, however, that arts organizations were more likely to achieve excellence when they merited private community support through the quality of their work. Government subsidies, he reasoned, tended to perpetuate mediocrity. In Wysong’s words, “Without county funding, the arts will flourish, allowing unbridled freedom of artistic expression. The test of censorship will then be derived from the consumer reaction to this new generation of artistic expression.”12

Wysong’s attempt to wean arts groups from government aid might not have generated such passionate opposition had it not been wedded to the attack on gays. Arts patrons were almost unanimous in their denunciation of the county commission for the apparent linkage of “family values” to censorship of Theatre in the Square. Stung by the vehemence of the
attacks and realizing the Theatre had a strong first amendment case if it alone were singled out, Byrne abandoned the attempt to restrict arts grants to family-oriented programming. Instead, he called on the commission to eliminate funding of the arts altogether. On 24 August 1994 that is what the commission unanimously did. Even Cooper supported the termination of arts funding, arguing he was doing so on economic grounds that had nothing to do with the anti-gay resolution.13

Despite the commissioners' desire to put the family values issue behind them, the topic would not go away. At numerous commission meetings activists appeared at the public comment segment to condemn the elected representatives for their decision. Even the chairman's gay daughter spoke out against her father's action. On 1 September 1993 the Marietta Daily Journal ran the first of a number of polls that showed the divided mind of the electorate. Conducted by the Roswell office of Ayres & Associates, the MDJ poll reported that only 41 percent of Cobb countians agreed that the commission should have passed a "pro-family" resolution. While just 14 percent expressed disagreement with the contents, some 39 percent thought the commission should never have addressed the issue at all. Pollsters determined that 53 percent of their sample thought the publicity surrounding the gay lifestyles resolution hurt the county's image. About two in five claimed they were embarrassed by the attention Cobb was receiving; only about one in four expressed pleasure. This core group of Wysong supporters thought the bad publicity was the price one paid for standing up for Judeo-Christian values against the cultural elite.

Support for the commission was much stronger on the termination of arts funding. While the vast majority of those surveyed agreed that the arts enhanced the quality of life, exactly half supported the commission's decision to stop the grants, while only 38 percent wanted to continue them. Commissioner Joe Lee Thompson told the MDJ that he thought the poll accurately reflected local sentiment. He believed that most people were opposed to gay lifestyles, but took the position that "we're all human beings and Americans, and when you talk about one group...it embarrasses us." On the other hand, commissioner Freeman Poole thought the MDJ poll underestimated support for the resolutions. He claimed that about 90 percent of the calls and letters to his office expressed approval for the commission's actions. Elva Dornbush, an aide to Wysong, agreed with Poole, pointing out that in a month the commissioners received some five thousand calls or letters, about 80 percent supporting their actions.
Joe Lee Thompson (Communications Office, Cobb County Government)
Chairman Byrne eventually did his own polling and concluded that about three-fourths of the people in Cobb County agreed with the family values resolution, but almost all thought the commission should never have brought it up.¹⁴

**Aftermath of the Arts Controversy**

Emotions remained high for a long time as civil libertarians and theater patrons tried to force a change in policy. During the next three and a half years a newly formed Cobb Citizens Coalition took advantage of the public comment portion of commission meetings to speak out frequently against the resolution. The national media focused on Cobb as the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), failing to force a repeal of the anti-gay resolution, withdrew preliminary rounds of volleyball from the Cobb Galleria and re-routed Olympic torch carriers around the county. Originally a supporter of the commissioners' decision, state legislator Johnny Isakson worked behind the scenes to persuade them to back down. Otis Brumby and his Marietta Daily Journal openly opposed the policy and became bitter critics of Byrne.

While local people had strong opinions on the resolution, a surprisingly small number cared if ACOG snubbed the county. Even before the arts controversy, local voters rejected a bond referendum that would have financed an Olympic-style softball complex at Lost Mountain Park. The electorate made clear they favored softball fields for the use of amateur ball teams, but opposed inordinate spending on a one-time event. The truth was that Cobb benefited immensely from the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. All the hotels and motels stayed full during the two weeks. Daytime visitors did not swarm to Cobb in quite the numbers anticipated, but local restaurants and tourist attractions had more customers than usual. Without spending any tax money in preparation for the games, Cobb was a big winner in at least an economic sense.¹⁵

None of the commissioners was repudiated at the polls in his next bid for reelection. In 1994 Wysong received the support of local, state, and national Republicans and won a 64 percent landslide. Bill Cooper, the lone dissenter on the anti-gay resolution, did even better, reclaiming his office without opposition. In the Olympic year of 1996 Bill Byrne won a second term as commission chair with 61 percent of the
Original cast of 1940s *Radio Hour*, 1982 (left to right: Jan Milner, Amy Brewer, and Beth Griffin) (Theatre in the Square)
1940s Radio Hour in 1993 (left to right: Denise Wilbanks, Nicole Burkholder, and Laurie McDuffie) (Theatre in the Square)
vote against former fire chief David Hilton, whose position on family values was essentially the same.

When the new commission took office in January 1997 the controversy came to a close. Under Georgia law a resolution passed by one political body cannot bind its successor. Both the Cobb Citizens Coalition and the new commissioners seized upon the chance to put the long simmering dispute behind them. Coalition members Elaine Hill, Anne MacPherson, and Jim and Cherry Spencer-Stark used the public comment period to announce the end of the resolution and declare their willingness to move on. Chairman Byrne shared their sentiments, proclamation, "It's a new year, a new time and an opportunity for a new attitude." He added that the board had "no desire to take [the family values] issue up in the future." Commissioner Joe Lee Thompson, who was also reelected in 1996, told a reporter, "If they are saying we should all just walk away from it and stop talking about it, then they've probably got an agreement. It's better for everybody just to leave it alone. That was a resolution we passed then. We don't intend to reintroduce it."
After four years of turmoil, it was fairly clear that virtually no one was against “family values,” although the term meant different things to different people. For a few, it was a weapon to lash out against all family arrangements that deviated from a male family head, a dutiful wife, and several obedient children, all of whom grew up to be “straight.” For others, the definition was broad enough to honor other family arrangements. In a nation whose motto was “e pluribus unum” (out of many, one), most people viewed toleration as a necessary virtue. Cobb countyans typically believed in “family values” and toleration. The same was true elsewhere. If the county commission hoped to influence other local governments, it must have been disappointed. With few exceptions other communities were forewarned by the media attack on Cobb and avoided making the same mistake. Not long after the commission vote, the artistic directors of twenty-seven metro-area performing arts groups selected Michael Horne by secret ballot as Atlanta’s Artist of the Year. The Theatre co-founder received his award in October 1993 at the annual “Business Salutes the Arts” ceremony sponsored by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

Theatre in the Square seemed to come through the crisis as strong as ever. Several nearby counties tried to attract the theater away from Marietta, but co-founders Wells and Horne were committed to stay and fight for their principles. By the time the crisis started, they were in their eleventh year and thought of Marietta as home. The renewal rate for season’s subscribers had reached a phenomenal 95 percent, far above average for community theaters. For the 1994-95 season, the renewal rate fell to 60 percent, as the more timid theatergoers stayed away to avoid controversy. With the loss of county funding and with season attendance down about fifteen thousand, the theater company could have been in financial trouble except for the support of friends around the country who donated about one hundred thousand dollars to what they regarded as a worthy cause. The largest single contribution ($20,000) came from Hollywood stars Joanne Woodward and her husband, Paul Newman. Reared in Marietta, Woodward visited her hometown often and kept in touch with local news. Other Hollywood artists openly assisted the embattled local company. In November 1994 the Theater co-sponsored with Norman Lear’s People for the American Way a reading of Lips Together, Teeth Apart, the play that Gordon Wysong had used to justify his decision to terminate arts funding. Susan
Sarandon, Alec Baldwin, Tim Robbins, Mercedes Ruhl, and playwright Terrance McNally came to Marietta for the reading.

Despite the outside support, Theatre in the Square experienced several lean years and had to reduce the size of its staff. To balance the 1996 budget, management borrowed eighty thousand dollars, using future ticket sales as collateral. In May of that year the company suffered its biggest loss when Michael Horne died after a prolonged illness. With Palmer Wells taking on some of Horne’s duties as artistic director, the theatrical group struggled on, maintaining its reputation for excellence. To balance experimental, daring plays, the company offered each year family favorites such as the 1940s Radio Hour and Smoke on the Mountain, the latter attracting many church groups with its old-time gospel music. Gradually the subscriber base and overall attendance returned to what it had been before the arts controversy. By the end of the decade close to seventy-five thousand people a year witnessed performances, and Marietta city government regarded Theatre in the Square as one of its best selling points.17
During Dr. Stephen R. Cheshier's seventeen years at the helm, Southern Tech gradually expanded its mission and programs and went through several name changes. In 1981 Cheshier recruited as vice-president a former colleague, Dr. Harris T. Travis, who had headed the mechanical engineering and technology department at Purdue University. After gaining independence from Georgia Tech in 1980, the Marietta school saw its enrollment increase by nearly 50 percent, reaching thirty-seven hundred by 1986. In that year a new academic building opened, the first new classroom building in almost two decades. Benefiting from a large donation of software from Lockheed, Southern Tech initiated in 1982 its first bachelor's program in computer science. The Board of Regents approved the college's first master's program (a degree in technology management) in October 1985, with students admitted to the program the following year.

Over the years the campus expanded from the original ninety-three acres to 232. By the end of the century students came from thirty-five
different states and more than eighty foreign countries. The number of programs continued to expand with the creation of the school of architecture in the 1989-90 school year, followed in the 1990s by bachelor’s programs in math, physics, chemistry, technology management, and technical and professional communication. Master’s programs included technical and professional communication, engineering technology, and computer science.

By the mid-1980s the name Southern Technical Institute seemed outdated and inappropriate for a school offering a diversity of technological programs. In other parts of the country similar schools were now called Institutes of Technology. The faculty recommended the title Southern Institute of Technology. However, Georgia Tech, officially known as Georgia Institute of Technology, opposed the change on grounds that the similar names would cause confusion and might cause people to think that “Southern” Tech had a broader mission than “Georgia” Tech. In 1986 Cheshier proposed Southern College of Technology as a compromise, and the regents adopted that appellation. A final name change occurred ten years later, when the chancellor of the university system, Dr. Stephen Portch, elevated most of the senior colleges to university status. On 10 July 1996 the official name became Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU).

In February 1997 President Cheshier announced his retirement at the end of the academic year. He could take pride in a remarkable growth of programs and facilities during his tenure. He could also take credit for increasing diversity on the SPSU campus. His academic vice-president, Harris Travis, was one of the highest-ranking African-American administrators in the Georgia system. Together, they had an admirable record of recruiting black students. Nonetheless, SPSU continued to have identity and visibility problems. Despite strong business support, the institution remained something of a “best-kept secret.” After enrollment peaked at four thousand in 1990, it remained at that level throughout the next decade.

Part of the school’s problem was the changing nature of technical education and the lay public’s inability to comprehend the changing nomenclature. In the 1960s Southern Tech had stayed abreast of changing times by moving from technical to technological training. By the 1980s the demand for engineering technologists began to decline. When STI first opened its doors, the typical graduate could expect a dozen or more job offers. Southern Tech graduates had always found themselves in a better competitive position than typical liberal arts alumni. Yet the placement
office shocked the campus in 1989 by reporting that only 70 percent of the graduates that year had been offered employment in their fields.

As the technological demands of industry became more sophisticated, a distinction emerged between applied engineering and basic research. Throughout the nation, the curriculum of major engineering schools was increasingly oriented toward basic research, while technical universities moved beyond engineering technology toward degree programs in applied engineering. As early as 1984 the Southern Tech faculty asked the Board of Regents for permission to offer applied engineering degrees. Perceiving unwanted competition, Georgia Tech strongly opposed the proposal. The regents chose to avoid controversy by deferring action on the Marietta school's request and eventually decided that one engineering school in Georgia was sufficient. At the end of the century Southern Poly remained one of the few technical universities in the United States not to offer an applied engineering degree.

While SPSU grew in complexity, communications between the higher administration and the faculty seemed to deteriorate. Years of tension came to a head in 1997 just before Cheshier left office, when he and academic vice-president Travis stripped five of the university's eleven academic department chairs of their administrative responsibilities. Frequently ignored in campus-wide policy-making, these chairs had been persistent critics of the president's and vice-president's leadership style and decision-making. The following year Travis resigned to devote full-time to his second job as pastor of Zion Baptist Church, one of Cobb County's oldest black religious institutions.

Dr. Daniel W. Papp, a professor of international affairs and assistant to the president at Georgia Tech, stepped in as interim president in 1997-98. A popular administrator, Papp did much to bring the campus community back together again. After a yearlong search Chancellor Portch announced the selection of Lisa A. Rossbacher as Southern Poly's second president. Dr. Rossbacher came from historic Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where she had been dean of the college and professor of geology. She promised improved communications and accountability and set priorities of increased visibility, enrollment, and resources. With regard to visibility, she worked to make sure that the faculty and staff communicated a consistent message about SPSU's unique mission. Her enrollment goal was five thousand students, and she created a women students initiative to attract more females to the institution.
Lisa A. Rosshacher (Southern Polytechnic State University)
New School of Architecture Building, Southern Polytechnic State University (photo by Kathy Scott)
In August 2000 Southern Poly announced an academic plan to carry the institution into the twenty-first century. The report noted a decline in the 1990s of some 50 percent in undergraduate engineering technology enrollments, both locally and nationwide. By the century's end, about a third of SPSU's graduating students each year earned master's degrees. To meet market demand the plan called for an expanded curriculum at both the graduate and undergraduate level. One targeted area was the sciences, where opportunities abounded in degree programs such as applied biology and biotechnology. The report advocated more interdisciplinary programs and expansion into selected engineering fields. It also indicated a need to join practical training with discussions of the ethical, responsible use of technology. As the Rossbacher administration implemented the new academic plan, Southern Polytechnic seemed to move once again to meet the industrial and community needs of the era.

**Development of Chattahoochee Technical College**

When Lee Leverette retired as director in 1983, the Marietta-Cobb Area Vocational-Technical School was still under the control of the Marietta school board. Superintendent Roy Nichols turned to Dr. Harlon D. Crimm to fill the vacancy. Crimm came to Marietta a little over a decade earlier as principal of Lockheed Elementary School. He quickly discovered he preferred working with older students, so he left the school after a few years for the superintendent's office, where he developed the personnel department. The superintendent was impressed with Crimm's administrative talents and, when the vocational-technical directorship opened, asked him to take the helm. Crimm jumped at the opportunity to engage in adult education.

It did not take long for Crimm to take the Marietta-Cobb Area School in new directions. With the aid of a state grant, he developed associate degree programs, beginning with engineering technology. Crimm and his staff received support from Southern Tech's president Cheshier, who accepted college credits from the vocational-technical school. If associate degree graduates chose not to go directly into the
work force, they could transfer into the Southern Tech bachelor's degree program. In 1983 the Marietta-Cobb Area School embarked on a "Bridge Program in Nursing" with Kennesaw College. About the same time, Kennesaw began accepting its credits in business skills courses for the B.S. programs in business. These were the first instances in Georgia of vocational-technical school credits transferring to a senior college.

A milestone in the history of the institution came on 1 January 1988 when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredited the college-level associate of applied technology programs. Later that year the school went through another major change when the Marietta system relinquished its supervisory role, allowing the Georgia Board of Technical and Adult Education to become the governing authority. This statutory body was created by an executive order of Governor Joe Frank Harris in 1985 and approved by the legislature the following year. The governor appointed the technical and adult education board, which chose a superintendent, to whom the directors of the various technical schools reported.

In 1986 the state asked the Marietta school to include Paulding County in its service area. With an expanded mission, Crimm and his staff thought the time had come to seek a name change. After soliciting advice from a variety of people and even holding a contest to come up with a name, they agreed upon Chattahoochee Technical Institute. The change was not without controversy, as some people objected to dropping Marietta from the title, and others feared the school was moving away from the concern for skilled trades that characterized the Leverette years. In reality, Chattahoochee Tech never dropped its vocational emphasis, keeping the older offerings as long as they maintained their enrollment. Through the 1990s associate degree programs accounted for only about 30 percent of student enrollment, with the majority still preferring the more traditional skilled-trade programs. Nonetheless, the name change reflected the ambition of Crimm and his administrative staff to become more comprehensive.

Crimm was also responsible for shifting the school's focus from a program orientation to a course orientation. For over twenty years students had enrolled in programs, such as welding, where they went to school with the same students and instructors from early in the morning to mid-afternoon or for several hours at night. Such scheduling worked a hardship on students who had work or family obligations that
kept them from blocking so much time. In the 1980s Chattahoochee Tech moved to a more flexible arrangement where students signed up for individual courses at the times they could take them, and gradually accumulated the credits they needed for graduation. With these changes, the institution experienced steady growth throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, with enrollment rising typically about 8 or 9 percent a year. Reflecting demographic changes in Marietta and south Cobb,
minority students played a central role in enrollment expansion. The institution integrated in the 1960s when the Marietta school system did so, but it had relatively few black students before Harlon Crimm became head. By 2000 African-American students made up a third of the school’s overall enrollment. On the Marietta campus Asians constituted another 3 percent and Hispanics 2 percent. With this strong minority enrollment, Chattahoochee Tech by 2000 for the first time reached twenty-five hundred students.

In 1995 the campus received a major facelift with the opening of the Vaughan Building, named for the late Jack Vaughan, Jr., a member of the Georgia legislature, whose promising career ended prematurely as a result of a fatal illness. The attractive new, two-story building contained modern classrooms and laboratories, as well as office space. In the same year CTI opened its first branch campus in Mableton, and moved several programs to that location. In 1996 the second branch campus went into operation in Paulding County, featuring a new program of study in early childhood care. The Mountain View campus in 2000 became the third satellite location, situated in a rapidly growing area near Shallowford and Sandy Plains Roads in east Cobb. That campus would feature new programs in culinary arts, designed to produce chefs, and entertainment technology to prepare people to work behind camera in a variety of skilled positions. The growth in the 1990s prepared the way for perhaps the most significant milestone in the school’s history when in July 2000 the name was again changed, to Chattahoochee Technical College (CTC).

Although the institution had been teaching college-level courses for well over a decade, the new name made it easier for the public to understand that CTC was more than just a trade school. Already by the fall of 2000, it was apparent that Chattahoochee Tech was on the verge of the most rapid expansion in its history. In the 1990s only about 6 percent of the students came straight out of high school. Average student age was about twenty-nine. After CTC added “college” to its name, it began to recruit more recent high school graduates. Some seemed uninterested in a technical education, thinking of CTC as a good place to start higher education before transferring to a liberal arts college. By the beginning of a new century, CTC owned twenty acres of land across Sandtown Road behind its Marietta campus. It was making plans to build four new classroom buildings at that site and an administration
building on another acre it owned along South Cobb Drive. President Crimm once said he thought the campus he inherited looked like a prison. That was no longer so by 2000 as the institution designed a campus community to fit its college status.  

**North Metro Technical College**

Cobb County played a secondary role in the creation of North Metro Technical College (NMTC), just across the county line in Bartow. In 1985 the boards of education and county commissions of Bartow and Cobb joined with the city of Cartersville to purchase the T. E. Stivers farm close to I-75 at Glade Road. The fifty-one acre site was barely inside Bartow County near the juncture with Cherokee and Cobb. By April 1989 four modern buildings had been erected, containing 140,000 square feet of floor space. The Bartow County Board of Education supervised the school's construction, but by the time the first classes were offered in October 1989, NMTC had become a unit of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education. The first president was Dr. Ken Allen. By the start of the new millennium, the president was Stephen H. Dougherty, and the nine members of the board of directors included five individuals from Bartow County and four from Cobb.

By that time the institution offered associate of applied technology degrees in six fields (accounting, computer information systems, electronics technology, management and supervisory development, marketing management, and secretarial science). It also granted a host of diplomas in occupational areas. The Council on Occupational Education accredited the various programs. Unlike Chattahoochee Tech, the Bartow institution lacked accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Therefore, it did not offer college-level English and math classes and other transfer courses. But it had a cooperative relationship with Floyd College that accomplished the same purpose. A two-year liberal arts college headquartered in Rome, Floyd operated a branch campus at NMTC. The two schools entered into a cooperative relationship where students could take technical courses through North Metro Tech and transfer them as a block to Floyd. After taking Floyd's general education classes, the student could earn an associate in applied science degree granted by the Rome insti-
tution. Convenience seemed to be the major factor in determining whether students enrolled at North Metro or Chattahoochee Technical College. The former served the needs of north Cobb, south Cherokee, and Bartow. The latter drew its students primarily from Marietta, east and south Cobb, and Paulding. Between the two institutions, Cobb provided a major service to area industries and to students desiring the technical skills for success in the modern workplace.1

Kennesaw State University

After a national search the Board of Regents in 1981 selected Dr. Betty L. Siegel to head Kennesaw College. The first woman president in the history of the university system, Siegel held a Ph.D. from Florida State University and completed two years of post-doctoral study in clinical child psychology at Indiana University. Prior to coming to Kennesaw, she served as dean of academic affairs for continuing education at the University of Florida (1972-76) and dean of the school of Education and Psychology at Western Carolina University (1976-81). Kennesaw's first president, Horace Sturgis, gave the school dignity and credibility. Dr. Siegel added energy and enthusiasm. At a time when the college's story was not well known, she devoted much attention to public relations, maintaining a full calendar of speaking engagements in the metropolitan area and throughout the country. Through her efforts Kennesaw was featured in a 1986 book by J. Wade Gilley and others, titled Searching for Academic Excellence: Twenty Colleges and Universities on the Move and Their Leaders. Published for the American Council on Education by Macmillan Publishing Company, the study documented Siegel's role in achieving a more inviting atmosphere on campus. She told one of the book's interviewers, "We must recruit talented, inviting, caring teachers and help them to create a nurturing, stimulating environment that exemplifies college-wide commitment to excellence in teaching...[and enables instructors to] possess the most accurate understanding available about the learners who pass through their doors."6

Dr. Siegel's management style put great emphasis on teamwork. Committees were established to discuss virtually every aspect of college life. The View of the Future committee, headed by Dr. Helen Ridley, produced a major institutional self-study. Out of this effort came a num-
ber of innovative programs and services such as the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the Kennesaw State University Freshman Seminar (KSU 1101). In 1982 Kennesaw for the first time established intercollegiate athletic programs. Dr. Sturgis had not been philosophically opposed to athletics. In fact, in his early days he coached a high school basketball team to a Georgia state championship. However, he believed the fledgling junior college lacked the resources to develop a quality program, and he was unwilling to settle for mediocrity. By the 1980s the college was in a position to fund winning teams. Dr. Siegel saw athletics as a way to increase school spirit and bond students and alumni to the institution. Originally, Kennesaw was affiliated with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), but in the mid-1990s it joined the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), competing in Division II. The school's best athletic year was 1996, when the men's baseball and women's softball teams each won a Division II national championship.

In 1983 the Board of Regents approved an academic reorganization plan, replacing the divisional structure with a system of departments and schools. The latter was more appropriate for a senior college,
allowing students to identify with the faculty and staff of their chosen
discipline. In the Siegel era the institution had two name changes. In
1988 the word “state” was added. The change was made for two reasons.
After the Board of Regents allowed two-year schools to drop “junior”
from their titles, Georgians mistakenly thought that Kennesaw College
was a junior college. Scholars from other states often assumed that
Kennesaw was a private school. The term “state” solved the identity
problems, implying both “public” and “four-year.” The name remained
Kennesaw State College until 12 June 1996, when the Board of Regents
granted university status to most of the state’s senior colleges.

The 1980s and 1990s were decades of tremendous growth for the
institution. In fall 1981, Dr. Siegel’s first quarter as president, enroll­
ment surpassed four thousand. By 1990 it topped ten thousand and in
1997 thirteen thousand. Part of the increase resulted from the estab­
lishment of graduate programs in 1985 in business administration and
elementary education. By the end of the century about a tenth of all
KSU students were enrolled in graduate programs. The total number of
graduate students was low when compared to research institutions, but
behind only West Georgia and Georgia Southern of the state and
regional universities.

The most dramatic growth was in junior and senior students. In
the early 1980s students frequently started at Kennesaw before transferr­ing
elsewhere for their third and fourth years. By the 1990s the oppo­
site was more typical. Excluding the main research institutions (UGA,
Georgia State, Georgia Tech, and the Medical College), Kennesaw had
the highest enrollment in the system at the junior/senior level. In fall
2000, a total of 5582 students (47 percent of all undergraduates) were
classified as juniors or seniors, compared to 4198 (or 34 percent) at
Georgia Southern, the institution closest to Kennesaw in mission and
enrollment.

Gradually, KSU’s physical plant expanded to meet the needs of a
comprehensive senior university. In 1993 the university system pur­
chased an additional thirty acres on the east side of campus, where
Kennesaw Hall opened in 1999 as the new home of central administra­tive
offices and the Bagwell College of Education. Other multi-million
dollar, multi-story complexes included the Carmichael Student Center
(built in 1973 and tripled in size in 1999), the Sturgis Library (1979),
the A.L. Burruss (Business) Building (1991), and the Science and
Mathematics Building (1996). In 1999 KSU expanded across I-75 to lease the Kinder Outlet Mall from the KSU Foundation. The renovated structure provided housing for continuing education, the A. L. Burruss Institute of Public Service, the foundation, and other administrative offices. These additions gave the campus over one million square feet of total classroom, office, and special purpose space and constituted an investment of nearly $128 million.9

The decade of the 1990s was a time of controversy as well as achievement. Kennesaw's troubles with the Internal Revenue Service over a course taught in Fall Quarter 1993 by Rep. Newt Gingrich will be covered in the next chapter. While that battle raged, KSU lost several federal court cases over different matters with civil rights overtones. In October 1996, without admitting guilt, the university and a nearby apartment complex signed a consent decree to pay twenty-five thousand dollars each to two African-American female athletes, who claimed they were forced to move to a section where blacks were concentrated to make room for a white coach. In August 1997 Dr. Candace Kaspers, a former chair of the communications department, won a $275,000 judgment against the university for retaliating against her when she objected to a reorganization plan for her department. While Kaspers was never fired from the faculty, she was relieved in 1994 of her administrative duties and asked to teach full time. She refused and, instead, took her case to federal court. In the court of public opinion she argued that she was removed for trying to protect the jobs of the only two Jewish members of her department. However, in the courtroom, the only issue was whether KSU acted arbitrarily in removing her for speaking her mind. A jury decided against the institution, and the administration decided not to appeal.10

By casting a shadow over Kennesaw's reputation for fairness, these cases complicated the institution's efforts to publicize its strong stance against all types of religious and ethnic discrimination. The university was proud of its record in attracting African-American students and faculty. Between 1991 and 1995 the number of black professors rose from twenty to thirty-four, then declined to twenty-seven by 2000. At the end of the millennium some 7 percent of the faculty was black, a higher percentage than all but a handful of sister institutions in the Georgia system. Black faculty members were found at all academic ranks and 70 percent were tenured, compared to just 57 percent of the
white faculty members.

During the 1990s the proportion of African-American students rose remarkably. In fall 1997 black enrollment for the first time surpassed one thousand, with an official figure of 1078. At the end of the century over thirteen hundred students were black (some 10 percent of the total student population). These numbers were up from only 275 black students (3 percent of total enrollment) in 1988. The improvement resulted in part from demographic changes in Cobb County, where the number of African-Americans has been rising (from 4 percent of the total population in 1980 to 19 percent in 2000). At the same time, the university, through the Student Development Center and other campus offices, worked diligently to recruit and retain black students. At the beginning of a new century the campus was hardly free of racial discord, and it fell short of the diversity of a downtown, urban university. But it increasingly reflected the racial composition of the nation as a whole and, for a suburban campus, was reasonably diverse.11

As KSU matured as an institution, it increasingly gained recognition beyond the campus for the excellence of its programs. The 1989 college edition of U.S. News and World Report singled out Kennesaw as one of five southern “Top Up-and-Coming Regional Colleges and Universities.” For the next two years the magazine continued to list Kennesaw as one of the “best up and coming colleges” in the South and as “a rising star.” In the late 1980s and 1990s KSU teacher education graduates often had the highest scores in the state on the teacher certification exam, and over 90 percent of the nursing graduates passed the licensing exam on the first attempt. In 1996 Success magazine listed the Coles College of Business as one of the top twenty-five business schools in the nation for entrepreneurship and one of the top ten “up-and-comers.”

As a state university, Kennesaw’s mission revolved primarily around excellence in teaching and professional service. President Betty Siegel set an excellent example by her active involvement in public affairs. In the late 1990s she served on the board of directors of four major corporations and a host of civic organizations. In 1996 she headed the Cobb Chamber of Commerce. Like Dr. Sturgis twenty-one years earlier, she was selected in 1996 as the Marietta Daily Journal’s Cobb Citizen of the Year. On a national scale she served as chair of the board of directors of the American Association of State Colleges and
Universities and as a member of the executive board of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

While the faculty was better known for teaching and service than research and writing, some faculty members gained regional and national recognition for their scholarly achievement. By the year 2000 faculty members brought to the university in external grants and contracts over four million dollars annually, a small amount compared to major research institutions, but more than double the record of just five years earlier. Some professors engaged in basic research, but more were involved in applied scholarship. Centers were created to engage in economic forecasting, provide services to family businesses, hold public conferences, and offer a wide variety of services. The Burruss Institute, for instance, conducted a major Lake Allatoona Clean Lakes Study and worked extensively with various law enforcement agencies.12

From its early days Kennesaw was a nontraditional institution serving numerous students over the traditional age. By fall 2000 about 38 percent of the undergraduates and 91 percent of the graduate students were age 25 or older. Almost 10 percent of all students were over the age of 40. The typical student juggled a host of responsibilities. Many were married and had children. Most had outside jobs. When the college started in the 1960s the overwhelming majority were male, but by the last two decades of the century over 60 percent were female. The older students brought to the classroom a wealth of practical experience and a strong desire to excel. Younger students brought stronger computer and Internet skills and an abundance of energy. As the two groups influenced each other, the general level of classroom achievement moved constantly upward.

Kennesaw was not alone in this transformation. In the 1990s only a few, elite residential schools catered exclusively to traditional aged students. In an era of rapid economic and societal change, salaried workers grew accustomed to changing jobs frequently. To remain current they found it necessary to become life-long learners. A commuter university by design, nontraditional Kennesaw, in many ways, became the typical university of the 1990s. Along with Southern Polytechnic State University and Chattahoochee Technical College, KSU provided a quality education at an affordable price to the citizens of Cobb and beyond.13
Tom Tocco and the Cobb County School District

In 1981 the Cobb County school board completed a national search for a new superintendent. Their choice was Thomas S. Tocco, a thirty-eight year-old assistant superintendent from Pinellas County, Florida. Tocco had majored in mathematics and chemistry as an undergraduate at the University of South Florida, and then received a doctorate in education from the University of Florida. For the Pinellas County school system, he supervised research, evaluation, and data processing. His areas of expertise included personnel management and teacher testing. Officials in the St. Petersburg-Clearwater area praised him as a good communicator who worked well with parents and the community. Self-confident to a fault, Tocco's brashness impressed Cobb school board chairman Harold Posey and the other board members, who picked him over older and more experienced candidates.14

Intellectually brilliant, Tocco enjoyed a spirited debate and was often verbally combative. For years, county government officials had complained about Marietta’s annexation policies, but had done little about them. Tocco quickly became the leader of the anti-Marietta forces. The city and county generally cooperated with each other, but from time to time the Marietta city council brought prime commercial properties into the city while bypassing adjacent, less lucrative residential sites. In March 1967 the Cobb board of education passed a resolution protesting Marietta annexations along the Four Lane highway southeast of town and in the Elizabeth community to the north. The latter action brought the North Chemical Company into Marietta but left out contiguous residential properties. Industrial sites carried higher assessments than individual homes and thus contributed more to government coffers. The board members condemned the city for allegedly following a policy of spot and strip annexation that was detrimental to the county school system.

As Marietta continued to annex, county leaders periodically registered further complaints. For example, during a 1972 discussion of the millage rate, Cobb school board member Joe Bird opined, “They get all the revenue producing property in the city and every time something comes up, they grab it, hopscotch.” Carl Harrison noted that Marietta
Thomas S. Tocco (Cobb County School District)
came six miles north of the city to his neighborhood, running down the centerline of the road to annex a 139-acre tract. He added that the map of Marietta looked like Spiderman, with thin, web-like fingers spreading in many directions.15

When Tocco became superintendent he began calling on Marietta to cease its annexation of valuable commercial properties. At a time when Marietta's tax base per student almost doubled that of the county, the Cobb school board asked the city to stop annexations until the county had a chance to catch up. The Marietta city council rejected that proposal in November 1983, but agreed to meet with the county educators to work on a compromise. By January 1984, with negotiations going nowhere, the county cut off discussion and asked the legislature to stop Marietta's annexations. Senator Carl Harrison, a former school board chairman, agreed to introduce such a bill.16

During the 1984 legislative session, the Cobb delegation worked out a compromise that allowed Marietta to annex Kennesaw Mountain in order to reach contiguous properties on the other side. At the same time, the city was prohibited from annexing more than 2 percent of the county's assessed commercial property value. This solution was not satisfactory to Tocco, who continued pushing for a total ban. At an August 1984 meeting, the superintendent urged residents of unincorporated areas to "put on your fighting shoes." Advocating a roll back of Marietta's boundaries to their 1970 locations, he called for the de-annexation of battlefield lands south of Dallas Highway. At an October 1984 district PTA council meeting, he distributed a two-page flier, claiming that Marietta policies had cost the county $1.5 million a year. The flier detailed construction projects that would have been completed with the lost revenues. When Marietta superintendent Roy Nichols denounced the flier as misleading and divisive, Tocco countered that he was "fighting for the citizens of Cobb County" and would not back down.17

In early 1985 the nonpartisan Legislative Educational Research Council gave some support to both sides. Its seven-page report noted that the county tax digest continued to expand despite Marietta's annexations, since the unincorporated areas were growing so rapidly in population. County property lost to Marietta between 1974 and 1984 cost the school system only $10.62 per pupil or less than six hundred thousand dollars of Cobb's nearly forty-nine million dollar school budg-
Mayor Bob Flournoy called it "a fight over crumbs." Nonetheless, the research council warned that uncontrolled annexation had the potential of doing serious harm to the county and recommended consolidation of the two school systems as a solution.

When Mariettans reacted in horror to the consolidation idea, county leaders renewed their efforts to stop annexations. Shortly after taking office in 1985, commission chair Earl Smith was angered by Marietta's annexation of six hundred acres just north of the city in the vicinity of Canton Highway, Sandy Plains Road, and Scufflegrit Road. The Trammel Crow Company and Southmark Corporation had first asked the county to rezone the property from residential to light commercial and industrial. When the commission turned them down, they successfully asked Marietta to annex them into the city at the requested zoning categories.

To stop Marietta the Cobb legislative delegation in 1985 persuaded the General Assembly to de-annex Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield lands south of Dallas Highway. In 1986 the state de-annexed the rest of the park and decreed a total ban on Marietta annexations for a five-year period from 1 July 1986 to the middle of 1991. It could have been worse for Marietta. An effort to de-annex the Trammel Crow-Southmark properties failed. Nonetheless, Tom Tocco expressed satisfaction that the county school system's fiscal solvency had been guaranteed for at least a half decade. He credited Senator Harrison with playing the central role in passing the ban.

Tocco's attack on Marietta turned next to the use of Board of Lights and Water (BLW) revenues to support education, since some of the BLW's customers lived in unincorporated areas where their children were barred from city schools. Marietta had profited from a BLW supplement since 1929, but to avoid a lawsuit Mayor Flournoy persuaded the city council to terminate direct funding of education from the city-owned utility. For several years in the 1980s the city kept school taxes at the low 6-mill rate of previous years by appropriating from the general fund an amount equivalent to what the BLW had formerly paid. In 1989, however, the city raised the millage rate for schools and eliminated any connection to the old BLW supplement. According to school chief Roy Nichols, Marietta went from the best-funded school system in Georgia to little above average.

Regardless of the funding controversies, both systems maintained
quality educational programs that earned national recognition. While scholastic aptitude test (SAT) scores remained below the national average, Cobb students led the Atlanta metropolitan area for much of the 1980s. Walton High School and Garrett and Tapp Middle Schools were proclaimed U.S. Department of Education National Schools of Excellence. Marietta's West Side School received recognition as a seventh congressional district elementary school of excellence, and the Education Department recognized the entire Marietta system for superior achievement. The Cobb district's after school program received national recognition from the U.S. Department of Education as one of the nation's best.20

Voters continued to support bond referenda for new school construction. In 1987 Tocco pushed through a $58.5 million bond issue, the largest in county school history. Pope High School opened in east Cobb in 1987. Despite these achievements, Tom Tocco accumulated many enemies during his eight years in Cobb County. His supporters thought he combined brilliance with compassion, but opponents found him arrogant and self-centered. Off the record one school board member joked that “if you're not careful he will take credit for the sun rising.” Toward the end of his tenure he became embroiled with the board in a contract dispute. In 1988 he asked for a two-year extension. With several members up for reelection shortly, board attorney Richard Still advised against a contract revision before the new board was installed. He argued that the state constitution prohibited board members from extending a superintendent’s contract more than six months beyond their own terms of office. Against Still’s advice the board extended Tocco’s contract twice in the mid-1980s and did so a third time in September 1988. That November, however, Georgia attorney general Michael Bowers issued an opinion that the two-year extensions were illegal.

As Tocco continued to press his case, the issue increasingly turned from the contract to the superintendent himself. Senior board members Carolyn Duncan and Harold Posey had helped bring him to Cobb County in 1981, but now they were disenchanted. Three newly elected board members, Laura Dingler, Beverly Boyd, and Paul Moore, took office in an angry mood, because they had been left out of contract negotiations, even after their November election. At eighty-three thousand dollars a year, Tocco was underpaid compared to superintendents of other large systems. Nevertheless, his insistence on a new contract undermined his relationship with the board. In January 1989 he
announced his departure at the end of the school year. In April he took a job in a relatively small Indiana school district for several thousand dollars less than he earned in Cobb.21

**Turnovers and Tumult in the 1990s**

After the Tocco years, the Cobb Board of Education seemed determined to find a proven leader. Former superintendent Kermit Keenum was doing a first-rate job as head of the Glynn County school district in Brunswick. In 1986 the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders chose him superintendent of the year. He managed to find the funds to upgrade dilapidated school buildings, and several Glynn County schools gained recognition as national schools of excellence. In a system that was 35 percent African-American, Keenum appointed a black man as associate superintendent and recruited other black administrators. Popular with students and parents, Keenum could have stayed in Glynn County as long as he wanted. In 1989, however, he applied for the Cobb County position and was quickly hired.22

Keenum's second tour of duty started well. He proposed a five-year building plan funded by three separate bond referenda. In November 1989 Cobb County voters overwhelmingly approved a $59.5 million bond issue designed to fund some 330 projects, including a new Carl Harrison High School in west Cobb. Two years later the electorate by more than three to one supported an additional $39.6 million bond proposal. The 1991 victory marked the tenth straight time since the early 1960s that county citizens authorized additional bonded debt for school construction.23

Unfortunately, the 1991 bond issue raised a question of conflict of interest. School board member Anne Brady wrote a private letter to the superintendent several days before the vote, expressing concern about his relationship with Lex Jolley & Company, a business that had handled county bond sales for many decades and was under contract for the 1991 bond issue. Jolley had employed Keenum as a consultant when he was superintendent during the 1970s, but he had not done any work for the company since his return. Brady was worried about the appearance of impropriety, especially since Jolley had been chosen without competitive bidding. Both Brady and Keenum were mortified when someone leaked the letter to the press, apparently in an attempt to defeat the bond referendum.
Kermit S. Keenum (Cobb County School District)
The hint of scandal forced the superintendent to disclose all his consultant activities, including a contract worth up to ten thousand dollars with the Clayton County school board. The county just south of Atlanta had hired Keenum to teach them how to sell the voters on a large school bond issue. Keenum had never attempted to keep his consulting work secret, but he did not go out of his way to tell the board everything he did after hours. A workaholic, he argued, “What I earn on my own time is my business. It’s time that I spend after I spend at least 60 hours a week here in Cobb County.”

The board’s legal counsel, D. Glenn Brock, argued that Keenum’s relationship with Lex Jolley & Company did not constitute a conflict of interest. However, the board asked Brock to draft an ethics policy for their consideration that would require board members, the superintendent, and senior staff to disclose any compensation they received from vendors who did business with the county schools. As the investigation of Keenum’s activities continued, other issues surfaced, such as his use of a county-provided car telephone in his consulting activities. Even after the board adopted a disclosure policy, member Beverly Boyd opened debate on whether the superintendent should cease all outside consulting. At that point, Keenum lost patience and, to the surprise of a stunned board, announced his retirement.

The school board launched a national search for Keenum’s replacement and by October announced the name of Dr. Arthur Steller, the superintendent of Oklahoma City schools. Due to the fact that the general election was only a month away, the board followed their attorney’s advice and offered Steller a six-month contract, with the assumption it would be extended when the new board took office. Steller was considered a brilliant administrator who could lead the system to new heights. Unfortunately, the board learned just after hiring him that he was under investigation in Oklahoma for alleged ethical lapses that far exceeded anything Keenum was accused of doing. Three days before he resigned in Oklahoma City, he received an eighty thousand dollar payment (fifty-six thousand after taxes) for unused sick leave. Local auditors were concerned that he did not follow proper procedures since he failed to provide six months notification and ask the school board for approval. Auditors also questioned why Steller received large sums of money for undocumented medical expenses, bonuses, and work at the legislature. When news of the investigation reached Cobb County,
Steller’s tenure became doubtful. Early in 1993 the board announced that his contract would not be renewed.\footnote{1}

Not wanting to go through another long search, the board turned to a local educator. A twenty-seven year veteran of the Cobb system, Grace Calhoun in 1993 became its first female superintendent. Hired “to help calm the waters,” in the words of school board chairperson Anne Brady, Calhoun had grown up in the mountains of North Carolina, received a college degree from Mercer University, and then worked her way through the ranks in Cobb County. At the time of her hiring, she was associate superintendent. One of her successes as superintendent was the passage of yet another large bond issue, this time $221 million for technology and school construction. Her critics accused her of lacking vision, and a poll of board members by the Atlanta Journal/Constitution indicated that a majority did not favor renewing her contract when it expired. But Calhoun was nearing retirement and claimed that she never intended to request a contract extension. After three years on the job, she announced that she would leave the system at the end of the 1996 school year.\footnote{26}

For the fourth time in seven years school board members searched for a new superintendent. By January 1997 they announced the selection of Dr. Richard Benjamin, the superintendent of the Metropolitan Nashville Public School System. Describing himself as a “visionary and agent for change,” Benjamin impressed the board with his record in Nashville as an innovator who was not afraid to alter time honored practices that no longer seemed to work. Benjamin arrived in Cobb in time to campaign for a local option 1 percent sales tax to pay for further school construction in Cobb and in the Marietta school district.

The two systems received a setback in June 1997, when local voters decisively turned down the tax increase. In an election held after schools closed for the summer, the turnout was light, prompting Benjamin to suggest that supporters had been overconfident. Almost in despair, Benjamin told a reporter, “I’m not sure where we go from here. The only thing that is certain is that the needs are still there and the growth is still there.” Paul Ploener, chairman of Concerned Taxpayers in Cobb County, played a leading role in defeating the sales tax. Among other things, he questioned whether a proper audit had been conducted of the $221 million bond issue of just two years previously.

The school boards regrouped and began preparing for another
Grace Calhoun (Cobb County School District)
vote the following year. They received strong support from state school board chairman and former legislator Johnny Isakson who campaigned strenuously for the school tax. Isakson pointed out that the tax would bring in about $673 million dollars during its five-year duration, and the money would go to school construction and other capital improvements. From the perspective of Isakson and Benjamin, a pay-as-you-go sales tax was far more efficient than a bond issue for the same amount, because the interest on bonds elevated the overall cost of any project by about 60 percent. The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) was an idea that more than one hundred counties in Georgia were already using for various civic and educational projects.

On 15 September 1998 Cobb County voters reversed the verdict of the previous year, with 59 percent voting favorably on the sales tax question. Helping persuade county voters was a promise they would receive a $115 million rollback in property taxes. With the county school system growing by about three thousand new students a year, the sales tax funded two new high schools (Kennesaw Mountain in west Cobb and Kell in northeast Cobb), four middle schools, and six elementary institutions. The Marietta school board projected a gain of $56.6 million over the next five years, of which $34 million was designated for a new Marietta High School building. Not wanting to wait for the revenues to come in slowly, Marietta leaders also placed on the ballot a $50 million bond referendum so the school board would have money up front to pay for construction.2

Benjamin did not stick around to see the new schools completed. In May 2000 he surprised everyone by announcing he was leaving after just a little more than three years on the job. Several board members had begun to criticize him for failure to implement his imaginative ideas. However, he could cite improved test scores and other evidence that his innovations were working. His decision did not result from any immediate likelihood that he would be forced out. Instead, he announced that he had accepted an offer extended by the president of Kennesaw State University, Betty Siegel, to be an associate professor and executive-in-residence to help plan a character education program and work with non-profit organizations involved in leadership development.

Searching once more for a superintendent, the county took an unconventional direction, selecting in November 2000 a retired three-star lieutenant general, Joseph Redden. The Air Force general had an undergraduate degree from the U.S. Air Force Academy and a master's
Richard Benjamin (Cobb County School District)
Joseph Redden (Cobb County School District)
in political science from Auburn University. A veteran of more than six hundred combat missions in Vietnam, Redden possessed experience in educational administration as commandant of cadets at the Air Force Academy, commander of the Air University, and director of education of the Air Education and Training Command. After years of growth and turmoil the Cobb School System ended the decade hoping they had a leader who could command respect and bring stability to the superintendent's office.28

The Marietta system maintained greater continuity at the top. Roy Nichols served twelve years from 1981 to 1993, then left to head the school system in Norfolk, Virginia. His replacement, Ron Galloway, came from the Cobb school system, where he had been principal of Walton High School and then associate superintendent of high school operations. Galloway remained six years, leading Marietta through the 1998 successful SPLOST vote and participating in the controversial decision to place the new high school at Manning Road on the western edge of town, rather than in a more central location. Before he retired he was able to award the first high school diplomas in an international baccalaureate program that he helped implement. Upon his departure, school board chairman Dave Miller described him as "a fantastic leader...[who] leaves the school system in the best shape it's ever been in." The Marietta board did not go far to find a replacement. In July 1999 Miller announced that Harold Barnett would move to Marietta from his job as the head of Cartersville schools. Barnett emphasized academics and technology and was chosen in part because Cartersville had higher overall test results on standardized tests than Marietta. As soon as he arrived, he found himself in the midst of a scandal over cost overruns on the new high school. Despite promises at the time of the SPLOST referendum that the school would be built for thirty-four million dollars, the price tag eventually ran more than twenty million dollars above that figure. Still, Marietta started the new millennium with a facility designed to serve community needs for years to come.29
Rise and Fall of Newt Gingrich

Gingrich's Early Career

The Cobb resident with the greatest national clout in the 1990s was a newcomer. An army brat, Newt Gingrich was born in Pennsylvania and grew up near army bases in America and Europe. While he was still a teenager, his stepfather, Major Bob Gingrich, was transferred to Fort Benning, and Newt enrolled in a Columbus high school. Completing his secondary education in 1961, the young scholar enrolled in Emory University, graduating with a history degree four years later. By that time he had married his high school math teacher and become a father. A second child was born while he was in graduate school. After enrolling briefly in the graduate program at Georgia State, Gingrich was accepted at Tulane University, where he demonstrated the remarkable energy and analytical ability that characterized his later career.

He passed his doctoral exams and moved to Brussels in 1968 to write a dissertation, “Belgian Education Policy in the Congo, 1945-1960,” which he successfully defended in 1971. By this time Gingrich
had worked in the campaigns of a number of Republican candidates and was beginning to think about running himself. He wanted to return to Georgia, where he hoped eventually to seek election to Congress. In 1970 West Georgia College in Carrollton offered him that opportunity, giving him a position as assistant professor of history.1

Gingrich immediately displayed the audacity (his enemies would say, gall) that characterized his rise to the top. When the presidency of West Georgia College came open during his first year on the faculty, he applied. The history department chairmanship became available the next year, and he again submitted his name. Having failed in both those attempts, he announced in 1974 he was running for the U.S. House of Representatives against a twenty-year veteran, Jack Flynt. The young professor made a decision at the beginning of his career to teach every course that interested him, but to forego scholarship, even if it meant he never gained tenure. Rather than engaging in original research in his European history discipline, he plunged into professional service, speaking on a variety of topics to any community group that would listen. Gingrich made himself known in the community in other ways. He became active in the Kiwanis Club and Georgia Conservancy and was chosen a deacon in his local Baptist church. He attended every GOP gathering he could find and did all he could to help the party. Popular with students and heavily involved in the Carrollton community, Gingrich thought by age thirty-one his time had come to fulfill a lifelong ambition.2

By the time he burst on the national scene, Gingrich was a conservative spokesman railing against two generations of liberal dominance in Washington. Running against Jack Flynt, however, Gingrich received a fair amount of support from liberals who adopted an “anyone but Flynt” attitude. Flynt was an old school Democrat, who started his career when states’ rights, white supremacist Democrats ruled Georgia. He took care of his constituents and supported federal aid to farmers, but opposed almost everything else that national Democrats wanted. Flynt voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He had little use for organized labor or foreign aid, and he seemingly had no interest in protecting the environment. In contrast, Gingrich believed in the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, advocated increased public support for education, and chaired the local chapter of the Georgia Conservancy. Along with Governor Jimmy Carter, he
Newt Gingrich (William R. Davis Photography, Mel Steely collection)
opposed on environmental grounds one of Flynt’s favorite projects, the proposed Sprewell Bluff Dam on the Flint River. Gingrich’s biographer and friend, Mel Steely, describes him as a common-sense conservative who sought the same ends as liberals, but thought their well meaning attempts to eliminate social injustices had largely failed. Like Ronald Reagan, Gingrich viewed government not as the solution, but the problem. In a close election, the first-time candidate fell less than three thousand votes short, receiving 48.5 percent of the ballots. Immediately he began preparing for the next campaign.3

In 1976 native son Jimmy Carter seized the Democratic nomination for president. His long coattails in Georgia made it difficult for any Republican to do well that year, and Gingrich lost narrowly to Flynt once more. The next round, however, belonged to the Republican challenger. In February 1978 Flynt announced he would retire at the end of the term. With a number of candidates running for the empty seat, Gingrich beat two contenders in the GOP primary, then won decisively in the general election against Democratic state senator Virginia Shapard.4

Gingrich’s personal triumph came in a year when Democrats held the other nine congressional seats and received more than 80 percent of the vote in races for U.S. senator, governor, and lieutenant governor. The new representative set out to build the Georgia GOP, but it was an uphill battle for another decade. While Gingrich won six more elections from the old sixth district in west Georgia, his only Republican allies in the state’s congressional delegation were Mack Mattingly and Pat Swindall. Neither Mattingly nor Swindall lasted long. In 1980 Mattingly upset Herman Talmadge for a U.S. senate seat, but he lost to Wyche Fowler in his 1986 reelection bid. Swindall represented suburban Atlanta’s fourth district from 1985-1989, but then self-destructed in a personal tragedy. As late as 1992 Gingrich was the only Republican congressman from Georgia.

Gingrich was not intimidated by his minority status. Being the only Republican in the Georgia delegation gave him a celebrity status he would never have enjoyed as part of the majority. The voice of Georgia Republicans, Gingrich had ready access to the media and used newspapers, talk shows, and C-SPAN to forward his conservative agenda. He often seemed an enfant terrible to his own party leadership for his combative nature and guerrilla tactics. Typical was his crusade against
House speaker Jim Wright, filing ethics charges that eventually brought the speaker down. A hero to a young generation of GOP activists that seethed at the party's inability to gain control of the lower house, Gingrich took his first step in the party leadership on 22 March 1989 when he was elected minority whip.5

Reapportionment in the 1990s

The Carrollton statesman's rise came on the eve of the GOP's greatest gains in Georgia since Reconstruction. With the 1992 election the party went from one seat in Congress to four. In a few more years the number jumped to eight. Republican congressional victories in the 1990s can be attributed to several factors. First, the economy was booming and people were flocking to Georgia from all over the world to take advantage of the good times. These affluent, well-educated newcomers were natural allies of pro-business, limited-government GOP politicians. Second, native white Democrats had been growing alienated from the national party for some time, because of its drift to the left. Feeling more at home with Reagan and Bush Republicans, they gradually severed their ties with the party of their ancestors. Third, the controversy over reapportionment between the Georgia legislature and President George Bush's Justice Department had the unintended consequence of benefiting Republican candidates.

In August 1991 the Georgia General Assembly held a special reapportionment session to draw new district lines based on the 1990 census. Due to population growth, Georgia was entitled to one new congressional seat, bringing the total to eleven. The legislature had to redraw the boundaries of all the districts, and in the process Speaker Tom Murphy plotted to drive Gingrich out of west Georgia. Murphy was embarrassed that his hometown, Bremen, was in Gingrich's congressional district, and he wanted to redraw the boundary lines to favor a Democratic opponent. Bowing to the speaker's demands, the Democrat-dominated General Assembly moved the sixth district to the northern Atlanta suburbs, running from north and east Cobb through south Cherokee to north Fulton and a slice of western Gwinnett. Meanwhile, the rural remnant of Gingrich's old sixth district was woven into a new third. While the change made reelection more difficult,
Gingrich might still have carried the realigned third district. At the last minute, however, the Democrats put his home precinct in John Lewis's fifth. It was virtually impossible for a white conservative Republican to win an election in a black-majority Atlanta district, especially against a civil rights icon. So Gingrich announced he was moving to east Cobb to seek election in the revised sixth.  

Recognizing that African-Americans made up 27 percent of the state's population, the Democratic leadership increased the number of black majority districts from one to two. Under the 1965 voting rights act, Georgia had to gain federal approval for changes in its election laws. When the reapportionment proposal was submitted, the Justice Department demanded that three of Georgia's eleven districts have black majorities, since African-Americans made up three-elevenths of Georgia's population. In making this concession, the legislature contrived two districts that would later be labeled bizarre. The eleventh ran all the way from Atlanta to Augusta and Savannah. The voters of different parts of the district had little in common. Indeed, the only stated purpose in creating such a gerrymandered district was to find enough pockets of black residents to create a majority. Ultimately, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out the plan on the grounds that it violated the equal protection clause of the fourteenth amendment.  

In the meantime three African-American Democrats won election to Congress. In addition to veteran representative John Lewis, Cynthia McKinney gained the new eleventh district seat and Sanford Bishop won from the southwest Georgia second district. After the courts whittled down the number of black-majority districts to one, McKinney found herself in a newly constituted fourth in the metropolitan area east of the Atlanta city limits. The revised fourth and second districts had white majorities and large black minorities. Enjoying the advantages of incumbency, McKinney and Bishop retained their posts into the twenty-first century. What was good for black Democrats also proved advantageous for conservative, white Republicans. By taking large numbers of African-Americans out of the other districts, the legislature and the courts opened the door for conservative Republicans to topple moderate Democrats. After the 1992 election the Georgia delegation consisted of four white Democrats, four white Republicans, and three black Democrats.  

By the time that Gingrich announced his move to Cobb County,
Republican legislator Herman Clark had already entered the race. Clark was well known and highly respected in his home county, and launched an aggressive campaign, criticizing Gingrich as an interloper who was more concerned with national issues than constituent needs. Gingrich (along with many other congressmen, including the seventh district’s Representative Buddy Darden) had been embarrassed recently by revelations of a sweet arrangement under which House members maintained their own bank. In the last thirteen years Gingrich had written checks for more than he had in his account on twenty-two occasions for a total of over twenty-six thousand dollars. While the Republican leader had fewer overdrafts than some of his colleagues, he nonetheless seemed a beneficiary of a highly questionable system.

Gingrich relied heavily on local politicians to introduce him to the local party faithful. State senator Sallie Newbill was helpful in north Fulton, as were Fred Aiken and Matt Towery in Cobb. A ten-year veteran of the Georgia General Assembly, Aiken resigned to become Gingrich’s full-time field director. After the election Aiken would run the sixth district office in Cobb County. A thirty-two-year-old attorney, Towery already had campaign experience as the 1990 Republican candidate for lieutenant governor. In 1992 he served as chairman of the Gingrich reelection campaign and also won election to Aiken’s old legislative seat, representing the Vinings and Smyrna area. In the 1992 sixth district Republican primary Herman Clark carried Cobb, but Gingrich took Fulton and won by a slim 980 votes. Next, he had to face Democratic candidate Tony Center in the general election. An attorney from Fulton County, Center tried to make Gingrich’s personality and character the main issues, but he had little chance in a Republican stronghold, and Gingrich won in November with relative ease.9

Gingrich’s Controversial Class and the Republican Takeover of Congress

Gingrich’s district now included Kennesaw State College, and the former professor dreamed of teaching a new course, “Renewing American Civilization,” that would allow him to analyze what was wrong with America and propose conservative solutions. A number of faculty mem-
bers participated in developing the syllabus and ensuring academic rigor. With a Ph.D. in history Gingrich had the academic credentials to teach the special course. Kennesaw State’s School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences was uninterested in sponsoring the class, but Tim Mescon, the dean of the business school, gave his support. President Betty Siegel signed off on it, thinking that Kennesaw would benefit from the publicity of having the minority whip as an adjunct professor. The chancellor of the university system gave his approval.

“Renewing American Civilization” was offered in fall 1993. Classes were interesting and provocative, and the administration, in good conscience, defended the course as an exercise of academic freedom. The campus was unprepared, however, for the intense criticism that Gingrich and his class generated. The central problem was that some of the congressman’s political supporters donated two hundred thousand dollars to the Kennesaw State College Foundation for the purchase of video equipment to broadcast the classes around the country. Gingrich’s opponents objected that Kennesaw had sacrificed its impartiality by allowing a powerful politician to use the institution’s good name to build a cadre of supporters for his conservative revolution. They pointed out that political contributions are not tax deductible, but charitable and educational donations are. One could make a case that political activists used the course to write off expenditures that were political in nature. In the sixty-year history of the university system, Democratic governors had appointed all members of the Board of Regents. Democrats were especially loud in their denunciation of the Gingrich course. The regents responded to the complaints and prevented Gingrich from teaching beyond one quarter. At the same time they established a policy that no state or federal elected officials could teach in the university system while still in office.¹⁰

During this same period, Gingrich was a chief Republican spokesperson in opposition to the policies of the Clinton administration. In 1992 Bill Clinton had carried Georgia and the nation (although not Cobb County) and had become the first Democratic president since Jimmy Carter left office twelve years earlier. As Clinton attempted to push through healthcare reform, a tax increase, and other liberal plans, Gingrich emerged as his most effective congressional critic. Minority leader Bob Michel announced in 1993 that he would not seek reelection, and the east Cobb representative was the heir apparent.
But Gingrich wanted to be more than minority leader. His goal was to orchestrate a national campaign to give the GOP its first House majority in forty years.

In 1994 Gingrich traveled throughout the nation campaigning for Republican congressional candidates. He was the guiding force behind a “Contract with America” that committed GOP candidates to a balanced federal budget, a line-item veto, welfare reform, a vote on term limits, and other conservative changes. The “Contract” helped turn local races into a referendum on the Clinton administration at a time when the president seemed to be moving too far to the left. One Republican candidate after another accused a Democratic incumbent of being a Clinton clone. The tactic proved remarkably effective. As the Republicans won a historic victory, their leader suddenly found himself elevated to speaker of the House.

One of the beneficiaries of the Gingrich strategy was Bob Barr, who in 1994 achieved a surprise victory over eleven-year veteran Buddy Darden. For years, local people had considered Darden, a Marietta Democrat, to be a non-ideological moderate who provided excellent constituent services, protected Lockheed’s interests, and brought federal dollars into the district for a variety of projects. Many seventh district voters were angered, however, by his tendency to go along with his more liberal Democratic colleagues. As Cobb became increasingly Republican, his future became clouded. During the 1991 reapportionment, the Democratic Georgia legislature tried to help him by taking GOP-oriented north and east Cobb out of the district. That strategy worked in 1992, but did not save him two years later.

Bob Barr made much of Darden’s vote for the president’s hefty tax increase and expensive crime bill, which seemed loaded with a host of social programs. Clinton had never been popular in Cobb County. He seemed to be involved in one personal scandal after another and in 1994 appeared less a New Democrat than an old-fashioned big-government liberal. Barr made an issue of Darden’s chumminess with Clinton and displayed at every opportunity a photo of the Cobb representative jogging with the president.

On a substantive level, Barr proclaimed his admiration for the policies of ex-President Reagan, his fervent support of the right to bear arms, and his pro-life conservatism. The outcome of the race was in doubt until late on election night, but in the end the GOP challenger
Newt Gingrich in thought on his balcony, with the Washington Monument in the background, 11 November 1998 (Mel Steely collection)
emerged victorious and became part of the freshman class that headed to Washington to revolutionize America. He would gain fame in the 1990s as a board member of the National Rifle Association and outspoken defender of second amendment freedoms. As a member of the House Judiciary Committee he would become a leader in the effort to impeach President Clinton.

After working a few years for Gingrich, Fred Aiken became seventh district director for Barr, operating out of an office in west Marietta. While both Gingrich and Barr were highly intelligent workaholics, Barr was more involved in the day-to-day running of his local office. To save commuting time in Washington, Barr spent the evenings on a sofa in his congressional office. Aiken arrived at work in the Marietta office around five o’clock each morning to find a number of e-mail messages that the early-rising Barr had already sent him. When the congressman came home on weekends, he spent most of his time meeting with constituents. Through the efforts of Aiken and the rest of the staff, Barr did as fine a job as Darden in providing constituent services. Like his friend Newt Gingrich, however, Barr incurred the wrath of Speaker Tom Murphy of the Georgia House, who used the reapportionment process following the 2000 census to dismantle the old seventh district and remove it from Cobb County. Shortly after the turn of the century, Barr sold his house in the Smyrna area and followed his district into Cherokee County.

**Fall from Power**

In the meantime Speaker Gingrich in the late 1990s emerged as one of the most powerful leaders in the world. At the end of 1995 he appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine as the “man of the year.” As speaker he fought with tremendous energy and idealism to push through the House most of the “Contract with America.” As the most outspoken and articulate opponent of President Clinton, he gained star quality as a possible presidential contender. Yet Gingrich had as many negatives as positives. Admired for his brilliance, the speaker frequently came across as an intellectual bully and snob. He did not smile a lot in public, and many feared he was too intense and too determined to force a controversial agenda on the American populace. Just at the moment he ascended to
power, he became embroiled in two issues that raised serious questions about his character. The first was Gingrich's decision to turn his back on a newly appointed House historian whom he had persuaded to come to Washington. The second was an investigation of ethics violations revolving around a questionable book deal and the "Renewing American Civilization" course.

Shortly after the 1994 victory, Gingrich asked Christina Jeffrey, a Kennesaw State associate professor of political science and public administration, to take the post of historian for the House of Representatives. The main function of the office was to work with C-SPAN covering House activities and, in other ways, to develop educational programs on the history and functions of Congress. The Speaker forced out the former House historian, Ray Smock, who had been appointed by one of his Democratic predecessors. Refusing to go gracefully, Smock accused Gingrich of politicizing the position, a charge repeated by the new speaker's Democratic opponents. A conservative Republican, Jeffrey had helped Gingrich develop the "Renewing American Civilization" course and had enthusiastically supported him for years.

Not long after reaching Washington, Jeffrey came under attack from congressional liberals when they discovered she had been the center of controversy in the late 1980s for opposing federal funding of a Holocaust course. In 1986 she had volunteered to review grant proposals for the U.S. Department of Education. This unpaid professional service was supposed to be performed confidentially, but someone in the education department leaked her Holocaust course evaluation, and the Washington Post reprinted part of it out of context. The department of education evaluation form asked whether the proposal presented a balanced view of the subject. Jeffrey responded that it gave "no evidence of balance or objectivity." She added, "The Nazi point of view, however unpopular, is still a point of view and is not presented, nor is that of the Ku Klux Klan." Jeffrey later admitted that she could have been more careful in the use of language, but her intent was clear, when read in context. She had attempted to argue that one could not grasp what happened in Germany during the World War II era without trying to understand who the Nazis were and what they stood for. The reference to the KKK came from the fact that the Holocaust course attempted an analogy between Nazi terrorism in Germany and Klan violence in the American South. No one who knew Jeffrey believed that she harbored
Nazi or Klan views. A Roman Catholic who had lived most her life in southern states, she had first-hand knowledge of Klan bigotry. She never opposed teaching about the Holocaust and was happy when the author of the proposal made revisions in response to her criticisms and the course ultimately passed the review process. Nonetheless, Democrats desiring to embarrass the speaker seized unfairly on her nearly ten-year-old comments and denounced her as a neo-Nazi extremist.

Months later, Georgia congressman John Lewis would apologize to Jeffrey for his harsh words. Ultimately, she gained endorsements from Jewish leaders such as Abraham H. Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, who stood with her at a news conference to denounce accusations of anti-Semitism leveled against her. Most of the Democratic leadership, however, never bothered to find the facts. In time, Jeffrey became as critical of Gingrich and his staff as she was of the Democrats, because of their failure to stand on principle. She had informed the speaker’s staff about the Holocaust controversy shortly after she was offered the job, but none of them saw it as a problem until they began to receive negative publicity. Then the speaker’s press secretary, Tony Blankley, advocated her firing and issued a press release indicating she had been fired about three hours before Gingrich even asked for her resignation. In a midnight phone call to the embattled House historian, Gingrich seemed sympathetic, but said he could not afford the political capital it would take to win the fight. Rather than giving the Democrats an issue, Gingrich decided to sacrifice his appointee. He said he needed to concentrate all his energy on the ethics complaint against him and the battle to enact the “Contract with America.”14

Jeffrey was forced out without a hearing. At the cost of a damaged professional reputation and some forty thousand dollars in moving expenses, she packed to return to Georgia. Fortunately, Kennesaw State had kept her job for her; so she was able to return to her scholarly responsibilities. Ten months later Gingrich offered a partial apology, writing that she was “treated shabbily” by the national press and her political opponents. After she criticized this “lame statement,” he met with her in December 1995 and told reporters that his decision to fire her was “totally inappropriate” and motivated not by evidence but by the “media frenzy.” Noting her “tremendous courage,” the speaker said that Jeffrey deserved “vindication.”15

Gingrich failed to stand up for his House historian in part because
he was under personal attack himself. Shortly after the 1994 election, HarperCollins offered him $4.5 million to write several books. Gingrich should have known better than to accept such a deal. It was obvious to virtually everyone outside Washington that the huge amount was a byproduct of his political power and not his scholarly or literary ability. His critics attacked his avariciousness and his poor judgment in accepting money from a company owned by Rupert Murdock, whose Fox television network had federal regulatory problems at the time. Under intense political pressure, Gingrich agreed to take only a dollar advance and rely on royalty payments to profit from his writings. Since his literary agent insisted on her commission based on the $4.5 million deal she negotiated, Gingrich made relatively little on his book.\(^{16}\)

Meanwhile, the speaker incurred another financial liability, resulting from an adverse decision of the House ethics committee regarding the “Renewing American Civilization” course. The political repercussions began when Gingrich’s 1994 Democratic opponent, Ben Jones, filed a complaint with the ethics committee over the course’s funding. The ethics committee had to decide whether the course was a legitimate academic endeavor or an attempt to build a loyal following of conservative Republican activists. If the latter were the case, then the contributions to the tax-exempt foundation would be illegal.

On 4 October 1994 Gingrich’s staff filed with the ethics committee a report that accurately detailed what Gingrich had done. When the committee asked for more information on the role of a political action committee, GOPAC, Gingrich’s attorneys filed two additional responses, dated 8 December 1994 and 27 March 1995. Unfortunately, both of the lawyers’ briefs were poorly researched, inaccurate, and in conflict with their own attachments. One of the documents indicated that GOPAC had no connection to the course, while the attachments mentioned GOPAC numerous times. Gingrich apparently trusted the lawyers to state the facts correctly and did not read the reports carefully before signing them.

In December 1995 the ethics committee cleared Gingrich of all charges regarding the course itself. At the same time, it refused to drop the issue of the conflicting statements filed by Gingrich’s staff and lawyers. The committee authorized an investigation by a special counsel, Jim Cole. Feeling betrayed by his former attorneys, the speaker brought in a new team of lawyers to defend him on this narrow issue.
After intensive negotiations, the committee and Gingrich’s representatives reached a compromise. Gingrich would admit that he should have consulted attorneys more in developing his course and that he had unintentionally filed erroneous reports. He refused to pay a fine, but agreed to accept a reprimand from the House and pay the committee three hundred thousand dollars to cover costs incurred in investigating the inaccurate statements. The size of the payment was unusually steep, but Gingrich assumed he could cover it with campaign funds. After his opponents vociferously denounced that solution, Gingrich eventually paid the fine out of his own pocket, thus ending the ethics controversy.17

Gingrich successfully won reelection in 1996 against millionaire Democrat Michael Coles and saw his party retain control of the House. Despite growing opposition within his own party, the Cobb County politician managed to remain speaker. Widely admired for his role in orchestrating the GOP congressional takeover, Gingrich, nonetheless, had many enemies. Just as Republicans ran their 1994 congressional campaigns against Bill Clinton, Democrats pledged in 1996 and 1998 to stop Newt Gingrich. The 1998 election was his undoing. While the Republicans achieved a House majority for the third straight time, the margin of victory was extremely thin. With Gingrich’s fate as speaker uncertain, he shocked everyone by suddenly resigning from Congress.18

The Internal Revenue Service took until 2 February 1999, after Gingrich left office, to exonerate him of charges that he violated tax laws with the “Renewing American Civilization” course. While the speaker was in power and under investigation, the tax-exempt status of the Kennesaw State University Foundation was also in question. Over several years the foundation spent about a half million dollars in legal fees to protect its interests. While a dark cloud hovered above it, the foundation had difficulty persuading benefactors to make large donations and had to postpone plans for a concert hall on the Kennesaw State campus. The fact that the IRS delayed its decision until Gingrich was safely gone raised suspicions that the speaker and Kennesaw State were victims of White House dirty politics.

With the sixth district seat now open, one veteran officeholder and several other contenders jumped into the race. The favorite from the beginning was former state legislator Johnny Isakson, the GOP candidate for governor in 1990 and a U.S. senate candidate in 1996.
Johnny Isakson
Shortly after the 1996 election, the Democrat-controlled state school board, appointed by the governor, came into conflict with the elected superintendent, Republican Linda Schrenko. Governor Zell Miller resolved the conflict by asking the board members for their resignations. Desiring to find someone known as a peacemaker, Democrat Miller tapped Republican Isakson as the new chairman of the state board of education. A moderate by nature, Isakson was the opposite of Gingrich in temperament. Widely admired by Democrats and Republicans alike, Isakson was a person of principle and integrity who could get along with the opposite party. His entry into the race dissuaded other prominent Republicans, such as Chuck Clay, from entering. To initiate his efforts, the candidate lent his campaign about a half million dollars. Then he quickly raised an additional million from friends, supporters, and political action committees.

Of the other five candidates, only one managed to raise a significant amount of money. The right wing of the Republican Party felt uneasy about Isakson’s candidacy, remembering his vigorous defense of the pro-choice position on abortion and his support for a number of tax referenda, including the 1998 SPLOST that created a 1 percent sales tax for education. The candidate of the right was former House historian Christina Jeffrey, who took an unpaid leave of absence from Kennesaw State University in order to run. In a spirited campaign, Jeffrey received contributions totaling more than $225,000, allowing her to compete for name recognition in the media.

In this “nonpartisan” election, the ballot did not identify the candidates’ party affiliations. However, one of the contenders, Gary Pelphrey, had run as a Democrat against Gingrich in the same district just three months earlier. In November 1998 Pelphrey received 29 percent of the vote to the speaker’s 71. In the 23 February 1999 special election Pelphrey garnered only 5 percent. The decline reflected a tendency on the part of moderate and liberal Democrats to abandon one of their own for Isakson. Frightened by Jeffrey’s conservatism, they made the pragmatic decision of supporting the moderate candidate most likely to win. On election night Isakson won 65 percent of the vote to Jeffrey’s 26. After the presidential victory of George W. Bush, Isakson emerged as a key player in the House, especially on educational issues.11

Thus, the Gingrich era ended quickly. The conservatives’ bright hopes of 1994 that the GOP could rein in big government seemed
dashed. Washington returned to politics as usual, and the electorate, in Cobb and elsewhere, made clear its preference for non-ideological moderates. The loss of Newt Gingrich, however, did not mark an end to Cobb's impact on the state and nation. The same 1998 election that ended Gingrich's career sent a Cobb politician, Roy Barnes, to the Georgia governor's mansion, where he became one of the strongest chief executives in the state's history. At home, the county commission, despite occasional notoriety, maintained a progressive record on quality of life issues that made it a model for other suburban communities. Those stories of state and local achievement will be recounted in the next chapter.
Bill Byrne, Roy Barnes, and Cobb’s Impact on State and Nation

During the last two decades of the twentieth century Cobb was the most Republican county in Georgia. In GOP primaries, Cobb led the state in ballots cast, with only Gwinnett coming close. Typically, Cobb accounted for about 10 to 13 percent of Georgia’s Republican primary voters. Both Cobb-based U.S. congressmen adhered to the GOP, as did a majority of county commissioners, school board members, and legislators. Indeed, by 1990, one of Cobb’s leading Democrats, Roy Barnes, could say regretfully, “There is no two-party system in Cobb County. Cobb County is a one-party county. It is a Republican, one-party county.” Nevertheless, Barnes envisioned a Democratic resurgence within about a decade as the population stabilized and became more diverse. The 2000 election provided some evidence that the future governor’s prediction was coming true. While the GOP continued to dominate the legislative delegation, the Democrats showed surprising strength in the southern half of the county. In 2000 veteran state senator Steve Thompson won easily, and incumbent
Democrat Don Wix gained reelection without Republican opposition. In House district 35 first-time candidate Terry Johnson upset incumbent Republican George Grindley, and in district 32, including part of Marietta, incumbent GOP legislator Judy Manning won by only nineteen votes over Democrat Pat Dooley. Meanwhile, three-term GOP congressman Bob Barr carried the seventh district decisively, but lost his home base in south and west Cobb to challenger Roger Kahn. The *Atlanta Constitution* attributed the Democratic totals to the hole in the Atlanta doughnut growing larger as more middle-class blacks and other traditionally Democratic ethnic groups spilled into the predominantly Anglo-Saxon suburbs.1

In the 1990s Cobb's political influence grew within both national parties. On the Republican side, Newt Gingrich and Bob Barr played major national roles, and all serious presidential contenders visited Cobb on campaign tours. After virtually disappearing in the late 1980s, Democratic power reemerged in November 1998 with the gubernatorial victory of Mableton native Roy Barnes, the first Cobb countian to become governor since Joseph M. Brown at the beginning of the century. One of the largest and most affluent Georgia counties, Cobb exemplified the new Georgia of the year 2000. With more than eight million residents, Georgia was no longer a rural state. About half the people lived in the Atlanta metropolitan area, but only a fraction of metro Atlanta was urban. About a tenth of the metro population lived within the Atlanta city limits, and most of the rest were found in unincorporated suburbs, especially in burgeoning north Fulton, Gwinnett, and Cobb counties.4

In a 1998 column entitled “Power to the Suburbs,” *Atlanta Journal* editorial page editor Jim Wooten noted that metropolitan Atlanta grew by an average of almost seventy thousand people a year during the 1990s, with Cobb and Gwinnett accounting for about half of that total. Wooten observed that most of the newcomers knew little about local politics; when they failed to recognize names on the ballot, they tended to vote for their favorite political party. Since most were well educated, affluent, and white, that party tended to be the GOP. Consequently, Wooten attributed the drift toward the Republican Party to the power of newcomers.5

At the end of the 1990s, with about half the state's population located in the suburbs, Cobb residents had become the typical
Bill Byrne, Roy Barnes, and Cobb's Impact on State and Nation

Bob Barr (Bob Barr for U.S. Congress office)
Georgians. Between 1990 and 2000 the entire state population grew a whopping 26 percent, but Cobb expanded at an even faster 36 percent clip. The increase reflected a reversal of population trends since the first half of the century. Now people of all races were flocking in great numbers to a newfound Promised Land. Well off but not rich, Cobb's inhabitants struggled from paycheck to paycheck to make mortgage and car payments. They liked low taxes, but worried about their quality of life and frequently endorsed bond issues and special taxes designated for school construction, road improvements, libraries, and parks. At the same time, they expected their money's worth and had little tolerance for waste or mismanagement of public funds. Pragmatic in outlook, they increasingly viewed themselves as political independents rather than Republicans or Democrats, and were willing to turn on any officeholder who betrayed the public trust. A reflection of the modern Georgia and the nation, Cobb ended the old millennium closer to national norms than ever before in its history.

Infrastructure Improvements in the Byrne Years

To keep up with rapid growth, Bill Byrne and the other commissioners of the 1990s found innovative ways of upgrading the infrastructure. In the process Cobb became a model for other counties. The improvements did not always mean bigger government. Chairman Byrne was elected in 1992 on a conservative platform calling for the privatization of as many functions as possible. His landscaping profession made him sensitive to the appearance of roads and public buildings, and he made sure they were lavishly embellished with plants, bushes, and trees. When he came into office he was dissatisfied with the county employees' slipshod manner of cutting grass and otherwise maintaining roadways. He thought it was inefficient to keep county employees on the payroll year round to maintain rights of way and medians, when the greatest need was in the summertime. So the Cobb Department of Transportation began bidding out the work to landscape contractors who were required to maintain the roadways according to a higher aesthetic standard than had been expected in the past.
Garbage disposal had been a headache for the previous administration. Trash collection had long been privatized in unincorporated areas, but the county had provided landfills where the private garbage companies dumped their trucks. By the 1990s all the landfills had reached their capacity, and the county was so developed that there was no place left for a new facility. Groundwater in Cobb was close to the surface in most places, and seepage from landfills constituted a potential health risk. Early in the Byrne administration, Cobb exported to Fulton, Cherokee, and other places about 30 percent of its garbage. Necessity dictated, however, a long-term approach. The most promising alternatives seemed incineration or composting. Since burning garbage created possible environmental hazards, Cobb turned to co-composting as the most feasible solution. On 5 April 1994 the commission created a Cobb County Solid Waste Management Authority that entered into a contract with the Bedminster Bioconversion Corporation to build a solid waste disposal facility on County Farm Road, adjacent to two recently closed landfills. The authority envisioned the site as a place where residential waste would be turned into a compost product called Bio-Blend. Bedminster completed the twenty-three million dollar facility in June 1996.

For the next several years the plant proved a major embarrassment to the county. No sooner had it gone into operation than neighbors began complaining about undesirable odors, requiring the installation of new air scrubbers. Then a fire did a million dollars of damage to the plant and several tons of compost. Due to a poorly designed stormwater drain, a large amount of soot poured into Olley's Creek, killing about five thousand fish. Investigators from the Cobb fire department and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms determined that the blaze resulted from a poor design, but Bedminster largely ignored their recommendations in rebuilding the facility. Public patience with Bedminster ended permanently when a larger, five million dollar fire struck on Christmas Eve 1996.

The solid waste authority turned to an outside company, the Limone Corporation, to reconstruct the plant, under the supervision of county employee Joseph Accortt. Chairman Byrne insisted on elaborate air pollution and fire prevention methods and the erection of a fence so that neighbors did not have to look at unattractive pipes and machinery. The county paid two million dollars in rebuilding
costs above what the insurance provider considered necessary. By April 1998 the plant reopened with Bedminster still in charge; however, within a year Bedminster asked out, citing net losses of about thirty-five million dollars.

Despite Byrne’s strong belief in privatization, he grew disgusted with the Bedminster experiment and decided the county could do its own composting more efficiently. He said at the time, “I’m burned out on [privatization]. It hasn’t worked. It isn’t working. As a conservative Republican, that bothers me. But we can do a better job than the private sector.” In the summer of 1999 the board of commissioners took over the newly named Cobb County Composting Facility and tapped Jonathan Jenkins to serve as plant manager. Over the next couple of years, as an increasing number of garbage haulers used the facility, it processed close to three hundred tons of waste daily, greatly reducing the amount of garbage going to landfills. The county originally had hoped to sell compost to Georgia farmers. Mixed with the red clay of the Georgia piedmont, it made the soil more porous and helped to absorb water. Failing to win a sufficient number of contracts, however, the commissioners resolved to give the product without charge to any local resident who wanted it for private use. While the plant did not live up to all original expectations, it overcame its early controversies and made modest contributions to the environment.

Bill Byrne was instrumental in converting the Cobb County Airport (McCollum Field) from a recreational to business orientation. Opened in 1960, the original facility needed a major upgrade long before Byrne took office. During the administration of Ernest Barrett, the county hired the Hensley Schmidt engineering firm to develop a master plan for airport improvements. This 1973 study predicted that McCollum would experience a huge increase in business, as the county grew and commercial airports, such as Hartsfield International, systematically excluded private planes. It recommended building a second runway and lengthening the current one to handle private jets. It also called for a fulltime airport manager and additional land acquisitions for future growth. With the economy in recession in the 1970s, however, nothing was done.

In 1985 Hensley Schmidt updated the master plan for the county. By then, expansion was complicated by the many new homes going up west of the airport in Kennesaw. Homeowners feared that a large,
noisy airport would affect their safety, peace of mind, and property values. When Sam Smith was hired that year as the first fulltime airport manager, he did his best to alleviate the neighbors’ concerns. However, many homeowners continued to oppose the upgrades recommended in the Hensley Schmidt reports. Responding to constituent complaints, the majority of county commissioners made clear their opposition to airport expansion. Mayor J. O. Stephenson of Kennesaw was one of the airport’s major critics. He thought it was unsafe and wanted it closed. Lacking the endorsement of the commission, Sam Smith was unable to apply for federal grants that would have helped pay for needed improvements. An option to buy three hundred adjacent acres was forfeited as a result of commission indifference. Tired of dealing with unsupportive county officers, Smith turned in his resignation in January 1992. The position remained vacant for eighteen months. During an election year for most of the commissioners, no one seemed anxious to anger Kennesaw-area voters by conducting a search.

After the election of Bill Byrne, the political climate changed considerably. Byrne supported airport expansion, seeing it as part of a package of overall transportation improvements. He recognized the airport’s potential in stimulating economic growth. At the time it generated about thirty-five million dollars a year for the local economy, and it had the potential to do much more. In 1993 Karl Von Hagel was brought in as the new airport manager. He proved ideal for the job. He devoted much time to working with concerned neighbors, persuading them that airport safety improvements were to their advantage. Over several years he applied for and won about six million dollars of Federal Aviation Administration grants to implement safety projects. Through his lobbying efforts and the support of chairman Byrne, the county commission added an additional $1,825,000 in matching funds. These resources made it possible for Von Hagel to build a control tower and add 250 feet to the runway. The control tower made McCollum a safer place and was especially important in improving relations with neighboring homeowners. After its construction, the airport manager found it easier to regulate traffic into and out of the facility, and the number of rules violations diminished considerably.

Byrne recognized the importance of the private Fixed Base Operators (FBOs) that sold gasoline, provided maintenance, rented storage space, operated flight and ground schools, and performed many
other essential services. In 1993 the county negotiated new long-term leases that allowed the FBOs to make greater profits and expand their facilities. By the end of the decade the airport was big enough to house two full service and thirteen single service FBOs. As the facility became more crowded, space to house planes tightened and rents went up, forcing out the occasional recreational pilots. Corporate jets became increasingly commonplace; by the year 2000 over a third of the planes registered at McCollum Field were owned by area businesses. The transition from single engine propeller planes to jet aircraft was reflected in the sales of jet fuel, which rose from less than two hundred thousand gallons in 1995 to more than nine hundred thousand just six years later. By the end of the century airport enthusiasts were hoping for further additions to the runways to allow planes as large as Boeing 737s to land safely.10

The most ambitious infrastructure project of the Byrne administration was the beginning of the Chattahoochee Tunnel, for which ground was broken on 7 September 2000. With the Sope Creek and Chattahoochee sewer lines reaching capacity, the county needed to devise a long-term solution for its wastewater problem. Shortly after Byrne took office in 1993, the county entered into a contract with a design-engineering firm, Jordan, Jones & Goulding, to study various alternatives. The company proposed a deep tunnel, arguing that it would do less damage to the environment and cause fewer disruptions than the traditional ditch-digging technique of installing sewer lines. The plan called for a 9.5-mile line running from the confluence of Sope and Sewell Mill Creeks in the Indian Hills subdivision to the R. L. Sutton Reclamation Facility on the Chattahoochee at Atlanta Road. A leading national firm, S.A. Healy, won the construction contract with two other national firms, Parsons Engineering and Jacobs Associates, providing construction management services. They went to work digging a huge tunnel some eighteen feet in diameter located an average of two hundred feet below ground level. At two locations along the route Healy constructed shafts some thirty-two feet in diameter, into which workers could drop large tunnel boring machines designed to grind through solid rock. At the southern terminus workers built a pump station shaft that was one hundred feet in diameter and dropped down some 175 feet. At that point, sewage would be pumped out of the tunnel into the Robert L. Sutton Water Reclamation Facility. The
largest project ever undertaken by the Cobb County Water System, the Chattahoochee Tunnel was scheduled for completion in the year 2004 at a cost of $113.6 million.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the Cobb County Water System embarked on a five-year, $640 million capital improvement plan, designed to upgrade water and sewer lines and to upgrade or replace by 2005 its four water reclamation facilities. In 1998 the expansion of two plants in northwest and south Cobb were completed, with their capacities expanding to eight and forty million gallons per day, respectively. In the northern part of the county off Shallowford Road, the Noonday plant began in Fall 2000 a major improvement project, expanding its capacity from twelve to twenty million gallons. At the end of the century the county was planning to replace the Sutton plant on Atlanta Road, a state-of-the-art facility just three decades earlier. The replacement project would be designed to tie into the Chattahoochee Tunnel.¹²

For the last half of the twentieth century, the Cobb County Water System purchased its water wholesale from the Cobb-Marietta Water Authority, Georgia's second largest drinking water supplier.
General manager Roy Fowler III reported to a board appointed from the various governmental customers and chaired by the Cobb commission chairman. In addition to Bill Byrne, board members in the year 2000 were Scott Craddock, Bo Pounds, Alex Lorch, R. L. Jacobs, Max Bacon, and Earl Smith. At that date the authority operated two plants, which treated 136 million gallons of water daily. The Quarles Treatment Plant on Lower Roswell Road purified water from the Chattahoochee River, while the Wyckoff Treatment Plant on Mars Hill Road handled that taken from Lake Allatoona. During peak demand times, the county also drew water from a well off Tritt Springs Trace. Operating largely out of public view, these efficiently managed facilities represented a huge capital investment and were far more relevant to the public’s well being than the divisive political issues that the media loved to cover.

Roy Barnes and the Road to the Governorship

The twentieth century ended with a native of Cobb County in the governor’s chair. Roy Eugene Barnes came from an old north Georgia family. While Barnes spent his adult political career in the Democratic Party, his ancestors were Republicans in the mountain counties of Gilmer and Pickens. Since the Civil War the GOP had been strong in these Unionist strongholds where few antebellum farmers owned slaves. His grandfather, Henry Barnes, owned a store in Blaine, Georgia, named for the 1884 Republican presidential candidate, James G. Blaine of Maine. In 1919, following World War I, the grandfather relocated to Cobb County, where he bought a farm and opened a store at Floyd Station. In 1929 he moved the store to nearby Mableton, where it has been ever since. To supplement his income, Henry Barnes taught school on the side. On a typical day he arose at five o’clock, worked in the fields for several hours, opened the store around seven-thirty, and then headed for the schoolhouse to teach all day. In the evenings he returned to the fields until dark, then worked at the store until nine or ten. The family patriarch died in 1956 at age eighty-three. By that time, he had two Mableton stores, a general store run by his son Felton and a hardware store run by another son, William C., who was Roy’s father.
Unlike Gilmer, Cobb was totally dominated in the early twentieth century by the Democrats. So the Barnes family generally voted for Republicans in presidential elections and the Talmadge faction of the Democratic Party on the state and local level. In his younger days Henry Barnes had backed Tom Watson and generally favored populist candidates over urban progressives. Gene Talmadge was elected commissioner of agriculture three times and governor on four different occasions. He frequently visited the Barnes stores while campaigning, and Henry and Gene became good friends. When Roy was born in 1948, he was given the middle name Eugene after Gene Talmadge.¹⁴

Roy Barnes graduated from South Cobb High School in spring 1966, attended a summer quarter at the University of Georgia's off-campus center in Marietta, and then enrolled at Athens in the fall. That year, when Bo Callaway became the first Georgia Republican to run for governor in the twentieth century, Barnes publicly supported him. The young college student led the audience in the pledge of allegiance at a Callaway rally in Cobb County and served as a delegate to the state Republican convention. During his college days he was active in the Young Republicans, in part to protest the segregationist policies of Georgia's Democratic governor, Lester Maddox. After graduating in
1972 from the University of Georgia law school, the young attorney served a brief stint in the U.S. Army Military Police Corps and a few years as a prosecutor for Ben Smith and Buddy Darden in the district attorney’s office.

By this time he had switched to the Democratic Party for both ideological and practical reasons. Despite Republican gains, he knew that the Democrats were likely to control the state for some time to come. Ralph Beaird, the UGA law school dean, liked to tell people that Barnes had a vision in the night where he saw how many more Democrats than Republicans there were in Georgia. Barnes claimed, however, that his real reason for changing was that he felt more at home in the Democratic Party. Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal played a major role in persuading him to abandon the party of his ancestors. He also thought that southern Republicans in their long years out of power became too obsessed with internal party politics, fighting vociferously over petty party offices and not seeming to care about electing people to public positions. Moreover, he believed that the Democrats were the true conservatives prior to the 1972 George McGovern takeover, while the GOP was dominated by the likes of Nelson Rockefeller and Jacob Javits, the liberal eastern establishment. As late as 1990 he expressed the view that Ronald Reagan was an anomaly, and that the Republican Party was more liberal than generally believed.15

In 1974 Barnes made his first race for public office, challenging state senator Jack Henderson for a seat in the General Assembly. Although the Barnes family possessed considerable political clout, Roy was only twenty-six and exercised extreme brashness in thinking he was more qualified than a veteran senator. Henderson came from a powerful family too. His father, “Boll Weevil” Henderson, was the county extension agent for years. In the year of President Nixon’s resignation, however, the public seemed angry at all incumbents, and Barnes challenged the ethics of several of Henderson’s real estate deals. We will never know whether Barnes could have toppled his more experienced opponent. Three weeks before the Democratic primary, Henderson was driving down South Cobb Drive just beyond Lockheed when he swerved into the bridge abutment at the Western & Atlantic railroad overpass. Built during World War II, the narrow bridge was not designed for a modern four-lane road. There was little room for error, and
Henderson was killed in the crash. When the county reopened qualifying, two new candidates entered, including Henderson's brother-in-law, but Barnes won without a runoff.16

Mentored by local powerbrokers Harold Willingham and Joe Mack Wilson, Barnes rose rapidly in the Georgia legislature. During Governor George Busbee's second term, Barnes chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee and played the chief role in writing the current Georgia constitution, which was ratified in 1982. Shortening the old constitution by about a third, Barnes fought for a number of progressive features, including the election of judges on a non-partisan basis and the establishment of a uniform judiciary system throughout the state. At the same time, he took the lead role in revising the Official Code of Georgia, replacing the old code of 1933. Having grown up near the Chattahoochee, he had a strong interest in the environment and pushed through the Clean Lakes Act of 1989. When Joe Frank Harris decided to run for governor in 1982, Barnes became one of the first state senators to endorse him. After his victory, Harris rewarded the Mableton legislator by making him the governor's senate floor leader.1

By 1990, when Harris's second term was about to expire, Barnes had been in the senate sixteen years and wanted to run for governor. He expected lieutenant governor Zell Miller to enter the race, but he thought he could force him into a runoff and ultimately beat him. What he did not anticipate was the entry of former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, one of the heroes of the Civil Rights movement. Miller and Young were much better known statewide than Barnes, and could raise considerably more money. Although Barnes' campaign contributions totaled in the millions, they were not enough to get his name or his message across on television. Barnes lost, but he learned lessons about campaigning that helped in the future. Nicknamed "Zig-Zag" for his amazing policy reversals in times past, Miller hammered away in 1990 on a simple, clear message, the need for a state lottery to support education.

Philosophically opposed to the state's entering the gambling business, Barnes adhered to an opposite position, to his political harm. Exit polls indicated that many people liked Barnes, but did not vote for him because of the lottery. His position on abortion was also a liability. The United Methodist layman followed his church, opposing abortions in principle but recognizing circumstances in which they were justified.
On the conservative side of the pro-choice position, he recognized a woman's right to choose, but favored restrictions to make the decision more deliberative. By advocating parental consent and requirements that clinics inform women of risks and alternatives, he managed to alienate the pro-choice camp without making any friends among ardent pro-lifers. In the end he felt victimized by his inability in a thirty-second television advertisement to convey a clear message. Candidates seemed to do better if they were consistently "pro-life" or "pro-choice" and not somewhere in between. On election night he came in just behind Miller in Cobb County, but third to Miller and Young statewide.18

In the statewide general election Zell Miller defeated Cobb County Republican Johnny Isakson 53 percent to 45, with a Libertarian candidate taking the rest. Good friends for years, Barnes and Isakson were moderate conservatives who made some of the same mistakes in campaigning against Miller. On several issues, Isakson was more liberal than Barnes in 1990. Despite the fact that the party of Reagan and Bush was "pro-life," Isakson made clear he would oppose any legislation restricting a woman's right to make the final decision. He was lukewarm on the lottery question, but consistently held that the issue should be placed on the ballot so that voters would have the right to choose. That stance proved not to be strong enough. Miller enthusiastically placed the lottery at the center of his campaign and rode the issue to victory.

In office, Miller made good on his promises, using the lottery money primarily for HOPE scholarships that allowed students with 3.0 grade point averages to attend college tuition free. Apart from the lottery issue, the greatest liability for Isakson and his party was their failure to win African-American support. Ninety-two percent of the African-American vote went to Miller. If Isakson had received just 18 percent, he would have been governor. The east Cobb Republican campaigned in black communities, attended forums sponsored by predominantly black organizations, sounded like liberal Republican Jack Kemp in favoring inner city economic development, had African-Americans on his staff, and planned to include black Democrats as assistant floor leaders in the General Assembly if he were elected. Race was not an issue in the 1990 campaign, and Isakson said nothing to offend black voters. Yet he recognized the reality that the current generation of African-Americans identified almost totally with the Democrats, out of
respect for the national party’s role in implementing the civil rights reforms of the 1960s and its advocacy of affirmative action and legislation favoring low-income groups. Republican candidates risked losing their suburban base if they tried to outbid the Democrats on class-based issues such as entitlements or payment transfers. Until there was a larger black middle class, the GOP seemed destined to remain a predominantly Caucasian party. Despite their failure, Isakson and Barnes were relatively young (still in their forties) and had time to rebuild their political careers. Both would return to the legislature in two years and then go on to higher office.^{19}

When Roy Barnes gave up his senate seat to run for governor, his friend Steve Thompson moved to the upper body. Just thirty-nine at the time, Thompson had already served five terms in the House as a Democratic representative from the Mableton area. In a dirty, name-calling race where the two candidates spent a combined total of over two hundred thousand dollars, Thompson won decisively over GOP opponent Guy Sharpe. Barnes returned to his successful legal practice, but he could not stay on the political sidelines for long. Early in 1992 Marie Dobbs Barnes noted, “Some men go fishing in the spring, but [her husband] run[s] for political office.” In the recently completed reapportionment, the Democrats in the General Assembly had tailored House District 33 for Barnes. Running from Mableton to Marietta, it contained a large majority of Democratic voters. Barnes won easily in 1992 with only token Republican opposition. In the same election Isakson went to the state senate from an east Cobb district that was overwhelmingly Republican.^{20}

Barnes spent the next six years building power in the General Assembly and biding his time while fellow Democrat Zell Miller served two terms as governor. By 1997 Barnes had made up his mind to run for lieutenant governor the next year, assuming that the current occupant, Pierre Howard, would be the Democrats’ standard bearer for the top spot. In August Howard surprised everyone by withdrawing from the race, saying he wanted to spend more time with his family. Barnes raised his sights to the governorship, joining a crowded field with labor commissioner David Poythress, state senator Steve Langford of LaGrange, and secretary of state Lewis Massey, a Pierre Howard protégé.^{21}

Barnes quickly emerged as the favorite, and in the July 1998 primary came within a few thousand votes of 50 percent. Massey finished
second with 28 percent. At first the secretary of state planned to launch a potentially bloody runoff, but his friends and financial supporters apparently persuaded him that he was not likely to win and that a bitter three-week campaign could only help the Republicans. Consequently, Massey joined Barnes and Governor Miller at the Capitol to announce the suspension of his campaign and his endorsement of the front-runner.

Guy Millner won the Republican nomination. The millionaire businessman had run for statewide office twice before, losing to Governor Miller in 1994 and Senator Max Cleland two years later. In the 1996 Senate race Guy Millner established himself in the Republican primary as a pro-life conservative, defeating the more moderate Johnny Isakson. In the general election, however, he was no match for a triple amputee, Vietnam War hero Cleland, despite Cleland’s fairly liberal views. Millner had never held political office and by 1998 had already been rejected by the voters twice, but his willingness to use a tremendous amount of his personal fortune made him a serious contender. By the end of the primary he had spent three million dollars of his own money and seemed likely to become the first Republican governor of Georgia since Reconstruction. Nonetheless, Barnes proved to be an effective fundraiser and ran an aggressive campaign throughout the state. When the November returns came in, Barnes garnered 53 percent to Millner’s 44 percent, with the remaining ballots going to a Libertarian candidate.

Race seemed to be the major factor in tipping the balance to the Democrats. Barnes benefited from a large African-American turnout for Georgia’s first black attorney general Thurbert Baker and first black labor commissioner Michael Thurmond. Barnes also profited from his opponent’s mistakes. Millner insisted on making affirmative action an issue in the campaign. The term, of course, meant different things to different people. From a conservative Republican perspective, affirmative action was a violation of the equal protection clause of the fourteenth amendment. When Millner used the term he had in mind types of reverse discrimination, such as set-asides on government construction projects that required the use of minority contractors or the admissions policy at the University of Georgia that gave a slight preference to black students. It had not been many years since the state government and the University of Georgia had openly discriminated in behalf of
Worldspan headquarters, Galleria complex (Childress Klein Properties, developer of Atlanta Galleria)
whites. Now that Caucasians were coming to accept the fundamental fairness of treating everybody the same, some raised objections to policies that seemingly went overboard in giving targeted minorities an advantage.

While Millner catered to white voters, he angered a great many black Georgians who saw attacks on affirmative action as fundamentally racist. As political historian James M. Glaser points out, southern Republicans had a tendency to employ such issues in jurisdictions where whites were the majority. The assumption was that attacks on affirmative action would energize the party's conservative base. Glaser provides evidence, however, that the strategy often backfired in places where African-Americans made up a significant minority. Race-based issues tended to win for conservative candidates few white votes that they would not have won anyway. At the same time, they alarmed blacks and elevated the African-American turnout. In the 1998 election GOP lieutenant governor candidate Mitch Skandalakis damaged Republican chances by calling Atlanta's black mayor, Bill Campbell, an "incompetent boob" and MARTA Chairman Laura Lawson a "welfare mother." The Democrats sent a minimum of two targeted mail-outs to every African-American family in Georgia. Many blacks also received recorded phone messages from congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and President Clinton. The result was the largest black voter turnout in Georgia history. According to exit polls almost 30 percent of the voters were African-American, and 90 percent or more cast a ballot for Roy Barnes. In the last gubernatorial election, in 1994, blacks had cast only 19 percent of the ballots.

After the contest, Barnes gave credit to the diverse nature of the Democratic ticket, which included Baker, Thurmond, and Georgia's first female secretary of state, Cathy Cox. According to the new governor, the Democrats won because they put forth a ticket "that looks like the state of Georgia." In the next several years Barnes established himself as one of Georgia's stronger governors, pushing through a regional transportation authority and extensive educational reforms. Just after the turn of the century, he almost single-handedly changed the state's flag. With a minimum of debate Barnes and the Democratic leadership introduced and pushed through the legislature a new design, removing the St. Andrew's cross that had been emblematic of the old Confederacy. Republicans and members of southern heritage groups
raised a valid complaint that the people were denied a chance to vote on the issue, but Barnes’ tactics, no matter how undemocratic, saved the state a bitter, racially divisive debate on an emotion charged issue.

By nature and tradition Barnes was fundamentally conservative. But the reality of turn-of-the-millennium politics had pushed him in a more liberal direction. Republican power had grown in the General Assembly to a point where it almost equaled that of the majority party. White Democrats no longer could run the legislature single-handedly. The balance of power was in the hands of African-Americans. If they sided on a particular issue with the GOP, the Republicans could push through their agenda. Barnes and his allies were determined to keep that from happening. In the process, they found themselves on the liberal side of issues such as affirmative action and the design of the Georgia flag. With support from black and white Democrats Barnes emerged as a strong and effective chief executive.

In 2002 Roy Barnes and Bill Byrne would both be defeated. Commission chair Byrne resigned his seat to seek the Republican nomination for governor. In the GOP primary, he carried Cobb, but did poorly everywhere else. In Georgia as a whole, he finished last, behind state senator George (Sonny) Perdue and state school superintendent Linda Schrenko. A businessman-politician from Bonaire in central Georgia, Perdue received a majority of the vote and emerged as the GOP challenger to Governor Barnes. The general election proved to be more a referendum on Barnes’ leadership than on the merits of Perdue. The governor had alienated numerous white Georgians over the flag change and many teachers over his educational initiatives. As a result, Sonny Perdue was elected the first Republican governor in Georgia since Reconstruction. Despite their failures that year, Byrne and Barnes seemed likely to be remembered as men of courage and conviction who made the most of their years in office.24
Economic and Social Diversity at the Start of a New Millennium

The Economy at the End of the Century

Cobb's enviable political position was directly related to the county's economic vitality. For the last forty years of the twentieth century, the per capita income of Cobb County residents stayed consistently between 130 and 140 percent of the Georgia average. As late as 1959 Cobb's per capita income was below the U.S. average, but it went ahead in the 1960s, peaked at 133 percent in 1989, and maintained a healthy 126 percent at the end of the century. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Cobb in 1999 boasted 17,564 business establishments, which provided employment for more than three hundred thousand workers. Only 3 percent of the businesses engaged in manufacturing, and just 8 percent of non-government jobs were in factories. Almost twenty-seven hundred firms provided technical or professional services, and about twenty-three hundred were involved in retail.

At the start of the twenty-first century Cobb was the home base or regional headquarters for 117 companies on the Fortune 500 list. The
county also housed 155 international firms. With an annual payroll in 1999 of almost $10.7 billion, Cobb’s economy was about five times larger than that of such urban counties as Chatham, Richmond, Bibb, and Muscogee. It was only slightly behind DeKalb ($11.0 billion) and about a third as large as Fulton ($29.9 billion), home of numerous downtown Atlanta businesses. The largest local employer was the Cobb County school system, with more than eleven thousand teachers, administrators, and staff personnel. Reflecting the county’s service orientation, WellStar Health System, Inc. held second place with seventy-eight hundred employees. Lockheed Martin was a giant among local manufacturers with about seven thousand workers. The world’s biggest self-help hardware chain, The Home Depot, was headquartered in Cobb. Operating warehouse stores throughout the United States and several other nations, The Home Depot employed almost forty-seven hundred workers in Cobb alone. The county government, with forty-six hundred jobs, was Cobb’s fifth largest employer. Two other businesses, Publix Super Markets and Worldspan, provided more than three thousand jobs. Worldspan was owned by Delta, Northwest, and TWA. It booked airline reservations over the Internet.4

A mere list of the biggest employers obscures the tremendous role that tourism played in the local economy. At the end of the twentieth century travelers staying overnight in Cobb spent $1.3 billion annually in the numerous hotels, motels, and restaurants, and at such tourist attractions as Six Flags and White Water. Only one other Georgia county produced so many tourist dollars. Tourism, however, accounted for just a little over a tenth of all retail sales.4 A healthy economy stimulated population growth, and in 2000 Cobb was the third largest county in Georgia. For half a century an enlightened local leadership had been building an infrastructure of schools, parks, roads, and utilities to sustain a high quality of life. With an affluent, well-educated, civic-minded population, Cobb was well positioned to play a major role in state and national affairs.

The Home Depot

The story of The Home Depot founders, Bernard Marcus and Arthur Blank, is perhaps the metropolitan area’s most remarkable rags-to-rich-
es example in recent history. The older of the two, Bernie Marcus, was born in 1929 and spent his childhood during the Great Depression in a fourth-floor tenement apartment in Newark, New Jersey. His father was a skilled cabinetmaker, but never learned the art of managing his finances. A Jew in a predominantly African-American neighborhood, young Bernie was beaten up often by neighborhood bullies, until one of the gang leaders developed a respect for him and inducted him into the gang. By the time Marcus finished high school he had more socially acceptable aspirations. His Russian immigrant parents had little money to send him to college, but he worked his way through the Rutgers University pharmacy school by holding down a variety of jobs.

At the start of his career Marcus found employment with various drugstores and cosmetics companies. Moving up the management ladder, he eventually became vice president of Daylin, Inc. of Los Angeles, and then president of one of Daylin's divisions, the Handy Dan Improvement Centers, a West Coast hardware chain. There in the mid-1970s he became a good friend of the company's treasurer, Arthur Blank. At the time Marcus was an extrovert in his mid-forties and Blank, a more reserved young man, barely thirty. Nonetheless, they worked well together. Born in Queens in 1942, Blank grew up in a Jewish family that lived modestly and was upwardly mobile. His father died when he was just fifteen years old, but Arthur was still able to attend college. He earned an accounting degree in 1963 from Babson College in Massachusetts and went to work for Arthur Young and Company in New York. After a few years he transferred to a pharmaceutical company that his father had founded. Ultimately, Daylin bought out the business, and Blank became an executive in Daylin's drugstore unit. From there he moved to Handy Dan as treasurer in 1974. Four years later, the president and chairman of the board of Daylin, Sanford Sigoloff, fired Marcus and Blank. Supposedly, Bernie Marcus was too arrogant and not a team player, and Arthur Blank was too closely identified with Marcus. The two men were not extremely upset that they were fired. By that point they were tired of working for someone else and wanted to start their own chain of hardware warehouses.5

Moving to the Atlanta area, the two friends started MB Associates, later named The Home Depot. While Blank managed the books, Marcus sold the project to investment bankers and businessmen. They almost entered into a partnership with Ross Perot, the founder of
Electronic Data Systems, who offered to invest two million dollars. It was obvious, however, that Perot wanted to control the partnership. After a dispute over what kind of automobile Marcus would be allowed to drive, the former Handy Dan executives decided they could not tolerate such micromanaging from an investor. Turning elsewhere, they received help from banker Ken Langone and in 1979 opened their first
three stores, all in the Atlanta area.\textsuperscript{6} That year they lost a million dollars, but then the company took off. Profitable by 1981, The Home Depot expanded to fifty stores by 1985, to 145 by 1990, and to 1,123 by the year 2000. At the end of the century the company was doing $45.7 billion in sales. The world’s largest home improvement retail business, The Home Depot on five occasions was named \textit{Fortune} magazine’s most admired retailer. Although Marcus and Blank never lived in Cobb, their company was headquartered in the county from the beginning. Having outgrown its original sites, The Home Depot in 1993 built a new corporate campus on Paces Ferry Road in Vinings not far from I-285. From the beginning The Home Depot had a major impact on the metro Atlanta economy in retail and philanthropy. By 1999 the corporate charitable budget exceeded fifteen million dollars, with grants going mainly to groups providing affordable housing, assisting at-risk youth, or protecting the environment. Marcus retired as chief executive officer in 1997, but continued to give generously to the community. Along with his wife Billi, he had donated in excess of $120 million by the end of the century. His largest project was the Marcus Institute to treat children with brain and behavioral disabilities. Additionally, the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, started by Blank and his wife Stephanie, gave away between 1995 and 2000 some twenty-eight million dollars, including fifteen million to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for a new concert hall. From the 1830s, when the term “businessman” first entered the American vocabulary, it has referred to community builders who believed the public good and their private interests were inseparable. The Home Depot founders were by no means unique among area business leaders in exemplifying a spirit of public service.\textsuperscript{7}

\textbf{“Diaspora in Dixie”}

For most of the twentieth century Cobb’s reputation as the site of the Leo Frank lynching discouraged many Jews from settling north of the Chattahoochee. By the 1970s, however, the county was a different place than it had been in 1915, when the lynching occurred on Roswell Road, just east of Marietta. In the same decade that Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank headquartered The Home Depot in Cobb, other young Jewish
professionals and managers were flocking to attractive new subdivisions within a few miles of the Frank murder site. Starting in 1976, Shalom Lewis, a rabbinical student, traveled to Cobb each week to hold religious services for the seventy-member Congregation Etz Chaim, Cobb’s first synagogue. Two years later Lewis became the full-time rabbi, and in 1980 the congregation moved into a permanent facility on Indian Hills Parkway next to east Cobb’s first major subdivision. By 1983 the growing congregation reached three hundred members. As the only shul in Cobb County, Congregation Etz Chaim at first tried to appeal to all Jewish opinion, from Orthodox to Reform. By the early 1980s it allied with Conservative Judaism, and more liberal Jews went to Temple Kol Emeth, created in fall 1982 as a Reform Jewish synagogue. Steven Lebow became Kol Emeth’s first full-time rabbi in 1986 and led the growing congregation five years later into a new facility on Old Canton Road in east Cobb.8

The Atlanta Jewish Federation conducted a study in 1984 that documented the growth of Judaism in the suburbs. Since 1947, when the last previous survey was completed, the Jewish population in metropolitan Atlanta had grown from ten thousand to fifty-nine thousand. In 1947 metro area Jews resided almost entirely in downtown Atlanta, but by 1984 over two-thirds lived in the suburbs. The Jewish population of Cobb County was 8,337, with more than three thousand located in east Cobb’s affluent 30067 zip code area (the Lower Roswell, Terrell Mill, Paper Mill segment of the county). They made themselves heard in 1988 when the county school board scheduled Saturday classes to make up lost days following a snowstorm. After several people politely protested the violation of the Jewish Sabbath, the Board of Education agreed in the future to build snow days into the calendar so Saturday classes would be unnecessary.

The Jewish presence in Cobb County was made manifest in 1989 with the opening of the Shirley Blumenthal Park branch of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. It was located on thirty-three acres off Post Oak Tritt at the site of the old Dodgen home place. The center offered preschool, softball fields, and, in time, a summer camp. After a $3.2 million upgrade in 2001 the facility included reconfigured, lighted playing fields and a large building addition that housed a fitness center, gymnasium, and teen lounge.9

When the Atlanta Jewish Federation completed its 1996 demo-
graphic study, the number of Jews in Cobb County had grown to 16,400, almost double the figure of twelve years earlier. By 1996 some 11 percent of all Jews in the metro Atlanta area lived in just three east-Cobb zip code areas (30062, 30067, and 30068). Two years later, in 1998, a new Orthodox synagogue, Bais Chayeinu, joined Cobb’s Conservative and Reform congregations. Although Jews made up only about 3 percent of Cobb’s population, they had a large impact on local politics. In the year 2000 Philip Goldstein was the longest serving member of the Marietta city council, Mitchell Kaye held a seat in the legislature, Michael Coles was a leader of the Democratic Party and former candidate for Congress and U.S. Senate, and Sam Olens represented east Cobb on the county commission (in 2002 he would become chairman of the commission, replacing Bill Byrne).

Olens noted that his faith almost never came up during his campaigns and “played absolutely no role” in the outcome of the elections. In researching the history of Jews in Cobb County, Timothy F. Weiss conducted an informal poll of local Jewish opinion. Those he interviewed said that anti-Semitism was no greater problem in Cobb than anywhere else and that Cobb was a “friendly” environment. Most had not heard of Leo Frank before moving to the county and said they came to Cobb because it was a good place to live and work. By the start of the twenty-first century Temple Kol Emeth had grown to nine hundred members, Congregation Etz Chaim to around eight hundred, and Cobb, according to Rabbi Lewis, was only “a good kosher deli” away from being ideal.10

Merger of Lockheed and Martin Marietta

By the 1990s Cobb’s biggest manufacturer, Lockheed, and the entire aircraft industry were changing rapidly. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and of the Soviet Union two years later, the Cold War, for all practical purposes, was over. As a result, the first George Bush administration began to economize on military spending. The Pentagon told defense contractors there would no longer be enough business for everybody and recommended consolidation. Larry Kitchen resigned in
1988 as Lockheed's board chairman and chief executive officer. During his tenure in the 1970s and 1980s the California giant relied less on planes and more on space and missiles. His successor, Daniel M. Tellep, predicted that at least half of future corporate sales would be in space and missiles and most airplane contracts would be with commercial or foreign customers. He believed that airplane sales to the U.S. military would account for only about a fifth of Lockheed's profits.

Tellep closed the historic Burbank plant and moved aircraft manufacturing to more efficient facilities in Marietta, Georgia, and Palmdale, California. The company-owned Burbank facility was getting old and costly to maintain. In contrast, two-thirds of the Georgia site was government-owned and maintained. Traditionalists were shocked when Tellep eliminated the Burbank plant where the company began; but in an era of shrinking profits, the CEO and the board looked to the bottom line.11

Ken Cannestra played a central role in protecting the interests of the Marietta work force. A University of Michigan electrical engineering graduate, Cannestra joined Lockheed in 1962 and became an expert on missile defense. He first came to Georgia in 1986 to assist president Paul Frech, who was about to retire. After an eight-month training period Cannestra took over.1 With his missiles and space background, Cannestra was appalled to learn that planes were routinely completed with fifteen to twenty defects. A missile could have no defects, because there was no way to repair one after it was launched. He insisted upon more rigorous quality control, telling his employees that the “planes needed to be perfect before they left the plant.” A respected manager, Cannestra sold Tellep and the Lockheed corporate board on headquartering aircraft production in Georgia.

Out of an office in Vinings, Cannestra by 1990 presided over a new Lockheed Aeronautical Systems Group, consisting of the Marietta plant, the Palmdale-based Lockheed Advanced Development Company (the highly guarded research group known historically as the Skunk Works), and the Lockheed Aircraft Services Company in Ontario, California. After a 1993 merger, the aeronautical systems group added General Dynamics' Fort Worth, Texas, facilities.13

The acquisition of General Dynamics began with a phone call to Cannestra from Gordon England, the manager of the Fort Worth plant where F-16 fighter planes were built. General Dynamics traced its role
in aviation back to Reuben Fleet's Consolidated Aircraft Corporation, founded in 1923. Through mergers, Consolidated became Consolidated-Vultee during World War II and then a division of General Dynamics in 1953. The company had an indirect connection to Marietta through Larry Bell, who worked for Consolidated in Buffalo, helped relocate the company to San Diego, then stayed in Buffalo and started his own Bell Aircraft Corporation. Of course, during World War II Bell built a Marietta branch, bringing aircraft manufacturing to Georgia. By the early 1990s, General Dynamics had teamed with Lockheed and Boeing on the F-22 project. After phoning Cannestra, Gordon England flew to Marietta to propose that Lockheed buy General Dynamics' tactical military aircraft operation. Cannestra recommended the purchase to Dan Tellep, and on 28 February 1993 the deal was completed for $1.52 billion.

That purchase committed Lockheed to seek further mergers to protect its competitive market position. Chairman Tellep soon initiated negotiations with Martin Marietta, another venerable company, which traced its roots back to 1912, when aviation pioneer Glenn L. Martin went into business in California. That company also had an indirect Georgia connection through Larry Bell, who started his aviation career with Martin before moving to Consolidated. Martin and Lockheed were similar in size. In 1993 the sales of the former totaled $9.4 billion and of the latter $13 billion. Martin had about 94,000 employees and Lockheed 83,500. Lockheed was the country's second largest defense contractor and Martin third. Unlike Lockheed, Martin Marietta no longer engaged in aircraft manufacturing, but was a leader in aerospace engineering, advanced electronics, and missile technology.

After extensive secret negotiations, top management of the two companies on 30 August 1994 announced a proposed merger. Lockheed stockholders were huge winners, receiving 1.63 shares in the new company for every one they currently held. After the deal was announced Lockheed stock skyrocketed on the exchange from $10.75 to $76.75. In March 1995 stockholders of the two companies overwhelmingly approved the ten billion dollar merger. Dan Tellep became the first chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin, with the understanding that when he retired in a couple of years, Norman R. Augustine, his Martin counterpart, would take his place. The plan was to divide top executive positions between the two companies on an equitable basis. The new
corporation would have a twenty-four-member board, twelve from Lockheed and twelve from Martin Marietta.\(^1\)

A reason for the merger was to consolidate operations wherever possible, eliminating several thousand jobs, and making the company more competitive. The change had less impact on Lockheed's aeronautical operations than its space and missile activities. The fact that
Martin Marietta did not build planes was a good thing for Cobb County. As Chamber of Commerce chairman Tad Leithead observed, the facility on South Cobb Drive would continue to do what it was already doing with relatively few jobs in jeopardy, at least immediately. However, Cobb County lost in one symbolic way. Over the objections of Ken Cannestra, the consolidated company decided to house all its group presidents in Bethesda, Maryland, where they could work together near Congress and the Pentagon.

Cannestra had already decided to retire in 1996 as president of the Lockheed Aeronautical Systems Group. His replacement, James A. (Micky) Blackwell, formerly headed the F-22 project and had been president of the Marietta plant since April 1993. At the time, Cannestra remarked, "There's a little bit of sadness in seeing the headquarters leave Georgia. I do think it involves some loss of prestige. You have lost a major group headquarters." In retirement Cannestra stayed in Georgia, where he served as a member of the Board of Regents of the university system. When Blackwell retired from the corporation in October 1999, he returned to Marietta and again became active in local civic affairs.16

With the aeronautical group president stationed in Maryland, the top Lockheed Martin official in Marietta was John S. McLellan, the plant president from 1995 to 1997. In rapid succession, William B. Bullock became president from 1997-99 and then C. T. Burbage from 1999-2000. At the end of the century, Lee E. Rhyant took the top spot with a revised title as corporate vice president and site general manager. A former production operations vice president for Rolls-Royce, Rhyant became the first African-American to head the Marietta plant.17

As a new millennium began the Georgia facility struggled to stay open with a work force of about seven thousand. Congress continued to fund a few C-130Js and F-22s, but new contracts remained uncertain from year to year. With the corporation run from Maryland, veteran Lockheed workers and managers increasingly suspected that corporate policymakers had little interest in Marietta. In a Cobb economy that generated over three hundred thousand jobs, the threat of Lockheed Martin's departure was not as frightening as it once would have been. Yet no one wanted the plant to leave. According to Kennesaw State University professor Roger Tutterow, the loss of Air Force Plant No. 6
would have a rippling effect throughout the economy. Some fifteen thousand employees in the Atlanta area worked for small businesses that provided the plant with a variety of goods and services. Seven thousand relatively high paid Lockheed Martin personnel spent a large amount of money locally. At the end of the century, the Pentagon continued to recommend the purchase of F-22s and C-130s, and most of the Georgia congressional delegation worked diligently to keep them in the budget. As a result, Lockheed Martin officials seemed cautiously optimistic that the plant would continue in operation for the foreseeable future.18
At the start of the new millennium, the people of Cobb County could look back on a century of revolutionary change. In 1900 the county had been rural, provincial, and poor. In 2000 it was just the opposite. Cobb’s transformation was, in microcosm, the story of the prosperous, Sunbelt South, which emerged in the decades following the outbreak of World War II. The catalyst that propelled Cobb forward was the arrival of the aircraft industry with Bell and Lockheed. For the region as a whole federal spending was a key stimulant in the so-called “second wave” of southern industrialization of the 1940s to the 1970s. As modern military bases, factories, and office buildings sprang up, the one-time Confederate states at last fulfilled the hopes and dreams of New South boosters almost a century before.

Cobb’s dramatic resurgence was made possible by several generations of dynamic leaders with the vision to build public institutions that sustained growth. Not every generation has the privilege of shaping a new society from the ground up. In the late twentieth century Cobb countians built two public universities, a private university, a technical
college, and large and progressive public school systems. They started one of the state’s first countywide park systems and greatly expanded the number of public libraries. They put in place a countywide network of four-lane roads, water and sewer lines, and other utilities. In the process they reshaped the local culture.

Given the reputation for bigotry that characterized Cobb and Georgia in the early twentieth century, the changing role of minorities is remarkable. In 1900 Cobb’s leadership was made up exclusively of Protestant, Caucasian males, and most had fought for the Confederacy or were the children of those who did. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, few of the county’s political, business, religious, and educational leaders were born in Cobb County and many came from outside the South. In 2000 the general manager of Cobb’s largest manufacturing establishment, Lockheed Martin’s Lee Rhyant, was an African-American. The manager of Cobb County’s forty-six hundred public employees, David Hankerson, also was black. Two Jewish businessmen, Bernard Marcus and Arthur Blank, operated The Home Depot’s international network from Cobb County. Women served as presidents of both public universities, with Betty Siegel heading Kennesaw State and Lisa Rossbacher directing Southern Polytechnic. Two of the county’s six mayors, Marcia Andruzzi of Acworth and Ansley Meaders of Marietta, were female.

Perhaps more remarkable than the number of women and minorities in leadership positions was how little anyone seemed to notice. Achievements that might have been impossible a half century earlier had become commonplace by the 1990s. The media paid little attention to the county’s leadership diversity, and the public seemed unconcerned about officials’ race or gender as long as they were good administrators and led in a progressive direction. When Bell Aircraft in 1942 announced its arrival in Marietta, the Cobb County Times called on local citizens to welcome newcomers enthusiastically and to work to build a new Cobb that retained a “family resemblance” to the old. Looking back sixty years later, one can say with confidence that the World War II and postwar generations performed admirably in preserving the best of the old Cobb while ushering in the new.
Preface


Chapter 1

Start of a New Century

1. W. P. McClatchey, undated manuscript, typed from the original by J. D. Merriam, 15 November 1952, Wylie and Minerva McClatchey family papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta.

2. The county-unit system was used in all statewide races in Democrat primary elections. The candidate with a plurality of votes in each county received all its county-unit votes. The smallest counties by population received two county-unit votes. Middle-sized counties received four, and a handful of large counties received six. By the early twentieth-century the population of Fulton County was one hundred times as large as some south Georgia rural counties, but its county-unit vote was only three times as large. So the political influence of people in metropolitan areas was far less than that of the residents of farm country. The system is explained in Kenneth Coleman, gen. ed., A History of Georgia, 2d ed. (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1977, 1991), 295, 397. For a description of Georgia in 1962 when the county unit system ended, see Jimmy Carter, Turning Point: A Candidate, a State, and a Nation Come of Age (New York: Times Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 1992).

4. The end of Reconstruction in Georgia is dated from the emergence of a Democrat-controlled legislature in late 1871, followed by the inauguration of a Democratic governor in January 1872.


6. See the Marietta Journal, 16 May 1895, for a story on Steve Clay’s conversion to the free coinage of silver. The Populist idea was for the federal government to buy the entire supply of silver from the nation’s mines and then to coin it at a ratio of 16:1 with gold. Since sixteen ounces of silver were worth less than one ounce of gold, a silver dollar would be worth less than a gold dollar, thus inflating the currency. The Populists could cite high interest rates and a deflationary currency to argue that bankers and other creditors were exploiting poor debtors. By inflating the currency, the People’s Party would make it possible for debtors to pay off their loans in coins that were worth less than those they borrowed. Most southern Democrats, such as Clay, thought originally that this idea was irresponsible. Once they realized that many farmers liked the idea, the politicians switched their public views in order to hold on to their offices.


8. In 1880 black tenant farmers in Cobb County outnumbered black farm owners 168 to 80; in 1900 the difference was 445 to 99. The increase in tenants corresponded to a drop in farm laborers. Scott, “Cobb County,” 4, 25, 64; Coleman, History of Georgia, 259.


10. Harvey E. Durham and Bessie H. Durham, interview by Thomas Allan Scott and Mary Boswell Cawley, 20 May 1987, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 2, transcript, pp. 16-17, Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Sturgis Library, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia. Bound transcripts are also located in the Georgia Room, Cobb County Public Library System, Marietta, Georgia.


14. James T. Anderson, Jr., interview by Mary Boswell Cawley, 6 January 1988, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 26, transcript, pp. 5-7, 15; Katie Long, “It Was a Time of Struggle: Marietta Square Was Once Center of Cotton Trading,” Marietta Daily Journal, 4 October 1986, 1A. Hereinafter the Marietta Journal will be cited as the MJ and after 1935, when it became a daily, the MDJ.

15. See, for example, the MJ, 17 January 1895. See also Coleman, History of Georgia, 234-35, and C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge:


20. Leon M. (Rip) Blair, interview by Florence F. Corley and Anne Blair Buchanan, c. 1962, for the Junior League, transcript, pp. 13-15, vertical files, Georgia Room; W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, “A Large Town: Marietta, Cobb County, Ga.,” The Negro in the Black Belt: Some Social Sketches, U. S. Bureau of Labor Bulletin no. 22 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), 413-14. Du Bois’s study of Marietta was based on notes taken by W. A. Rogers, a senior at Atlanta University and a Marietta native. According to Du Bois, the marble mills, paper mill, Glover Machine Works, and railway shops employed a number of African-American workers. At the time African-American draymen in Marietta earned up to five dollars a week, while laborers generally earned seventy-five or eighty cents a day. Du Bois argued that these were living wages for the area. Most families raised their own vegetables, and blacks could rent a two-room house for three to four dollars a month and a three-room house for five to six dollars.

21. Temple, First Hundred Years, 408; Northcutt interview, 3-11.

22. Temple, First Hundred Years, 494-95.

23. Chris Reinolds, “Acworth Mill’s Fate Is in Board’s Hands,” Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 3 September 1998, JG3. Hereinafter the Atlanta Journal-Constitution will be cited as the AJC, the morning Atlanta Constitution as the AC and the afternoon Atlanta Journal as the AJ.

24. Deed Book A, p. 414; Deed Book B, pp. 450-51; Deed Book C, pp. 127-28, Cobb County Superior Court, Marietta, Georgia; Temple, First Hundred Years, 405.


27. Temple, First Hundred Years, 332, 405-06.

28. Temple, First Hundred Years, 407-08. In the 1900 tax digest, eleven companies declared ownership of at least $25,000 of real and personal taxable property. The largest was the
Roswell Manufacturing Company with $100,000 of taxable wealth, followed by the Brumby Chair Company ($60,000), the Marietta Paper Manufacturing Company ($56,650), the Kennesaw Marble Company ($50,325), Laurel Mills Manufacturing ($40,000), the Lemon McMillan Company ($32,600), the S. Lemon Banking Company ($28,500), the Marietta Chair Company ($28,000), the First National Bank of Marietta ($27,500), the Marietta Knitting Company ($25,000), and Anderson Brothers ($25,000). Six individuals declared ownership of at least $25,000 of property. They were John R. Winters ($56,370), George H. Camp ($49,935), Orlando Awtrey ($44,680), T. S. Stewart ($32,700), J. W. Henderson ($31,220), and M. M. Sessions ($25,105).


Chapter 2
The Nadir of Race Relations


3. Blair interview, 12; Chuck Anderson was the son of John A. G. Anderson, Sr., and grandson of John and Susan Coleman Anderson, pioneer Cobb County settlers (Temple, First Hundred Years, 51).


5. Blair interview, 12; Rosalie L. Andrews in “Interviews with Members of Zion Baptist Church,” interview by Thomas A. Scott, 24 April 1986, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 46, transcript, pp. 1.

6. Dee Black, “Marietta in 1910 Based on Taxpayer List and Comments by Mr. Dee Black and Others,” p. 1 (undated, unpublished, typed manuscript in possession of author).


8. Rosalie L. Andrews, interview by Joyce Patterson, 10 July 2000, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 78, transcript; Andrews in “Interviews with Members of Zion Baptist Church,” pp. 5-6, 23.

9. Scott, “Cobb County,” 25; Cobb County Tax Digest, 1900. The 1900 census lists 967 white farmers and 99 black farmers who owned the land they worked. Blacks, therefore, made up 9.3 percent of all owner-operators. The tax digest lists 1,116 individuals or companies that reported at least $1000 of taxable property. Of that number, seventeen were African-Americans (1.5 percent).
In 1900 the largest African-American landholders were Isom Gresham (331 acres in Gritters militia district); Millie Gresham (269 acres, Gritters); Alfred Broadnax (267 acres, Powder Springs); W.M. Holleman (266 acres, Powder Springs); Moses Winkler (160 acres, Marietta); Sam Sanders (150 acres, Austell); Joe Robertson (140 acres, Powder Springs); Henry Ferguson (123 acres, Coxes); Lige Jennings (115 acres, Oregon); Sam Barnwell (110 acres, Powder Springs); L.W. Reynolds (107 acres, Powder Springs); Eph Benjamin (101 acres, Big Shanty); and John Slocum (100 acres, Gritters).

Cobb County Tax Digest, 1900; wills of Isham [sic] Gresham and Millie Gresham, Fulton County Probate Court, signed 15 March 1916. While Mr. Gresham’s first name is spelled “Isham” in the probate records, it is spelled “Isom” in the tax digests and on his tombstone. In 1900 the African-Americans with the largest aggregate amounts of declared property for tax purposes were F.P. Rogers ($6,380, Marietta militia district); A.J. Rogers ($3,830, Marietta); W.M. Holleman ($2,550, Powder Springs); Isom Gresham ($2,500, Gritters); Millie Gresham ($2,160, Gritters); G.B. Gresham ($2,145, Marietta); John B. Timmons ($2,135, Marietta); A. Broadnax ($2,120, Powder Springs); Charlie Sanders ($1,800, Marietta); L.W. Reynolds ($1,610, Powder Springs); Mose Bacon ($1,490, Marietta); Moses Winkler ($1,240, Marietta); Sam Sanders ($1,160, Austell); Henry Sorrells ($1,160, Marietta); R. Nelson ($1,150, Acworth); Lucy Hammond ($1,100, Marietta); Temp Charity Grand ($1,000, Marietta).

Temple, First Hundred Years, 409, 442; U.S. Population Census, Cobb County, Georgia, 1900; Craig E. Aronoff and Mary Boswell Cawley, A Century of Service: A History of Cobb and Its Bank (Marietta: Barnett Bank, 1987); Blair interview, 8-9; Cobb County Tax Digest, 1900.

Dee Black, “Marietta in 1910,” 1, 12.

Du Bois, The Negro in the Black Belt, 413.

Blair interview, 3.

Hoke Smith, “Speech of Hoke Smith at Columbus, Georgia, January 10, 1906,” MS 2334, box no. 15:15, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library/University of Georgia Libraries, Athens.

The sole account of the lynching is a story in the MJ, 22 March 1900, p. 4. The Journal story claimed that Amanda was sixteen, but the 1900 census listed her date of birth as April 1885, making her less than fifteen at the time of the incident.

According to the 1900 population census, the mother, Elizabeth, was a widow. Her son John, born in 1884, was a chair finisher. None of the Snellgroves could read or write.

The Upper Piedmont stretches from just south of the mountain counties of extreme north Georgia through Atlanta and Fulton County to the edge of the Cotton Belt.


MJ, 16 August 1900, p. 1.
22. The Blue Ridge Circuit included a number of counties in northwest Georgia.

23. An account of the execution can be found in the MJ, 6 September 1900, p. 1.

24. See an article on the plans for the courthouse in the MJ, 29 June 1899, and a story on the completion of the project in the same newspaper on 31 May 1900. Also see the following: Travis Mobley, "Symbol of the County: Cobb County's Fourth Courthouse, 1872-1969," term paper, HIST 275, June 1996, Center for Regional History & Culture, Kennesaw State University.

25. The Frank case continues to evoke raw passions. Like the Sacco and Vanzetti or O. J. Simpson trials, the case is interesting because it tells us so much about the times and ourselves. With the facts so contradictory, writers often reveal in their arguments as much about themselves as about Frank or his times. In this author's opinion, the best book on the murder continues to be Leonard Dinnerstein's The Leo Frank Case (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968; reprint, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987). It could be supplanted, however, by a new book scheduled for publication this year by Steve Oney, entitled And the Dead Shall Rise. Bill Kinney wrote an excellent summary of the case for the Marietta Daily Journal in 1986. The thirteen-part series began on 16 March 1986 and ran daily on the front page through 28 March 1986. Mary Phagan Kean, a great-niece of the girl allegedly killed by Frank, is the author of a well-researched book entitled The Murder of Little Mary Phagan (Far Hills, N.J.: New Horizon Press, 1987). One of the book's strengths is a series of interviews that Kean conducted with Phagan family members. Despite her connection to the victim, she provides a remarkably objective account. Local attorney Tom Watson Brown, descendant and namesake of one of the key players in the ordeal, produced a scholarly analysis of the case under the title "Notes on the Case of Leo Max Frank and Its Aftermath" (unpublished manuscript, 1982; copy in possession of author). Though not entirely convincing, the document makes a strong case for Frank's guilt and for the fairness of his trial. The following account is based on all these secondary sources.


27. Her tombstone gives her birth date as 1 June 1900, making her twelve at the time of the murder. But the 1900 census lists her birth date as June 1899. The older age fits better the description of a family member that "Mary Phagan was a beautiful little girl...since she was well developed, she could have passed for eighteen." U.S. Population Census, Cobb County, Georgia, 1900; Kean, Murder of Little Mary Phagan, 16.

28. Frank was represented by two of Atlanta's best trial lawyers, Luther Z. Rosser and Reuben Arnold. Assisting them were Styles Hopkins and a representative of the National Pencil Company, Herbert Haas.

29. The daily coverage of the trial in the three main Atlanta newspapers provides no evidence of disturbances inside the courtroom. The Phagan family remembered that Judge Roan maintained strict discipline, prohibiting any disturbances. Kean, Murder of Little Mary Phagan, 25.


31. One of the best biographies of any southern politician is C. Vann Woodward's brilliant


33. Dinnerstein, Leo Frank Case, 130-31; Philip Goldstein, interview by Kathryn A. Kelley, 4 August 1994, Cobb County Oral History Series. The interviewee is the grandson of Philip Goldstein who was in Marietta at the time of the Frank lynching. The oral history will be made public after Mr. Goldstein completes final revisions.


35. This account of the lynching is based on Kean, Murder of Little Mary Phagan, 213, 222-24; and Bill Kinney, “Careful Plans Led to Frank’s Lynching,” MDJ, 25 March 1986, p. 1A.


38. Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, Decision in Response to Application for Posthumous Pardon for Leo M. Frank, 11 March 1986.

39. An annotated list of alleged conspirators and participants in the Frank lynching, compiled by Stephen Goldfarb, has recently appeared on the Internet at the following address:<www.leofranklynchers.com>. Articles about the website can also be found in the AJC, 11 June 2000, p. A1; and the Wall Street Journal, 9 June 2000, p. A1. Goldfarb found his list in the Special Collections at Emory University. It apparently started with Mary Phagan Kean, based on information she gathered from people who approached her to tell what they knew about the lynching. Ms. Kean gave a copy to Marietta attorney, Tom Watson Brown, who passed it on to Dr. Judson C. Ward, a Cobb County native and long-time Emory administrator. Ward then put the document in his university's special collections. A second list has circulated for some time among a handful of Cobb residents. This list started with the confessions of one of the last living lynching members to Judge James Manning of Marietta. The judge eventually gave this information to Bill Kinney and perhaps others. The lists are similar but not exactly the same. Since the allegations can never be verified with total certainty, this author prefers not to repeat the names here. But it is easy now for readers to study the lists for themselves. Steve Oney's And the Deal Shall Rise promises to reveal a great deal about the lynching party.
Chapter 3
The Great War and the Prosperous Twenties

1. A list of Great War veterans can be found in Temple, First Hundred Years, 579-85. According to my calculations, the list includes 829 whites and 243 blacks, including two black casualties. In the early twentieth century, the U.S. Navy excluded African-Americans from all but servants' roles; none of the local navy veterans were black. The 1920 census listed 5,214 males in the 18-44-age group. For all age categories, the census counted 6,645 blacks and 23,792 whites. See the United States Historical Census Data Browser <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/>.

2. Temple, First Hundred Years, 481; Cobb County Times, 4 July 1918; 31 October 1918. Hereinafter, the Cobb County Times will be cited as CCT. Unless a specific page number is given, the cited article can be found on p.1.

3. Temple, First Hundred Years, 486-87.

4. MJ, 10 August 1917; CCT, 9 August 1917 and 16 August 1917.

5. Coleman, History of Georgia, 269.

6. Temple, First Hundred Years, 408-09; Northcutt interview, 6; Jennie Tate Anderson, interview by Susan Herman, 12 April 1979, Kennesaw College Oral History Series, transcript, 9-10. Jennie Tate married James T. Anderson, Jr., in 1939.

7. In 1906 Sacred Heart Church in Atlanta purchased an old sanctuary on Atlanta Street at Waverly Way and sent out Father J. A. Reis, a Marist priest, to serve perhaps twenty-five to forty local parishioners. Dedicated in 1909, the building had been constructed originally to house the First Methodist Church in Marietta. At the turn of the century that congregation moved a block north to the corner of Anderson Street, and the old sanctuary served for awhile as an opera house. After a few years the Catholic parish moved to a small Church Street building that would serve the congregation until the move to Lacy Street in the early 1950s. Prior to World War II no more than sixty-five people were ever in attendance at the Sunday mass. The Church Street structure survived until the 1980s when the North Marietta Parkway was built. See Mary Martin, A History of Saint Joseph's Catholic Church (n.p., 1977), Georgia Room, Cobb County Public Library System. Also see Charles M. Price, "A Sensible Moment: The Desegregation of Saint Joseph's Catholic School of Marietta, Georgia," term paper, HIST 275, Fall 1993, Center for Regional History & Culture, Kennesaw State University.

8. Robert J. and Betty Kienel, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 27 September 2000, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 68, transcript, pp. 2-7, 25. The story about Alma's experience as a Catholic in Cobb County comes from an interview conducted by Betsy Bean, a former Acworth city council member, who related it to the author in an e-mail letter dated 28 August 2000, copy in author's possession. For information on Leila Ross Wilburn and the Kienel compound, see National Register Nomination Form, Collins Avenue Historic District, Acworth, Georgia, State Division of Historic Preservation, Atlanta, Georgia.

9. The property owners who sold the land for the Clarkdale site were A. N. Haney, J. M. Lovinggood, S. O. Brown, Bank of Powder Springs, Mrs. Bertha Dodson, J. L. Butner,

10. CCT, 8 January 1931, p. 1 and 4; 22 January 1931; 31 December 1931; MJ, 15 January 1931.

11. MJ, 19 October 1920.

12. CCT, 24 November 1920, p. 4; 30 November 1920, p. 2. The president of the Cobb County Times was Otis A. Brumby and the editor Frank C. Bunting.

13. CCT, 7 December 1920.


16. The numbers 8-8-8 refer to the percentage in the bag of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, respectively. A convenient website providing information about fertilizers is Fertilizer University at <www.fertilizer.com>.

17. Durham interview, 17-18; Ernest J. Wester, interview by Thomas A. Scott and Jeffrey B. Grable, 30 October 1984, Kennesaw College Oral History Series, transcript, pp. 5-6, 12, 33.


19. Coleman, History of Georgia, 415. In raw numbers, the black population of Georgia was about 1.0 million in 1900, 1.1 million in 1940 and 1.2 million in 1970. In other words, it changed very little in this seventy-year period. In contrast the white population rose from 1.2 million to 2.0 million to 3.4 million in the same time periods. As the white population increased and the black population remained stable, the percentage of blacks fell.


21. Scott, “Cobb County,” 25; Federal Population Census, Cobb County, Georgia, 1900; Fifteenth Census, Vol. II, Pt. 2, p. 526. Caucasian-owned farms were somewhat larger and more valuable. The comparable figures were 1,177 white-owned farms, averaging 58.7 acres in size and worth $59 per acre.


24. Cassie Wingo Chastain, interview by Eugene R. Huck and Thomas A. Scott, 4 April 1980; Cassie Wingo Chastain and Katherine Chastain Baird (her daughter), interview
by Thomas A. Scott, 15 July 1980, Kennesaw College Oral History Series, transcript, pp. 1, 6-8, 10, 19. Attached to the interview (pp. 32-33) is an article from the Cobb County Times given to the interviewers by Mrs. Chastain. Entitled "Here's a Farm Home That Rivals Any Country Estate," the story is undated, but the Chastains have penciled in "Year 1924).

25. Chastain interview, 6-8.


30. CCT, 12 February 1920, p. 4; 19 February 1920; and 23 March 2000.


33. “County Schools Succeed under Bernard Awtrey," CCT, 31 December 1920; “Great Strides in Education Are Being Made Yearly by the Schools of Historic Marietta and the County” and “Up To Date Building and Efficient Teachers Class Olive Springs Consolidated School as Modern,” MJ, 9 May 1929, pp. 33, 36.

34. Jessie Mae Spears Taylor, interview by Mary Boswell Cawley, 10 February 1988, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 32, transcript, pp. 1-4, 8-15. When she was interviewed, Ms. Taylor was uncertain about the date of construction for the African-American school in Acworth, but the minutes of the Cobb County board of education give an authorization date of 13 February 1952.

35. Jeanes supervisors were supported in part by the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, set up by a northern humanitarian interested in improving educational opportunities for African-Americans. The Jeanes funds were particularly designated for the enhancement of rural schools. Dr. Susie W. Wheeler, the Jeanes supervisor for Bartow County, claims that the women in these positions worked to improve the schools in any way they could and had many of the responsibilities of superintendents in the white schools. Coleman, History of Georgia, 327; Susie W. Wheeler, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 3 March 2000, North Georgia Oral History Series, transcript, pp. 20-22.


39. Margaret Virginia Tapp, “The History and Significance of the Seventh District Agricultural and Mechanical Arts School, Powder Springs, Georgia” (M.Ed. thesis, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1962), 1, 6-7, 13, 16-18, 23, 25-27, 31. Both the boys’ dormitory and the dining hall were destroyed by fire during the school’s first decade, but they were quickly replaced with new structures.

40. Margaret Virginia Tapp, interview by Mary B. Cawley, 21 August 1987. The transcript is in my possession; it is part of a backlog of interviews that eventually will be edited and indexed for the Kennesaw State University Oral History Project.

41. Tapp, “History and Significance of the Seventh District School,” 34-36.


45. Dr. Ward’s father, Judson C. Ward, Sr., owned a grocery store, Smith, Ward & Hicks, in the second store on the west side of Church Street going north from the Square. Ward interview, 4, 6.

46. Elgin, Centennial Celebration, 63, 77-78.


Chapter 4
Depression Decade


3. L. M. Blair, “Memories of Marietta,” interview by Florence F. Corley and Anne Blair Buchanan, c. 1962, for the Junior League, transcript, p. 8, vertical files, Georgia Room, Cobb County Public Library, Marietta, Georgia. Since Mr. Blair was in poor health at the time, he requested that he be interviewed in several short sessions. This is a second part of the interview by Corley and Buchanan cited in Chapter 1, note 20.

4. “Roosevelt Club Formed by Cobb County Citizens,” CCT, 2 July 1931, p. 1. Other charter members of the club listed in the newspaper article were former representative J. Guy Roberts, Mrs. George H. Keeler, George Welsh, Mrs. Helen Lewis McIntyre, Robert Fowler, Al Burtz, R. J. Hancock, and R. A. Hill.


18. "$45,000 Negro School Ready May 1" (photo), CCT, 6 April 1939; Edmund Hughes, "Education Board Formally Accepts New $45,000 Negro School Building," CCT, 11 May 1939; "Perkinson High School" (photo), CCT, 15 June 1939.

19. Hughes, "Work to Start Soon"; "Brumby Recreation Center to Be Dedicated June 16," CCT, 25 May 1939; "Brumby Recreation Center" (photo), CCT, 15 June 1939.

20. Antley interview, 16; Northcutt interview, 14.

21. Joe Mack Wilson interview, 8; Cantrell interview, 5; Northcutt interview, 14; Blair,
“Memories of Marietta,” 16.

22. CCT, 11 April 1940, p. 1; 18 April 1940, p. 1; Rotalight, 21 January 1942, in Scrapbook 1 (2 January to 25 March 1942), Box 1, Blair Collection, Bentley Rare Book Room, Kennesaw State University. Compiled by city clerk Odene L. Johnson, the scrapbooks consist of newspaper clippings from Marietta and Atlanta newspapers, covering Blair’s administration from January 1942 to January 1948.


27. The main accounts of the fire are several articles in the CCT, 6 November 1930; and “Marietta Swept by $250,000 Fire,” AC, 1 November 1930, p. 6.


Chapter 5

Local Leaders and the Recruitment of Bell Bomber


3. Throughout his adult life Clay claimed that he was born on 23 April 1897, and many sources have naturally taken the general at his word. His biographer, Jean Edward Smith, became suspicious of that date when he looked in the Marietta Journal and discovered that Clay’s mother was hosting a big event that night. The truth was that Clay was born in 1898. When he was appointed to the United States Military Academy in 1915, he worried that he might not be admitted at age seventeen, so he lied about his age to appear older than he was. Then he consistently continued to claim the earlier birth date the rest of his life. Smith notes that the general never lied about anything else and turned white when his biographer brought the matter up. In response to Smith’s direct challenge, Clay said: “But my official birthday is April 23, 1897. This is how I’m listed in the Social Register, Social Security, all the rest. A mistake may have occurred there. It’s very probable. But that’s the official birthday as recorded everywhere, April 23, 1897.” General Lucius Clay, interview by Jean Smith, Cape Cod, 2 August 1971, Interview # 31, transcript, p. 1057, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas; Jean Edward Smith, interview by Brian Lamb, 18 November 1991, C-SPAN, Booknotes, transcript, p. 4 of 26, <www.booknotes.org/transcripts/10108.htm>.


5. Smith’s biographer, Dewey Grantham, thinks that the Georgia politician was an opportunist on the race question. He was a moderate with regard to African-American rights before 1906, but to gain the rural vote he submitted to ex-Populist Tom Watson’s demand that he make disenfranchisement the cornerstone of his gubernatorial campaign. Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 132-33, 163-65.

6. Clay interview, 52, 55, 1063-64.


8. The account that follows is based on the AJ article cited above and on Smith, Lucius Clay, 17-100. The latter is an excellent account of the general’s career.


13. Cobb leaders joining Blair were Commissioner C. M. Head; County Attorney James V. Carmichael; Ordinary James J. Daniell; Superior Court Clerk John T. LeCroy; First National Bank President J. E. Massey; A. L. Crowe of Smyrna; attorney Charles M. Brown of Marietta; plant manager W. R. Beldon of Clark Thread Company (Clarkdale); and Max C. Pittard, George L. Harrison, and James T. Anderson, Sr., of Marietta. Others present were Ivan Allen, chairman, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s Industrial Bureau; Winship Nunally, chairman, Chamber Aviation Committee; Montgomery Knight of Georgia Tech; Ed Nilsan of the CAA; Dr. Frazer Adams of the Atlanta Aero Club; Frank K. Shaw, secretary, Chamber Aviation Committee; W. H. Barnwell of Georgia Power; and Jesse Draper, vice-president, Atlanta Chamber. “Airport Site Proposals Go to CAA,” CCT, 17 October 1940; “Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Helps Bring Large Airport to Marietta,” MDJ, 75th Anniversary issue, 16 October 1941.


15. L.M. Blair, Mayor, to Civil Aeronautics Authority, Washington, D.C., attention: Major Clay, 28 October 1940, Marietta, Georgia, folder, Box 22, Civil Aeronautics Administration Office of Airports, DLA Correspondence File, 1941-1947, Record Group 237, Federal Aviation Administration, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland [hereinafter cited as Marietta folder, CAA].

16. W.B. Hartsfield to Hon. C.M. Head, Commissioner, Cobb County, 23 October 1940; Ivan Allen, Chairman, Industrial Bureau, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, to James Carmichael, Marietta, 23 October 1940; Montgomery Knight to Honorable L.M. Blair, 23 October 1940, Marietta folder, CAA.

17. A Class 4 airport had runways that were long enough and thick enough to handle the largest commercial airplanes of the era. Blair made clear that Marietta was not interested in the smaller first or second-class airports, but wanted only a Class 3 or Class 4 facility.


19. A. B. McMullen to Regional Manager, CAA, Atlanta, Georgia, 9 November 1940, Marietta folder, CAA.

20. Lucius D. Clay to Honorable L. M. Blair, 15 November 1940, Marietta folder, CAA.

21. C. M. Head, Commissioner of Roads and Revenues, Cobb County, Georgia, to Administrator of Civil Aeronautics, Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., 23 November 1940, Marietta folder, CAA.

23. Donald H. Connolly, Washington, to R. C. Copeland, Atlanta, 20 February 1941; R. C. Copeland to Colonel Donald H. Connolly, 28 February 1941, Marietta folder, CAA.

24. Lucius D. Clay to Colonel Robert Olds, Office of the Chief of the Air Corps, War Department, 7 May 1941; Charles B. Donaldson, Chief, Engineering and Construction Section, Airport Division, CAA, to Regional Manager, CAA, Atlanta, 7 May 1941, Marietta folder, CAA.


27. A former public school teacher, Jolley started working in 1925 at the bond department of Atlanta's Citizens and Southern Bank. The first bond issue he ever handled was for the construction of the Mountain View School in east Cobb. After 1933, federal law prohibited banks from engaging in the securities business; so the employees in the C & S bond department formed Johnson, Lane, Space & Company. Jolley worked for them from 1933 to 1953, and then became manager of the municipal bond department of Robinson Humphrey. In January 1964 he founded with his daughter, Malinda Jolley Mortin, the Lex Jolley & Company. Lex and LeoDelle Jolley, interview by Mary Boswell Cawley, 13 and 20 October 1987, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 4, transcript, pp. 36-37, 48-49.


29. Jolley interview, 48, 52-53; Joe Kirby, “Unwitting Father of Dobbins Still Flying High,” MDJ, 18 November 1987, p. 5C; minutes of meeting of the Commissioner of Roads and Revenues and the Advisory Board of Cobb County, 10 June 1941; Geo. H. McMillan to Administrator of Civil Aeronautics, c/o Regional Manager, 12 June 1941, Marietta folder, CAA.

30. James V. Carmichael, County Attorney, Cobb County, to Harvey [sic] Perkins, Regional Magr., Civil Aeronautics Authority, Atlanta, 21 June 1941 (two separate letters); James V. Carmichael to Civil Aeronautics Administration, % Regional Manager, Atlanta, 27 June 1941; H. Harvie Perkins, Regional Airport Engineer, to Civil Aeronautics Administration, Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., 28 June 1941, Marietta folder, CAA.

31. Torn down in the late 1990s, the Carmichael home place and store were located just south and east of where I-285 now crosses Atlanta Road, the old Dixie Highway.

32. Ward interview, 21-25; Chess Abernathy, “Now I Like That—,” CCT, 25 August 1938, p. 4; Peggy Carmichael Redmond and Willie Mae Carmichael Williams, interview by Mary Cawley, 17 October 1987; transcript in my possession for ultimate inclusion in Cobb County Oral History Series.

33. Cobb, “George Huie McMillan,” 3; “Rickenbacker Field: Famous War Ace Pleased
with Plan," MDJ, 4 September 1941; Eddie Rickenbacker, President and General Manager, Eastern Air Lines, New York, New York, to His Honor, the Mayor of Marietta, the Honorable Board of Commissioners of Cobb County, and the Progressive Citizens of the Community, open letter, MDJ, 16 October 1941, Section B, special 75th anniversary issue, no page number.

34. "$75,000.00 Added to Extend Runway on New Cobb Airport," MDJ, 27 October 1941.

35. Supplemental Agreement, the United States of America and W. L. Florence Construction Company, 21 October 1941, Marietta folder, CAA; "New Airport, Highway Bring Big Trade Stimulus to Cobb County: Marietta Super-Highway Ranks As Best in North Georgia Section" and "W. L. Florence Builds One of Nation's Great Airports," MDJ, 16 October 1941, Section B, no page numbers; Miller interview, 2-3.

36. Kirby, "Unwitting Father of Dobbins Still Flying High," SC.


38. A Resolution, Cobb County Commissioner of Roads and Revenues and Advisory Board, 21 October 1941; Contract between Cobb County and Georgia Power, 9 December 1941; Blair, "Memories of Marietta," 18; Blair to Clay, 17 December 1941; Clay to Blair, 22 December 1941, Marietta folder, CAA; Blair, "Memories of Marietta," 17-18.

39. Smith, Lucius D. Clay, 98-99, 109, 155; Clay interview, 403-04. The quotations above come from the published work. The wording differs slightly from the original oral history transcript, but the meaning remains identical. The oral history makes clear that Clay volunteered information on his role in bringing Bell to Marietta in response to a general question about the factors responsible for placing defense industries in particular locations.


41. A. O. Willauer, Staff Assistant to the Manager, Bell Aircraft Corporation, Georgia Division, Outline History of B-29 Program at Bell Bomber Plant, Dec. 22, 1941 to Dec. 31, 1943, p. 1. Air Force Historical Research Agency Collection, call number 208-1, Montgomery, Alabama; the author is grateful to Richard S. Combes, Senior Research Engineer, Georgia Tech Research Institute, for giving him a Xerox copy of this unpublished manuscript.


46. The wage figure for the family-owned Glover Machine Works comes from the first-
hand recollection of James Bolan Glover IV, as ascertained for the author on 14 June 1999 by Glover’s son, James Bolan Glover V.

47. “Cobb Gets Big Bomber Plant.”

48. Xerox copy of January 24 entry from diary of Willie Mae Carmichael Williams (Mrs. Earl Williams), in possession of author; Cobb, “George Huie McMillan,” 4.


50. Blair to Clay, 18 December 1941; Clay to Blair, 18 December 1941; Blair to Clay, 19 December 1941, Marietta folder, CAA.


Chapter 6

Bell Aircraft and the Growth of Cobb County

1. Rotalight, 4 February 1942, Scrapbook 1, Box 1, Blair Collection, Kennesaw State University; Otis A. Brumby, “Jambalaya,” CCT, 26 February 1942.


7. Miller interview, 4-8, 34.


13. Larry Bell is the source for the number of B-29s built in Georgia, as cited in the *Marietta Daily Journal*, 3 November 1945. Other sources run the total as high as 668. Harold Mintz points out that several planes were built, but never delivered, after the atomic bombing of Japan brought the war to a rapid conclusion. Those planes were scrapped. Counting them, one reaches a higher total than President Bell’s figure. For the work force figures see “Marietta, Georgia: A Problem in Reconversion,” Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta *Monthly Review* 31 (October 1945): 109-14.

14. Norton, Larry, 133-41; see the MDJ, 28 and 29 November 1944 for an account of Carl Cover’s death. The same paper on 27 December 1944 carried a story of Carmichael’s elevation on 1 December 1944 to manager and on 26 December to corporate vice president.

15. Bell to Carmichael, 28 July 1944, Folder 2, Box 4; “Larry” to “Dear Jimmy,” 19 December 1944, Folder 6, Box 5, Series 1, subseries 2, General Correspondence, James Vinson Carmichael papers, Special Collections, Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia [hereinafter referred to as Carmichael papers, Emory].


17. For official photographs taken by company photographers, see the webpage for the history department at Kennesaw State University at <www.kennesaw.edu/history/>.

18. Betty L. Williams, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 22 October 2000, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 73, transcript.


20. Currently, South Marietta Parkway.
21. MDJ, 23 March 1943; 14 October 1943; 25 August 1944.


24. MDJ, 14 October 1943.

25. Helen Dortch Longstreet, "My Day," copy sent to Larry Bell, 18 December 1944, Folder 3, Box 6, Carmichael Papers, Emory.


27. MDJ, 1 November 1943.


29. Carmichael's views on disabled workers can be found in an article he wrote for the January 1946 issue of Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation News, Folder 11, Box 9, Carmichael papers, Emory.


32. Ferguson, "Politics of Exclusion," 66-67; Mrs. Sarah Madison, Complaint against Bell Aircraft Corporation, 1 May 1944, Closed Cases, Box 2; Region VII, Records of the Committee on Fair Employment Practice, Record Group 228, National Archives—Southeast Region, East Point, Georgia.

33. Witherspoon Dodge to Clarence M. Mitchell, Associate Director of Field Operations, 12 March 1945; Dodge to Mr. Will Maslow, Director of Field Operations, 27 March 1945; Mitchell to Mr. W. Don Ellinger, Regional Director, FEPC, New Orleans, 28 February 1945; Mitchell to Dodge, 17 March 1945, Bell Aircraft Corporation folder, Administrative Files, Region VII, Records of FEPC, National Archives—Southeast Region.


35. Croop interview, 12-13; Adams interview, 1, 16-17.

36. Gisel interview, 1, 3.

37. Gisel interview, 5.
38. Gisel interview, 3-4; Croop interview, 12-13, 15.

39. The Bellringer, February 1944, p. 10; Gisel interview, 2-3, 12, 16.

40. MDJ, 17 August 1945; Yates, "Jimmy Carmichael Recalls 'Bell' Days," 59; Norton, Larry, 141.

41. Fred D. Bentley, Sr., interview by Thomas Allan Scott and Mary Boswell Cawley, 11 July 1987, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 8, transcript, pp. 12-13, 45.

42. Census of Population: 1950, Characteristics of the Population of Georgia, 9, 13; James V. Carmichael, handwritten manuscript [1946?], Folder 20, Box 62, Carmichael papers, Emory; Mintz interview, 18-19; Adams interview, 22-23, 29; Croop interview, 18-19; Bockman interview, 17-18; Williams interview, 19-20; Odom interview, 12-13; Slade interview, 18-19.

Chapter 7
From Bell to Lockheed: The Late 1940s in Cobb County

1. Gisel interview, 18.


5. A thorough discussion of Clay's post-World War II career can be found in Smith, Lucius D. Clay, books 3 and 4; Smith, interview by Brian Lamb, Booknotes, 10-26; and Lucius D. Clay, Decision in Germany (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1950). This summary of Clay's life is based on those sources.


9. Thomas R. Wheaton, Jr., and Mary Beth Reed, *The First Marietta Waterworks: A Preliminary Archeological and Historical Assessment of the Life Student Center Site*, prepared by New South Associates for Life College, December 1989; Temple, *First Hundred Years*, 449; 476; minutes, Cobb County Commissioner and Advisory Board, 3 November 1959. [Hereinafter cited as Cobb County Advisory Board minutes]. As part of a 1959 resolution calling for the issuance of water and sewerage revenue bonds, the commissioner and advisory board included a brief history of the county's supply and distribution system.


14. At the time of this statement United Mine Workers President John L. Lewis was leading a major strike for higher wages and improved safety and health benefits. Lewis had gained a reputation for arrogance when he took his laborers out on strike during World War II, jeopardizing the nation's need for uninterrupted coal productivity while American troops were fighting against fascism. Mayor Blair, no doubt, assumed that an informed public would recognize his allusion to powerful private interests operating against the public good. See George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 1248-49, 1291.


26. When Lula D. McEachern died in 1949 she left all her stock in Life of Georgia to the McEachern Trust Fund, with 80 percent of the million-dollar endowment designated for the high school. Mrs. McEachern's estate records can be found at the Cobb County Probate Court. See Marianne Little Rogers, "Local History for First Grade with Emphasis on the Town of Powder Springs and John McEachern High School" (M.Ed. thesis, Kennesaw College, 1987), 28.


29. Tina Stanton, "Ken Stanton and the Beginning of the Cobb County Band Program," term paper, HIST 2275, 26 November 2000, Kennesaw State University, Center for
Regional History & Culture.

30. Stanton, "Ken Stanton."


34. Despite his association with Ellis Arnall, Carmichael clearly lacked the governor's ties to organized labor. During the 1946 campaign Arnall asked U. S. Commerce secretary Henry Wallace to appeal to his Congress of Industrial Organization friends in behalf of the erstwhile Bell general manager, whom the unionists distrusted as a "boss." Through Wallace, the governor urged Georgia CIO leaders to endorse Carmichael on faith, as a favor to Arnall, a friend of labor who claimed never to let the working people down. Telephone conversation, Governor Arnall to Secretary Wallace, 10 May 1946, "Telephone Logs," Henry Agard Wallace Papers, Reel 66, University of Iowa Microfilm Collections. The author is grateful to colleague Randall L. Patton for alerting him to the existence of this request.

35. Prior to a constitutional amendment in the early 1940s the governor's term had been two years. Arnall was the first governor of the modern era to serve a four-year term.


37. Talmadge's platform in the 1946 contest was printed in the AC, 7 April 1946.

38. Carmichael carried Cobb County two to one over Talmadge. The final poll was 8,274 for Carmichael, 3,950 for Talmadge, 384 for Rivers, and 161 for a minor candidate, Hoke O'Kelley. Carmichael did particularly well in the Marietta boxes, carrying all 862 votes cast in the "colored" box and 4,213 of 5,872 cast in the white box. A native of the Smyrna area, Carmichael also received a huge majority in Smyrna, beating Talmadge 622 to 241, and in Lemons (508 to 128) and Vinings (98 to 17). Talmadge carried the mill village of Clarkdale and a number of rural districts, such as Big Shandy, Gitters, Lost Mountain, and Merritts. CCT, 18 July 1946, p. 1.


40. Hartwell and Susan Hooper, "The Scripto Strike: Martin Luther King's 'Valley of
Chapter 8
Lockheed's First Years in Georgia

1. The negotiating teams at Panmunjom signed a truce on 27 July 1953, permitting the exchange of prisoners, creating a 2.5-mile-wide demilitarized zone, and leaving the truce line just slightly above the 38th parallel. The U.N. forces achieved this costly containment "victory" at the expense of 33,000 Americans killed in action, 103,000 more wounded or missing, a million South Korean casualties, and probably 1.5 million communist casualties. George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, America: A Narrative History, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 1315-18.


Rogers went to work for Lockheed in 1951 as director of public relations. When he retired in 1987 he was special assistant to the president of Lockheed-Georgia.

Sherman Martin, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 11 August 2000 and 25 October 2000, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 72, transcript, p. 3; Boyne, Beyond the Horizons, 99-109; A. Lee Rogers, interview by Thomas A. Scott and Mary B. Cawley, 10 August 1987, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 64, transcript, pp. 4-5.

Martin interview, 7-8; Boyne, Beyond the Horizons, 225.


In a 1954 letter Carmichael admitted, “For nearly thirty years now I have not been free from pain. It is with me constantly, and one day differs from another only in the intensity of the pain I suffer.” Carmichael to Robert W. Woodruff, 3 May 1954, Folder 6, Box 11, Carmichael papers, Emory.

The Defense Department officially awarded the plant to Lockheed when the two parties signed a contract on 19 January 1951. “Carmichael Is Appointed General Manager As Lockheed Creates Georgia Division” and “Full Text of Lockheed Announcement,” CCT, 4 January 1951; “Carmichael to Head Lockheed Set-up At Bomber Plant,” MDJ, 4 January 1951; Rogers interview, 4.

Boyne, Beyond the Horizons, 224-26; “Marietta Division Assistant Manager Veteran of 11 Years with Lockheed,” CCT, 11 January 1951; Rogers interview, 6.


To keep them from rusting, the engines were pickled (i.e., immersed in oil) during their sojourn in the desert.

Gabriel claims that Haughton was a fatherly figure, and everyone called him “Uncle Dan.”


23. Rogers interview, 21-22.


30. Boyne, Beyond the Horizons, 233-34; Dabney, Herk, 93-96.

31. Rogers interview, 16-17; Frech interview; Dabney, Herk, 97.


33. Combes, “Aircraft Manufacturing in Georgia,” 34; Dabney, Herk, 97-98.

34. Dabney, Herk, 131-32; Price, “Early Production of the C-130,” 5.

35. Boyne, Beyond the Horizons, 234; Dabney, Herk, 98-100.

Chapter 9
The John Heck Administration, 1949-1953: Progress and Controversy

1. Remarks of James V. Carmichael, Early Bird Breakfast, Cobb County Chamber of Commerce, 3 February 1966, p. 1, Folder 24, Box 63, Carmichael papers, Emory.

2. Remarks of Carmichael, 7-10.


6. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 3 April 1951; Georgia Laws 1951, p. 497.

7. According to the 1950 census, Austell was Cobb’s fourth largest town with a total of 1,413 people. See Chapter 7, footnote 18 for the population of the other towns.

8. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 3 April 1951; Willingham interview, 21, 86-87; Homer Meaders, "Water Authority Gets $3,000,000 Check," MDJ, 1 June 1952.


10. "Cobb Water Authority Nearing End;" "Water Plant Moving at Rapid Pace," MDJ, 10 July 1952; Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 3 November 1959; Heck interview, 6-7.

11. "Engineers Ask for Bids on Allatoona Dam Project," CCT, 3 January 1946; "Acworth Asks for Secondary Dam to Save Community’s Economy," CCT, 10 January 1946; Carrie Dyer Woman’s Club, Acworth, Georgia: From Cherokee Country to Suburbia (Acworth: Star Printing Company, 1976), 68; Willingham interview, 83-84; "Sub-Dam

13. Willingham interview, 16, 84-86; "Legislature Okays $100,000 for State Park at Acworth," CCT, 15 February 1951.


15. For alerting the author to the significance of this case and for sharing information, the author is grateful to James Asher, metro editor for enterprise and projects of the Baltimore Sun.


18. "Davis Taylor Takes Farm Warden's Post," CCT, 16 April 1953.


23. Meaders, "Taylor Takes Full Blame"; "Amos Reece Trial Scheduled Friday"; and "Death Penalty Is Given Reece."


25. Motion to Quash Indictment, 16 June 1954; Demurrer to the Plea, 22 June 1954; Motion for New Trial, 25 June 1954; Amendment to the Original Motion for New Trial, 21 August 1954; State v. Reece, # 1961.


27. A writ of certiorari is an order from a higher to a lower court, seeking the record of a case for review.

28. Reece v. Georgia, in Ernest H. Schopler, ed., Cases Argued and Decided in the Supreme Court of the United States, 100 Lawyer's edition (Rochester, NY: Lawyers Co-operative Publishing Company, 1956), 79-83. Also see “Supreme Court Orders New Reece Trial,” MDJ, 5 December 1955. The story made the front page of the local paper, but was supplanted as the main story of the day by another civil rights issue. The top headline for 5 December was “Tech Given Nod to Play in Sugar Bowl; Future Non-Segregated Games Banned.” Governor Griffin had previously ordered Tech not to play in the football bowl game, because the opponent, the University of Pittsburgh, had an African-American athlete on the team. After a huge student and alumni protest, the Board of Regents reached a compromise, permitting Tech to play in New Orleans but banning in-state games with integrated teams.


35. Commutation Proceedings, State Board of Pardons and Paroles, 5 November 1956, State v. Reece; Jack M. Forrester, Director, State Board of Corrections, to Mr. R. P. Balkcom, Jr., Warden, Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, 6 November 1956; Executive Sanity Commission, Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, to Honorable Marvin Griffin, Governor, State of Georgia, 23 November 1956; Electrocution of
Southern (and perhaps American) justice was notorious for giving lighter sentences to blacks committing crimes against blacks than blacks whose victims were white. Two cases in Cobb County during the same month as Reece's first conviction provide illustrations. On 20 October 1953, the day that Reece committed his crime, Mildred Regina Roberts, a black Marietta woman, was convicted of voluntary manslaughter in the shotgun slaying of a black man and received three to five years in prison. Two days later, James Miller, an African-American, worked out a plea bargain agreement, in which he received one to three years for stabbing another black man to death. Both altercations followed a quarrel. "Negress Given 3-5 Year Term on Manslaughter," MDJ, 21 October 1953; "Miller Negro Pleads Guilty Gets 1-3 Years," MDJ, 23 October 1953.

Chapter 10
Politics and Education in the Mid-1950s

1. Alice Heck interview, 1-5, 47-48.
2. Bentley interview, 1-7, 20-27; Paul Thompson, "Bentley Heads Legislative Ticket; Williams In; Thompson Carries Cobb," CCT, 29 June 1950.
5. "Relieve Us of Willingham's Services or We Resign," political advertisement, MDJ, 3 November 1953, p. 5-A. On 2 October 1953 Cobb Superior Court Judge James T. Manning decided a case brought against the proposed cemetery by members of the Rottenwood Creek Community Club. The judge upheld Commissioner Heck's right to grant Byron Reeves authority to build the cemetery on the 185-acre Windy Valley Farm along the Four Lane Highway. At the same time Manning ruled unconstitutional the controversial section of the 1953 act that took from the planning commission the right to rezone the property. In 1949 the planning commission had declared the area to be part of Zone I, which could be developed only for residential or agricultural purposes. "Judge OK's Cemetery; Suggest New Zone Law," MDJ, 2 October 1953.
7. MDJ, 4 November 1953.


10. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 16 February 1953, 9 September 1953; Willingham interview, 86.


13. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 19 November 1954.


15. “7 Stores to Open in Belmont Hills,” MDJ, 21 July 1954; “Miss America Will Open Belmont Hills” and “Shopping Center to Become Largest in Southeast,” MDJ, 17 November 1954.


17. A mill is the equivalent of one dollar in taxes for every thousand dollars of real property, as assessed by county administrators.

18. Due to questions about the legality of the south Cobb election, the advisory board decided to submit the issue to the voters for a second time. On 8 June 1957 the people again affirmed their desire to be taxed for a fire prevention district, this time by a 351 to 160 margin. The voters also elected to the fire prevention board T. H. Baker, L. D. Melton, J. E. Roberts, C. Clyde Gløre, and L. R. Dunn. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 6 May 1957, 21 June 1957.


transcript, p. 11.


23. For a first-hand account of the negotiations resolving the integration dilemma and allowing Georgia Tech to participate in the Sugar Bowl, see W. Howard Ector, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 15 June 1995, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 38.


27. “Amendment No. 4 Defeated in Cobb; Carries in State,” MDJ, 3 November 1954; Sybil Williams, “Reed Joins Bentley in Pledging Fight Against School Plan,” MDJ, 4 November 1954.

28. See the author’s “The Integration of Public Schools and Colleges,” in *Cornerstones of Georgia History: Documents That Formed the State* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 208-23.

29. In February 1961 the Acworth Colored School was renamed Roberts Elementary School. About the same time the Austell Colored School was renamed Washington Street Elementary School. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, June 1959, February 1961, April 1961.

30. The white Cobb County high schools in 1959 were Campbell (Jasper M. Griffin, principal), South Cobb (W.O. Smitha), Sprayberry (Ralph F. Quarles), North Cobb (T.C. Cantrell), McEachern (Gale G. Acuff), and Osborne (Robert L. Osborne). The white county elementary schools were Acworth, Austell, Belmont Hills, Blackwells, Brown, Due West, Eastside, Elizabeth, Fair Oaks, Fitchugh Lee, Green Acres, Harmony-Leland, Hawthorne, Kennesaw, King Springs, LaBelle, Mableton, Milfورد, Mt. View, Powder Springs, Powers Ferry, Riverside, Sedalia Park, Sky View, and Smyrna. The separate Marietta system operated the following elementary schools: Allgood, Banberry, Dodd Street, Hickory Hills, Lockheed, Park Street, Pine Forest, and West Side. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 10 June 1959, Elgin, Centennial Celebration, 86-93, 118-20.


Surprised At Reaction," CCT, 14 January 1960, p. 3-A.


34. Help Our Public Education was incorporated in Fulton County on 12 December 1958 for the purpose of maintaining public education in Georgia. The organization claimed to be neutral in the debate between segregationists and integrationists. From a liberal perspective, its most controversial decision was to limit its membership to whites on the tactical grounds that only whites could change current state policies. As the courts narrowed Georgia's options to desegregating or closing public schools, HOPE supported John Sibley's efforts to keep public schools open. The organization was more active in north Georgia than in the southern part of the state. Within a few months of its creation, HOPE had strong chapters in Marietta, Gainesville, Athens, and Rome. See Paul E. Mertz, "Mind Changing Time All Over Georgia: HOPE, Inc. and School Desegregation, 1958-1961," Georgia Historical Quarterly 77 (spring, 1993): 41-61.


39. Mrs. E. P. Inglis, "Will We Allow This To Create Strife?" MDJ, 25 March 1960.

40. The author is grateful to Ruth Inglis for sharing her correspondence following the publication of the letter to the editor cited above. The complete text of the 21 March 1960 Reuter story in France-Soir is as follows: "En Georgie, les membres du Ku Klux Klan ont parcouru hier les routes du comte de Cobb, a bord d'une centaine de voitures, exigeant des commerçants qu'ils affichent a leurs vitrines des slogans favorables a la segregation raciale."


Chapter 11
Last of the One-Man Commissioners

1. Alice Heck interview, 47-48; McCollum interview, 1, 3, 14-16; "Officials Sworn In: Begin 4-Year Terms," MDJ, 31 December 1956.

2. "Cobb Board Makes Sweeping Changes," MDJ, 2 January 1957; Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 6 August 1957, 3 November 1959; McCollum interview, 28-29; Raymond Reed, interview by Mary B. Cawley and Thomas A. Scott, 15 December 1987, transcript in possession of author.

4. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 23 May 1958; "Country Board Governing Unit of the Field" and "Here's Story of Airport That Couldn't Be Built," CCT, 1 September 1960, Special Airport Section, 1.


6. Lindsey, "Cobb County Airport, McCollum Field," 3-6; McCollum interview, 18-20; "Here's Story of Airport That Couldn't Be Built"; "158,500 in Federal Funds Awarded to Cobb's New McCollum Airport," MDJ, 12 November 1959.

7. An Alabama native, C. W. Matthews came to Marietta with the U.S. Corps of Engineers to help build the Bell Aircraft facility. After serving the remainder of World War II in the Pacific, he moved to Marietta and in 1946 formed a partnership with his wife Myrtle, S. A. White, and Ed McPherson to form the Marietta Construction Company. Mrs. Matthews handled the payroll. At the time they had two tractors and a motor grader. Their first big job was the building of the Parkaire airstrip. By 1952 Matthews was able to buy out White and McPherson and rename the company C. W. Matthews Contracting Company. Over the next thirty years he paved numerous highways throughout the southeast and built the midfield terminal at Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta. By 1980 the corporation was the second largest road contractor in the country. In January 1982 C. W. Matthews retired and turned the business over to his sons. Maggie Willis, "Retiring—After a Fashion," MDJ, 20 December 1981, p. 1D.


10. Lindsey, "Cobb County Airport, McCollum Field," 6-7, 18.


19. With one exception this was the same board that the commissioner had appointed in 1957. Originally, James A. Kirk served on the group, but when the authority was created, Dewitt Alexander took his place. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 7 May 1957.


21. The county purchased this tract on 3 October 1957 from R. A. Bozeman, Roy D. Ayers, Mrs. J. L. Bozeman, George R. Skelton, and J. C. Cantrell, Jr. Book 420, p. 397, Deed Records, Cobb County Superior Court, Marietta, Georgia. The resolution to sell the property to the recreation authority is in Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 17 November 1958.

22. The original authority members were appointed in 1958 for two-year terms, but no record exists in the advisory board minutes that any was ever reappointed. The members simply continued to serve until they resigned. Through the beginning of 1963 the only changes in the board came when Herman Brinkley took Burdett's place (17 November 1958), Guy A. Powell replaced Brinkley (24 October 1959), John Carney replaced Powell (1 September 1961), and James Dawson replaced Horace Crowe (21 April 1961). Grand Jury Presentments, January-February Term of Cobb Superior Court, 25 March 1963, pp. 546-50, Minute Book 3-Y, Cobb County Superior Court, Marietta, Georgia.

23. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 17 November 1958; Horace Crowe, "$1 Million Check Received for Park," MDJ, 22 December 1958.


26. The land of the daughter, Jane Frey Chastain, was located east of Frey Road and was not part of the deal. John Steve Frey, Sr. and his sons John, Jr. and Ralph were the grantors in the sale to the recreation authority.


28. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 23 November 1959.


31. Paid advertisement by individual authority members, CCT, 1 September 1960, p. 15-A; Willingham interview, 41; John Ottley, "23,056 Give McCollum Edge Over Henderson; Sams, Sanders, Griffin, Manning Also Winners," CCT, 15 September 1960.


34. Willingham interview, 40-41; Pennington, “Controversial Cobb Tract.”

35. The other partners in Cobb Developers were Alan Welker, whose engineering firm, Merritt & Welker, was the project engineer for the recreation center; and Mr. and Mrs. Rosser Little, whose bank held a two hundred thousand dollar note against the authority.

36. Bentley interview, 26; Pennington, “Controversial Cobb Tract.” The original Yazoo fraud occurred in 1795, when a corrupt Georgia legislature sold the state's claims to Alabama and Mississippi to four giant land speculation firms for the extremely low price of five hundred thousand dollars. Upon investigation, it became clear that the representatives voting for the deal had been bribed with shares in the land speculation companies or other tangible rewards. Coleman, History of Georgia, 96-99.


Chapter 12
Creation of Colleges and an Elected County School Board


4. Willingham interview, 54-55; Bentley interview, 33-34; Reed interview; “Vandiver Forces Celebrate Defeat of Griffin’s Rural Road Measure,” MDJ, 29 January 1958.


9. Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 6 May 1958.

10. In the following legislative session Willingham pushed through a bill allowing the Marietta Housing Authority to issue revenue bonds to build dormitories. The bonds would be retired through rentals, and tax revenues could not be used for that purpose. “Bill Authorizes Southern Tech Dormitory Work,” MDJ, 4 February 1959; “Governor Signs STI, Absentee Ballot Bill,” photograph caption, MDJ, 19 February 1959.

11. Willingham interview, 58; Bennett, *Southern Polytechnic State University*, 51-53; Cobb County Advisory Board minutes, 5 November 1958.

12. Cobb County took from DeKalb both Southern Tech and the Atlanta Naval Air Station, where Southern Tech had been based. NAS Atlanta officially opened in Chamblee on 22 March 1941. Fourteen years later Congress authorized about four million dollars to build a new station. The navy chose the military reservation occupied by Dobbins Air Force Base and Lockheed. Half way between Marietta and Smyrna, the unfinished facility started operations on 1 August 1958 and was officially completed the following April. “First Plane from Chamblee Lands at New Navy Facility,” MDJ, 1 August 1958; “Naval Air Station Atlanta History,” www.nasatlanta.navy.mil/history.html.
13. The Kiwanis Public and Business Affairs Committee hosted a June luncheon for Dr. Harrison at the Marietta Country Club. Invited guests were a "who's who" list of prominent Cobb countians, including the eight Kiwanis club committee members, Kiwanis president Ward Watkins, the county advisory board (McCollum, Troy Adair, and John LeCroy), the three House members who voted for Griffin's rural roads bill, Marietta mayor C. W. Bramlett and councilmen Herman Brinkley and Claude Anderson, Marietta Center director Rushton, Chamber of Commerce leaders Campbell Dasher and Charlie Manner, Harold Walker, Al Jones, Luther Hames, Jr., and Times-Journal president Brooks Smith. Atkinson, Higher Education in Cobb, 46-48; "Re-location of College Here Seen," MDJ, 10 June 1958; "Cobb Group Hands Deed to Governor," MDJ, 12 August 1958. Also see Bill Kinney, "Former Legislative Trio Got the Job Done for Cobb," MDJ, 5 January 1982.


17. This is the forerunner of the present Chattahoochee Technical College. Willingham interview, 59; McCollum interview, 30-31; "Marietta and Cobb Given Area Vocational School," MDJ, 17 September 1958.


21. The college committee is listed in "Ground Breaking Ceremonies, Cobb County, University of Georgia System, College," 18 November 1964. A Xerox copy of the program is in the possession of the author. Robert Fowler would leave the MDJ shortly after leading the junior college committee to become the owner of a paper in Gwinnett County. "Fowler Resigns as Editor, Buys Gwinnett Newspaper," CCT, 18 June 1964, p. 5.

22. Willingham interview, 59-61; Application from the Cobb County and Marietta Governmental Agencies to the Regents of the University System for the Establishment and Operation of a Junior College, 3 April 1963. The author read this document in a file labeled "History of the College," in the office of Roger E. Hopkins, formerly vice president for business and finance at Kennesaw State University. The current administration has apparently destroyed the file, however, the author has kept detailed notes of the contents. The original copy of the application should also be preserved at the Board of Regents, Atlanta.
23. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, 9 October 1963; J. H. Dewberry, Memorandum for the Record, 20 February 1964, included in Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Regents, 3 March 1964; “County Wins Fight to Get Junior College,” CCT, 10 October 1963.


26. Willingham claimed that Governor Sanders asked him as a favor to place the campus as far north as possible. The Cobb legislator replied, “Well, that won’t be any favor, we were planning to do that anyway—get as far from your constituents in Atlanta as possible.” “Willingham interview, 61.


32. Sturgis interview; MDJ, 23 July 1965 and 29 July 1965; North Cobb News, 29 July 1965 (a copy of the editorial can be located in the university scrapbooks in the Sturgis Library vault at Kennesaw State University).

33. Horace W. Sturgis to J. H. Dewberry, 16 May 1966; Dewberry to Sturgis, 17 May 1966. Formerly in “History of College” file; notes in author’s possession. For newspaper accounts of labor unrest at the campus work site, see the Marietta Daily Journal, 22 October 1965, 8 November 1965, 3 March 1966, 12 August 1966, and 24 November 1966. Also see the Atlanta Journal, 1 August 1966; Roger E. Hopkins, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 15 August 1988, transcript in possession of author. Mr. Hopkins was the second controller of Kennesaw Junior College, arriving in 1967.

34. Sturgis interview; Madeline M. Miles, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 28 May 1992, transcript in possession of author; David M. Jones, Jr. interview by Thomas A. Scott, 20 November 1998, A Celebration of Service to the Institution, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 66, transcript, p. 32.


36. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 13 February 1957, 6 November 1957, 14 January 1959.


41. “Board Locks on Bill Smitha,” MDJ, 12 April 1962; Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 11 April 1962, 13 April 1962.


43. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 12 January 1961, 6 December 1962, 5 March 1964.


46. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 13 January 1965.

47. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 12 January 1966, 26 January 1967, 27 May 1967. The different districts included the following militia districts: District 1, Smyrna; District 2, Coxes, Howells, and Lemons; District 3, Austell, Macland, Oregon, Powder Springs, and Clarkdale; District 4, Acworth, Big Shanty, Lost Mountain, and Red Rock; District 5, Elizabeth, Gritters, Merritts, and Post Oak; District 6, Fullers and Vinings; and District 7, Fair Oaks and Marietta outside the corporate limits. “Cobb School Vote Saturday,” CCT, 10 October 1963.
Chapter 13
The 1964 Civil Rights Act and the End of Jim Crow


3. Coleman, History of Georgia, 393; Rogers interview, 20; Gordon interview, 4-5.


5. Gordon interview, 5-6.


8. Boyne, Beyond the Horizon, 243; Price, “Early Production of the C-130,” 6-8; Gordon interview, 4-5.


17. Eventually, Dunaway Drugs operated eighteen stores in north Georgia.


22. This account is based on memories of the author’s wife, Kathleen Sherlock Scott, who attended St. Joseph’s Elementary School in the 1950s and on a term paper by Charles M. Price, “A Sensible Moment: The Desegregation of Saint Joseph’s Catholic School of Marietta, Georgia,” HIST 275, Kennesaw State College, Fall, 1993, Center for Regional Culture & History, Kennesaw State University. Also see Mary Martin, “A History of Saint Joseph’s Catholic Church” (1977), Georgia Room, Cobb County Public Library System, Marietta, Georgia; and T. J. Shelley, “The Life of Paul J. Hallinan, Archbishop of Atlanta, 1911-1968” (Ph.D. dissertation, the Catholic University of America, 1987).

23. Laura Link and Dick Hebert, “Catholics To Integrate Schools in Atlanta and North Georgia Sept. 1,” AC, 11 June 1962.


27. The following account is based heavily on a paper by longtime Marietta schools administrator Josetta O. Walker, “The Desegregation of Marietta City Schools,” 11 June 1989, written for a graduate class (EDL 895) at West Georgia College (currently State University of West Georgia). Ms. Walker graciously donated a copy that is in the author’s possession.


Chapter 14
Progress Toward Full Integration

1. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 1 March 1965, 13 May 1965, 18 May 1965. Also see Julie J. Kohler, “Segregation to Integration: Case Profile Cobb County,” May 2002, term paper, HIST 2275, Center for Regional History & Culture, Kennesaw State University.

2. Elgin, Centennial Celebration, 120; “Mix Plan Accepted by HEW,” MDJ, 1 September 1965.


4. Becky Smith, “Marietta Transfers Negroes,” MDJ, 8 September 1965; Walker, “Desegregation of Marietta City Schools,” 9. For an account of Cox’s career, see Loyd C. Cox, interview by John S. Starratt, October 1981, Collected Interviews, Vol. VI, transcript, Kennesaw College Oral History Project, Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Kennesaw State University. Unfortunately, his answers to questions on school integration were guarded and not very revealing.

5. Smith, “Mix Plan Begins in Cobb.”

6. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 13 April 1966, including exhibits B and C.


10. Walker interview, 12, 17-21; Elgin, Centennial Celebration, 141.


12. In May 1971 the school board leased the Washington Street School to the City of Austell for government and recreational purposes. Later that year the county ran sewer lines to Rose Garden Hills, which the board continued to use for special education and kindergarten. Cobb County Board of Education minutes, 8 May 1968, 22 May 1968, 12 June 1968, 26 June 1968, 9 April 1969, 12 May 1971, 10 November 1971.


County Oral History Series, No. 76, transcript, 7-15; “YWCA of Cobb County: History/Mission,” <www.ywcaofcobb.org/history.htm> [accessed 1 January 2003]; telephone conversation with Sandra Boyce, executive director, YWCA of Cobb County, 21 January 2003. Ms. Boyce went through old minutes of YWCA board meetings and found Ms. Woods first listed in attendance during 1967. She could not find the exact date that she was first elected to the board.

27. Sarah Temple lists several African-Americans who ran unsuccessfully for Marietta city council and other posts during Reconstruction and immediately afterward. Temple, First Hundred Years, 398-99.


30. Grogan interview, 12-15. Joining Grogan in the suit were Ernest Christian, Harold Adams, Dover Ferrell, and the Black Action Council. Ferrell was the president of the Cobb County NAACP chapter.


34. Grogan interview, 14; Plaintiffs’ Motion to Alter or Amend, 30 June 1975; Defendants’ Reply Brief, 7 July 1975, Grogan v. Hunter.


Chapter 15
Start of the Ernest Barrett Era


5. Joe Mack Wilson interview, 27; Flournoy interview.


7. Candidates for chairman and deputy chairman ran as a team. The deputy chairman candidates were Bob Austin (with Ernest Barrett), Harold Nix (Jack Henderson), Cliff White (O. C. Hubert), T. L. Dickson (Bill Teague), and Arthur Bacon (Joe Mack Wilson).


12. The author is grateful to a former student assistant, Vincent Hancock, who devoted considerable time during 1986-88 to summarizing newspaper accounts of the Barrett administration.


24. Released by the commission in April, Ernst and Ernst’s report revealed a total county indebtedness of $14.8 million, of which $9.9 million were water and sewer system revenue bonds that would be retired through customers’ water bills. The study indicated that Cobb’s total bonded indebtedness was among the lowest in the state per population. On the other hand, the McCollum administration, before leaving office, had spent over 80 percent of the current fiscal year budget, leaving the new administration with inadequate operating funds for the first six months of 1965 and requiring the issuance of warrants at high interest rates to cover expenses. James H. Wynn, “Cobb Indebtedness Totals $14 Million,” MDJ, 11 April 1965; Jim King, “McCollum Audit Backs Fund Need,” MDJ, 12 April 1965.


28. The bond question produced a split in Republican ranks when the treasurer of the Young Republicans denounced Republican legislator Ben Jordan as a liberal and a liar for failing to inform the voters that the bonded indebtedness might lead indirectly to a tax increase. The chairman of the Cobb Republican Party, Jordan demanded that the


33. Harvey starred in such films as Room at the Top (1959), Buttefield 8 (1960), The Alamo (1960), Walk on the Wild Side (1962), and The Manchurian Candidate (1962).


Chapter 16
Parks, Libraries, and the Arts

1. The county commission agreed to divide the nine hundred thousand dollars of park bonds with the six incorporated cities based on their respective percentages of the total county population. Collectively, the cities received $97,350. Bill Schemmel, “97,350 In Recreation Funds To Be Divided Among Cobb Cities,” MDJ, 28 July 1966. On 21 December 2000, the Cobb County Recreation Board provided the author with a complete list of board members from 1965-2000 and the original charge to the recreation commission. A copy is in the possession of author. Also see “County Lacking in Parks,” and “Parks Policy Statement by County Commission,” MDJ, 15 July 1965, special supplement, p. 8.


5. Yow interview.

6. Jennie Tate Anderson interview, 29; “Cobb Cited for Planning of Recreation


13. Millard, A Woman’s Place, 72-73.


20. Cobb County Arts Council, in cooperation with the Cobb County Board of Commissioners and Cobb County Parks and Recreation Commission, Cherokees to Galaxies: History of Cobb County in Dance, Drama and Music, booklet, Cultural Arts Theater, Cobb County Civic Center, November, 1975; Dee Bryant, “Voters Solidly
Endnotes 849

Endorse $7 Million Bonds Plan," and "Smiles Greeted Final Vote Tally," MDJ, 15 December 1971. In addition to the funds for Larry Bell Park, the referendum included $4.0 million for parks and $1.75 million for an administration building in the courthouse complex.


23. Bennett interview, 15-18; Joseph D. Meeks, Dean, School of the Arts, Kennesaw State University, telephone interview by the author, 21 September 2001, notes in author's possession; Cobb County Arts Council, From Cherokees to Galaxies; Parker, "Cobb Symphony Director to Pass Baton."


26. Meeks interview; Byess interview.


Chapter 17
Roads and Sewers in the Barrett Era


2. Bill Mays, “Cobb Officials in New York to Get County Bond Funds," MDJ, 13 December 1965; Buzz Weiss, "Cobb Voters Say Yes to 5 Bond Questions," MDJ, 25 May 1977. The total bond issue in 1977 was $26.5 million, with $3.65 million approved for a parking deck at the judicial complex, an additional three million dollars going to park
expansion and improvements, four hundred thousand to build a new branch library in east Cobb, and two hundred thousand designated for a new dog pound.


6. Willingham interview, 70.


15. Lawrence, “MARTA.”


17. Lawrence, “MARTA.”

18. In his introduction to the Crabgrass Frontier (p. 11), Kenneth Jackson finds many causes for suburban growth, including the central role of developers, cheap construction techniques, accessible means of transportation, government support, and race problems.


33. Sutton interview; Maggie Willis, "City Told To Update Treating Sope Waste," MDJ, 3 June 1970.


36. Marlene Goldman, "Sewer Line Due Sope Creek Area," MDJ, 19 April 1974; Tom Crawford, "Sewer Work Let for Sope Creek," MDJ, 10 July 1974; Tom Crawford,
Chapter 18
Planning and Zoning and the Growth of East Cobb County

1. Flournoy interview.

2. Selby McCash, "Cobb Zoning Unit Changes; Four New Members Named," MDJ, 8 January 1965.


4. Commission chairman Barrett was elected five times and held office from the start of 1965 until the end of 1984. Bill Oliver served only two years before stepping aside for T. L. Dickson, who won the eastern district post in 1966 and 1970. After Dickson, the next three commissioners of the Barrett era served only one term (Charlie Jones elected in 1974, Wit Carson in 1978, and Barbara Williams in 1982). Williams was the first Republican to hold the seat. Harry Ingram held the other eastern post until he resigned to head the revenue collection department. His replacement in 1970 was Republican George Langford, who remained in office for the rest of the Barrett period. All the commissioners from the western districts were Democrats. Tommy Brown served through 1978, when Butch Thompson replaced him during the remainder of the Barrett tenure. The other western position was held by a series of one-termers (Al Burruss elected in 1964, E. P. "Doc" Ellison in 1968, Jimmy Jones in 1972, Charles Ruff in 1976, and Harvey Paschal in 1980.


7. Constructed in 1963, the Big Chicken is a large wooden chicken head with moving eyes and beaks that towers above a fast-food restaurant (currently a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise) at the northeast corner of the Four Lane Highway (U.S. 41) and Roswell Road. The Big Chicken has long been a directional landmark, as well as the inspiration of many jokes about Cobb County.

8. Hayes interview.

9. Hayes interview.

10. Hayes interview.

11. Hayes interview.

12. Johnny Isakson, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 22 May 1992, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Georgia State University, transcript, pp. 4-5, 22; Ross Bodle,

13. Isakson interview, 24-27.

14. Debbie Archer, “Loch Highland Subdivision: Legends Rooted in the Past,” term paper, History 2275, Fall 2000, Center for Regional History & Culture, Kennesaw State University; William J. (Bill) Byrne, chairman, Cobb County commission, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 30 July 1999, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 55, transcript, p. 3. A landscape architect, Byrne also did the landscaping for Woodbine Station in east Cobb and Stilesboro Crossing in west Cobb.


18. Sutton interview.

19. Hayes interview; Frazier, “Cumberland Mall Opens Doorns Today.”


23. Hayes interview.


27. Ingram interview, 35.

28. Bentley interview; Hayes interview; Ingram lecture.


Phelps, et al., Civil Action, File No. 784532 and John A. Sibley v. Cobb County Board of Tax Assessors, Tax Appeal No. 784592, Cobb County Superior Court, Marietta, Georgia.


33. Order, Judge Luther Hames, 20 March 1979, pp. 3-4; Sibley to Phelps, Sibley v. Phelps.

34. Sibley to Phelps, Sibley v. Phelps.


36. Order, Judge Hames, pp. 3, 9; David Morrison and Don Hicks, “Court Says Cobb Land Appraisals Violate Ga. Law,” AC, 6 September 1979, C-1.

37. Order, Judge Hames, Sibley v. Phelps. Sibley not only sued to set the property assessments aside, he also sued government employee C. G. Phelps and the entire Board of Tax Assessors. While ordering that rural lands be reappraised, Judge Hames dismissed the civil action against Phelps and the others (p. 6).


40. Bentley interview; Yow interview; Sam Hensley, Jr., telephone interview by author, 8 August 2002, notes in possession of author; Evelyn Taylor, tax assessors’ office, Cobb County, telephone interview by author, 8 August 2002, notes in possession of author; Georgia code 48-5-7 and 48-5-7.4, <http://www.state.ga.us/services/ocode/octzsearch.htm>.

41. Ingram interview.

42. Ingram interview; Isakson interview, 56-58. Rep. Al Burruss and Sen. Joe Thompson were the only two legislators to vote against it.


Chapter 19
First Steps Toward a Two-Party System


3. McGirr, Suburban Warriors, 18, 45-46, 94.


5. 1990 Census of Population Social and Economic Characteristics, Georgia. The per capita income for white Cobb countians in 1990 was $20,055, some 147 percent of the state average. The totals for blacks were much lower; still, the $12,834 per capita income figure for Cobb County blacks was 94 percent of the $13,631 figure for all Georgians. While only 14 percent of Cobb's black population lived in poverty in 1990, some 30 percent of all blacks in Georgia were in that status.

6. The statewide results were quite similar to those in Cobb. In 1952 Eisenhower received 30 percent of the votes cast in Georgia; in 1956 he received 33 percent. Against Kennedy, Richard Nixon received 37 percent of the Georgia vote. "Georgia's Presidential Election Returns Since 1900," File 15, Cobb County Republican Party, 1961-62, Bayard and Mary Cole Papers, Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Kennesaw State University.


11. Cole interview, 1-3; Cobb County Times, 29 June 1961.


17. Dodgen/Meadows interview, 2-3, 9, 24-25.


23. Flournoy interview.

24. Delegate and membership lists can be found in Files 14-16, Cole papers. Also see Francis M. (Frank) Wilson, Jr, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 3 April 2001, Cobb County Oral History Series; and Lawson Yow, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 15 February, 7 March, 27 March 2001, Cobb County Oral History Series. The Nixon quote can be found in the Atlanta Constitution, 9 May 1966.


27. Flournoy interview; John Smyly, "GOP Winner Pledges Cooperation to All," MDJ, 5 November 1964.

5 November 1964.


31. Wynn, "Cobb GOP Discovers Politics Is a 'Troubled Game';" Rapid Transit Truth Committee advertisement, "The Truth About So-Called Rapid Transit!" MDJ, 13 June 1965, p. 3B.


42. Bill Schemmel, "Bo Stems Tide of Cobb Dems," MDJ, 9 November 1966, p. 11-A.

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Chapter 20

The Republicans Take Charge

1. Hanna Ledford, "Recount Gives Job to Green," MDJ, 7 November 1968. A brief biographical sketch appeared in the Marietta paper in 1974 when Green ran unsuccessfully for the state senate. At that time he was the owner of Canton Road Drugs, was a past president of the Piedmont Lions Club, served on the Cobb Chamber's board of directors, and was a member of Roswell Street Baptist Church. "Seven Seek Senate Posts," MDJ, 3 November 1974, p. 9C.


3. Bill Schemmel, "We're Not Dead"—Cobb GOP," MDJ, 7 November 1968.


15. Boswell, “Republicans Gain School Board Slots.”

16. Dee Bryant, “3 Key Assembly Posts Claimed by Local GOP,” MDJ, 8 November 1972.


18. Isakson interview, 41-42.


20. Isakson interview, 38, 43.


22. Roy Eugene Barnes, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 5 and 26 October 1990, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 21, transcript, pp. 11-12; Nielsen, “The Murders of the Matthews.”


28. Isakson interview, 54-55.


37. Willis, “Republicans to Gain Nine Offices in Cobb.”

Chapter 21

Larry McDonald and the National Conservative Movement

1. Peter Applebome, Dixie Rising: How the South Is Shaping American Values, Politics, and Culture (New York: Times Books, 1996), 25-26, 40. The first quotation is attributed to Barbara Wolfe. Applebome’s interpretation of the suburban South is significantly different from that of this book. For Applebome’s complete argument, the reader may want to peruse his chapter, “Cobb County, Georgia: Newtland,” 23-55.

2. Applebome, Dixie Rising, 44; Baxandall and Ewen, Picture Windows, see especially Part Five, “Suburbia Speaks,” for an extended treatment of racial attitudes and practices on Long Island.

No. 61, transcript, pp. 19, 59.


5. McDonald stayed in the navy reserve, reaching the rank of captain.


7. McDonald/Price interview, 5.


9. McDonald/Price interview, 8-10.

10. McDonald/Price interview, 4-5; Bill Carbine, “Gambrell, Nunn Make Runoff; Davis Squeezes by McDonald,” MDJ, 9 August 1972; Bill Carbine, “Davis Breathes Easier After Primary,” MDJ, 10 August 1972.


14. McDonald/Price interview, 46-47.


17. McDonald/Price interview, 18, 56-57.


20. Patton, “Lawrence Patton McDonald,” 13; McDonald/Price interview, 15, 40-42.

21. McDonald/Price interview, 15-16.

22. In the aftermath of KAL 007's destruction, numerous articles and at least three books appeared. None of the accounts can be regarded as definitive. The U.S. and Soviet gov-
erments classified much of the relevant information, and, of course, the pilot and crew did not live to explain why they were so far off course. The most popular of the books was *New York Times* investigative reporter Seymour M. Hersh's *The Target Is Destroyed: What Really Happened to Flight 007 and What America Knew About It* (New York: Random House, 1986). Scholarly, but not necessarily better, accounts were penned by Stanford University professor Alexander Dallin, *Black Box: KAL 007 and the Superpowers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) and Oxford University faculty member R. W. Johnson, *Shootdown: Flight 007 and the American Connection* (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1986).


24. Hersh, *The Target Is Destroyed*, 243-44.


27. McDonald/Price interview, 59-60, 62.

28. McDonald/Price interview, 32-33.

29. McDonald/Price interview, 33-34, 51-52.


**Chapter 22**

**Shift in Cobb’s Economic Center—From Air Force Plant No. 6 to the Platinum Triangle**


2. Boyne, *Beyond the Horizons*, 337.


6. Ferguson interview.


10. Rogers interview, 27.


15. Sherman A. Martin, telephone interview by author, 18 August 2002, notes in possession of author; Ferguson interview.


28. The Georgia Military Institute opened in 1851 on College Hill, across from the City Cemetery on Powder Springs Street. With the exception of the home of Colonel Arnoldus V. Brumby, all the campus buildings were burned by Union troops in 1864. Around the turn of the century, Professor and Mrs. J. H. Smith, from Boy’s High School in Atlanta, built a house at the top of College Hill. The adjacent Trammell’s pasture was the site of local baseball games and Marietta High School football practices. Professor Smith, journalist O. B. Keeler, and others decided to use part of the pasture for a three-hole golf course, the first in Marietta. By 1915 a golf club had organized. Headed by Morgan L. McNeil, Sr., the members applied for a charter. It was granted on 17 January 1916 to the Marietta Golf and Country Club. In the meantime, the J. H. Smith residence was destroyed in a fire. The Smiths decided not to rebuild. Instead, they sold the property to the country club for a clubhouse and golf course. The new clubhouse was constructed on the foundations of the Smith house. The Marietta Country Club stayed at that location until it moved to a new west Cobb facility in 1990. After its departure, the Marietta Conference Center and Resort was built on the site. The city-owned conference center featured a six-story hotel, with two hundred guestrooms, and an eighteen-hole golf course. “Marietta Country Club: History of Earlier Days,” Marietta Country Club, 1915 (club membership booklet, c. 1998), pp. 4-8; Marietta Conference Center and Resort, <www.mariettaresort.com/> [accessed 17 January 2003].


33. The Kennedy Interchange was named for Alfred and Thornton Kennedy after the Kennedy heirs donated family lands for the parkway. The descendants later sold various parcels of the estate to developers for commercial projects made feasible by the accessibility that the Kennedy Interchange provided. John McCosh, “‘Triangle’ a Bonanza for Cobb Developers,” AJC, 13 September 1997, p. H1.


Chapter 23
Educational Maturation in the 1970s

1. Bennett, Southern Polytechnic State University, 79-86, 127.

2. Bennett, Southern Polytechnic State University, 87-88, 127; Wilson interview, 52.

3. Bennett, Southern Polytechnic State University, 103-10. Dr. Robert Hays, the English department head at Southern Tech, should not be confused with Dr. Robert D. Hayes, an engineering professor at Georgia Tech, who was mentioned in Chapter 18 as chairman of the planning commission during the early part of the Barrett administration.

4. Bennett, Southern Polytechnic State University, 111-27.

5. Sturgis interview; Hopkins interview; George H. Beggs, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 3 August 1988, transcript in possession of author; minutes of the meeting of the Board of Regents, 14 April 1976; System Summary, April 1976.


14. AJC, Cobb Extra, 26 April 1972, 10 May 1972, 10 January 1973; MDJ, 8 November 1972, pp. 10A-15A.


17. Don Hicks, "Optional Courses on Origin Voted," AC, 13 December 1979, p. 1-C.


22. Rensink interview; Elgin, *Centennial Celebration*, 144.

23. Telephone interviews with Sylvia Ingram, 7 January 2003, and Anita Barton, 7 January 2003, notes in possession of author; “History of Youth Museum,” three-page, typed history, c. 1970, provided to author by Sylvia Ingram; “Cobb County Youth Museum Fact Sheet” and “History of the Cobb County Youth Museum, Inc.,” one-page handouts; Cobb County Youth Museum, “Mom! I was Buffalo Bill,” brochure, n.d.

**Chapter 24**

First Republican Commission Chairman


5. Despite his racist reputation, Wilson seemed to get along well with fellow black legislators and occasionally teamed with them to pass bills designed to help poor people. Atlanta Rep. Billy McKinney once called Wilson “my good friend” and claimed that they liked to joke around together. The outspoken black legislator maintained that the camaraderie of the 1980s was a vast improvement over the lack of communication between blacks and whites when he first went to the General Assembly in 1973. Another veteran black legislator, Tyrone Brooks, joined with Wilson in 1985 to abolish Georgia’s “workfare” program and replace it with PEACh, a plan modeled on federal welfare reform legislation, that provided day care and transportation for poor people. Salynn Boyles, “Joe Mack Wilson: He Paid His Dues Over Quarter Century,” MDJ, 1 February 1987, p. 1A; Cynthia Tucker, “Brooks Can Teach His Mentor, Hosea Williams, How to Be Effective,” AJC, 23 July 1988, p. 23A.


11. Maggie Willis, "Cooperative Effort Provides County with Road Tax Option," MDJ, 31 March 1985, p. 1A; Maggie Willis, "Roads Tax Wins by Huge Margin," MDJ, 3 April 1985, p. 1A; Merritt Cowart and Maggie Willis, "Decisive Victory Excites County Commissioners," MDJ, 3 April 1985, p. 1A.


14. Temple, First Hundred Years, 74, 757, 764; federal agricultural census, 1880, Cobb County, Georgia, manuscript material; Alfie Virginia Estes Chastain, interview by Cynthia Avonne Ryals, 30 July 1989, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 14, transcript, pp. 6-9.


27. By 1995 the East Cobb Civic Association would consist of 125 homeowner association members.


32. James Budd, "Smith's Fliers Urge Johnson Ferry Widening," AC, 14 April 1988, p. C2. Johnson Ferry Road is actually misnamed. The man who once operated a ferry across the Chattahoochee River at this site was William Marion Johnston, but some time in the past mapmakers left the "t" out of the name. In 1989 one of Johnston's descendants, Joel M. Thomas, petitioned the commission to name the road correctly. The county recognized the correctness of Thomas' claim, but did nothing, since county policy prohibited name changes unless 75 percent of the property owners along the route approved. Business owners did not want to assume the cost of changing their stationery and business cards and creating possible confusion in the minds of their customers. Rebecca Nash, "Marietta Sites Not Added to Historic Register," AJC, Cobb Extra, 27 April 1989, p. G3. 

Chapter 25

The Elections of 1988: Culture Wars and Political Upsets


5. Dodgen/Meadows interview, 50-51.


Chapter 26

The Secrist Administration and Historic Preservation

1. Jennie Tate Anderson interview, 19; minutes, Cobb Landmarks Society, 13 February 1974.


4. Minutes, Cobb Landmarks Society, 8 June 1976, 14 September 1976, 18 October 1976. In the post office listings, Frasier Street is the correct spelling for the road that runs by the Bostwick-Fraser house. The western most part of this road connecting to Atlanta Street was once the driveway leading to the home of Anne Couper Fraser. At an early date local residents began to misspell the name. In the tax records at the courthouse it
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is sometimes spelled Frazier as well as Frasier and Fraser.


8. Jackson, "All the World's a Mall," 1120.


11. Pickett, "Revitalization of Marietta Square," 11-16; Leiter interview; McLemore, "The Marietta Experience."

12. Pickett, "Revitalization of Marietta Square," 11-12; Leiter interview.


14. Harold Smith, telephone interview, 2 January 2002, notes in possession of author. The railroad tore down the old depot in 1959 after offering the structure to the city of Smyrna. The mayor at the time, Hoot Gibson, proclaimed the depot an "eye sore" and persuaded the city to turn down the offer.


20. Schild, "Historians Arm for Battle."


25. Secrest interview, 26 December 2001; letter of transmittal, re: the East/West Connector at the Covered Bridge Historic Site, Box 2, File 12, papers of Dr. Phillip L. Secrest, chairman of Cobb County commission, 1988-1992, Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Kennesaw State University.


28. Rebecca Nash, "DOT, Residents Discuss Road: Transportation Officials Seek


30. Of the other major parts of the twenty-mile four-lane road through the southern part of the county from Town Center to Cumberland Mall, the Barrett Parkway Extension, running from U.S. 41 to Dallas Highway, was completed in 1995. The West Cobb Parkway, from Dallas Highway to Powder Spring Road, required extensive negotiations with the Corps of Engineers over Noses Creek wetlands. The 5.8-mile segment, including a three thousand-foot bridge over the wetlands, opened in December 2000. The road destroyed three acres of wetlands, but the county won federal approval by agreeing to buy another 170 acres of the Noses Creek basin and by the creation of an eight-acre bog. Thus, by the end of the century one could ride on the divided highway from I-75 at Town Center around the county and through the Covered Bridge area to South Cobb Drive, not far from I-285. Kathey Alexander, “Paving the Way: Loop Is Final Link Awaiting Approval,” AJC, Cobb Extra, 13 April 1995, p. G12; Clint Williams, “Stretch of West Cobb Parkway Opens Today, Six Months Early,” AC, 18 December 2000, p. E7.


Chapter 27
Politics and Race Relations in the Late Twentieth Century


14. Secrist 2001 interview; Salerno resignation file, File 4, Box 2, Secrist papers, Kennesaw State University. After this incident Chairman Secrist on 7 March 1990 wrote a letter of recommendation for Salerno in which he said that the former county manager’s “strengths are many and his weaknesses are few.” Secrist particularly praised Salerno for
his knowledge of budgets, his ability to complete tasks, and his "greatest achievement" in guiding CCT into operation.


20. Byrne interview, 3-9; Chris Torkzadeh, "Byrne Whips Paschal for Commission Chair," MDJ, 12 August 1992, p. 1A.


23. Hankerson interview, 5-10.


25. Byrne interview, 12-13; Hankerson interview, 24-25, 30-32.
Chapter 28  
Community Standards and Funding for the Arts


3. As discussed in Chapter 26, the DMDA stimulated the revitalization of the downtown area by approving millions of dollars of low-interest pass-through loans from banks to downtown property owners.


5. Adair, “Comedy and Tragedy,” 11-12; Lois M. Kubal, “1993 Cobb County Resolutions: Two Years Later,” term paper, HIST 710, Summer 1995, Kennesaw State University, Center for Regional History & Culture, pp. 10-11, appendix D.


7. Cobb County Commission, minutes, 10 August 1993, pp. 4-6; copy of resolution attached as an appendix in Kubal, “1993 Cobb County Resolutions,” p. 4-5B.


9. Harold Smith to Commission Chairman Bill Byrne (other commissioners copied), 9 June 1993. Mr. Smith provided the author with a copy of his letter with the accompanying advertisement from Creative Loafing.


14. The numbers do not add up to 100 percent, because 8 to 12 percent on each question answered that they did not know. Alan Friedman, “Poll: Anti-gay Stance Hurts County Image; Arts Cut OK,” MDJ, 1 September 1993; Byrne interview, 28-29.


Chapter 29
Schools, Colleges, and Universities at the Century’s End

1. Bennett, Southern Polytechnic, 128-57; [www.spsu.edu/about/AboutSPSUprologue.html] [accessed 21 August 2001].


8. Fact Book, 4, 6; Betty L. Siegel to Chancellor Dean Propst, Board of Regents, 16 April 1988 ("History of the College" file).


10. AJC, 26 October 1996, C-3; 22 August 1997, C-1.


15. Cobb Board of Education minutes, 8 March 1967, 29 September 1972; Elgin,
Endnotes


Chapter 30
Rise and Fall of Newt Gingrich


2. Steely, Gentleman from Georgia, 26-54.

3. Steely, Gentleman from Georgia, 53-64.


5. Steely, Gentleman from Georgia, 104-05, 204-05.


8. Steely, Gentleman from Georgia, 232.


11. Steely, Gentleman from Georgia, 246-75.

12. While Barr was universally recognized as a second amendment supporter, the Gun Owners of America sometimes criticized him for being too willing to compromise. Barr and the GOA disagreed, for instance, on an omnibus appropriations bill in 1996. At issue was a provision that banned from ever owning a gun those convicted of a domestic misdemeanor. Barr pushed through a compromise that eliminated from the bill's coverage those convicted of misdemeanors that were so mild as not to require a jury trial. He supported the final bill as less than what he wanted but better than it was before. The GOA thought that he should have pushed for more and picketed him at public gatherings in Cobb County. <www.nrawinningteam.com/barr.html> [accessed 30 March 2002]; <www.gunowners.org/klbarr.htm> [accessed 30 March 2002].


16. In a 30 December 1994 press conference in Marietta, Gingrich said that he had called a number of prominent Republicans, asking them what he should do. Many told him that the $4.5 million book deal was "legal and ethical." Only former Housing and Urban Development secretary Jack Kemp told him directly that the deal was wrong. Gingrich claimed that he was finally persuaded to take the one-dollar advance after placing a call to Representative Bob Walker at his home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Walker related a conversation with a local activist who said to tell Newt that a lot of ordinary people had worked for his victory, and they resented it if he cashed in personally on their efforts. "You Can't Just Be Legal and Ethical: Excerpts for Rep. Newt Gingrich's Press Conference Friday," AC, 31 December 1994, p. A8; Steely, Gentleman from Georgia, 283-84.


Chapter 31

Bill Byrne, Roy Barnes, and Cobb’s Impact on State and Nation

1. To cite a few examples, 38,335 Cobb Countians voted in the 1988 Republican presidential preference primary, some 9.6 percent of the 400,928 statewide tally; the respective figures for the 1996 Republican U.S. Senate primary were 56,630 locally and 446,655 statewide (12.7 percent); for the 1998 Republican gubernatorial primary, 48,561 of 418,542 (11.6 percent); and in the 2000 Republican presidential preference primary, 70,034 of 643,188 (10.9 percent). See the Georgia Secretary of State Website, <www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/results> [accessed 28 March 2002]. Also see MDJ, 9 March 1988, p. A8, for the Cobb results in the 1988 presidential preference primary.

2. Roy Eugene Barnes, interview by Thomas A. Scott, 5 October and 26 October 1990, Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 21, transcript, p. 17.


4. The precise 2000 population figures were 4,112,198 in the twenty-county Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of the 8,186,453 people living in Georgia (50.2 percent). Incorporated Atlanta’s 2000 population was 416,474 (10.1 percent of the Atlanta MSA. In 2000 the four largest Georgia counties were all in the Atlanta metropolitan area: Fulton, 816,006; DeKalb, 665,865; Cobb, 607,751, and Gwinnett, 588,448. The entire metropolitan area grew by 57 percent during the 1990s. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13000.html>; <www.demographic.com/db-atlmet2000.htm>; <www.accessatlanta.com/aic/census/cities.html> [accessed 28 March 2002].


17. Barnes interview, 32-33, 36, 41-42.


Chapter 32
Economic and Social Diversity at the Start of a New Millennium


Cobb County, Georgia, and the Origins of the Suburban South: A Twentieth-Century History


10. Weiss, "Diaspora in Dixie," 16-19; Yolanda Rodriguez, "Cobb's History No Deterrent to Jews: Anti-Semitism Rare Now; Most Like County's Amenities," AJC, 27 March 2002, p. 3B.


17. "Lockheed Martin: Celebrating 50 Years," 13E, 48E-52E.

18. "Lockheed Martin: Celebrating 50 Years," 36E-37E.
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Scott, Thomas Allan, 1943-
Cobb County Georgia and the origins of the suburban south
Thomas A. Scott is a professor of history at Kennesaw State University, where he has taught since 1968. He is a former recipient of KSU's highest faculty honor, the Distinguished Teaching Award. His publications include *Cornerstones of Georgia History: Documents That Formed the State* and a chapter on Bell Aircraft in *The Second Wave: Southern Industrialization from the 1940s to the 1970s*. Along with his wife Kathy, he served in 1992 as co-chair of Cobb Landmarks & Historical Society.

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