History of the Region

> NOTE: The following narrative briefly outlining
> South Carolina's history emphasizes the culture,
> settlement, and expansion of the state's early
> frontier area (set in italics), of which the
> present Central Midlands Region was a significant
> part. Against this synoptic framework, the four
> subsequent county histories--linked by a common
> early heritage--can be viewed in sharper histor-
> ical perspective.

A Brief History of South Carolina

The Palmetto State's role in American history has been distinctive. Perhaps the most favored of the thirteen colonies, South Carolina was slow to join the American Revolution, but contributed mightily to its successful conclusion. The leading protagonist of secession, it suffered total defeat and its Reconstruction experience was the most arduous of any Southern state.

The Spanish were the first Europeans to survey the Carolina scene. Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon planted a colony on Winyah Bay, near Georgetown in July, 1526. But the Spanish did not find gold and silver they were seeking and were soon decimated by fever and starvation.

In the 1660's Charles II of England was in economic and political debt to the men who had helped restore him to the throne, and one means of pay-ing such obligations was by grants of land in America. Thus, in 1663, the king issued a charter to eight prominent gentlemen awarding them title to an enormous tract of land lying between the thirty-sixth parallel on the north and the thirty-first parallel on the south. The grant embraced the present states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia and extended west to the Pacific Ocean. The Lords Proprietors, as the grantees were subsequently known, financed the outfitting of the colonizing expedition, which reached the harbor formed by the confluence of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers in April, 1670, and founded Charles Town.

As cultivation of rice became profitable, the colony expanded inland along the rivers, carrying with this expansion the institution of slavery. By 1720 slaves outnumbered the whites.

Between 1715 and 1719 the colony was beset by two foes, whose almost simultaneous attacks brought about the greatest crisis it was to undergo prior to the American Revolution. These adversaries were the Yemassee Indians (a relatively small tribe who went on the warpath in 1715 killing about 400 colonists) and hordes of swashbuckling pirates, who ravaged Carolina commerce.

The failure of the Proprietors to lend meaningful aid in the stuggles with the Indians and pirates brought about the demise of Proprietary regime.

FIG. 14. Indian hunters stalk game in an early drawing.
Until 1730 the Central Midlands was an uninhabited
wilderness and hunting ground for Indian tribes.

Beginning in 1719 a series of events occurred that by 1729 led to the
establishment of North Carolina and South Carolina as royal colonies,
in which the governor would be appointed by the King.

*A plan for developing the interior of the new royal colony
was devised to provide both for expansion and for protection
from "internal" (slaves) and "external" (Indian and Spanish)
threats.*

*North European Protestants were enticed in the 1730's to
settle a network of townships along the rivers in the central
parts of the state by offers of land, transportation, tools,
and food. These frontiersmen could absorb the shock of
Indian, Spanish or French attack and thus permit coastal
planters to remain vigilantly watchful over their slaves
at home.*

*One of these townships was Saxe Gotha (now Lexington County)
which, because of its strategic location inland along
navigable river routes, developed into the colony's chief
western crossroads for commerce and trade exchange between
the Indians and up country settlers. Large numbers of hardy
Swiss-Germans, Scotch-Irish and Virginians of English
extraction settled this township, which shortly until the
Revolution was largely marked by near wilderness living
conditions.*

Beginning in the 1740's the province entered into an era of prosperity
that continued until the Revolution. Rice and indigo brought quick wealth
to many coastal planters and led to the importation of large numbers of
slaves. Trade at Charles Town boomed and by 1775, the city's cultural assets
included numberous churches, schools, newspapers, a theater, a museum,
painters, silversmiths, and skilled furniture makers.

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*A society of a very different nature was developing in the up
country, primarily a land of small slaveholding farmers whose
chief products were cattle and grain. Among the new settlers,
there were virtually no towns, no schools, few churches, and
fewer preachers.*

*The new back country settlers were separated from the coastal
plantation planters geographically, economically and socially.
In every sense they were underprivileged inhabitants, looked
upon by the coastal planters as a distant and barbaric popu-
lation forming a convenient buffer against Indian attack.*

*Relative poverty, lack of social organization, and an exclusion
from most of the benefits of the provincial government character-
ized the back settlers. Law and order, morality, family integrity,
and knowledge of the outer world were also weakened by exposure
to the frontier.*

FIG. 15. An abundance of readily available timber provided building
materials for almost every early structure in the region. Construction
techniques varied. A Lexington County log structure (left) illustrates
the German method of joining stripped logs with the saddle notch. Right,
the English practice of dovetailing hewn logs is shown in a Richland
County building.

*It is not surprising that friction developed between the two
divergent societies. The sectional conflict in South Carolina
was paralleled by similar controversies in Virginia, North
Carolina, Pennsylvania and other colonies where the interests
of the well developed coastal region came into conflict with
those of the young and turbulent back country. In South
Carolina the Charles Town authorities at first ignored the
newcomers, and refused to grant them representation in the
legislature. Furthermore, the colonial government failed to
provide them with law enforcement, courts, schools, and*

*adequate military protection. The tax rate was unfair; the
capital at Charles Town was too far away; and the established
Anglican Church, the support of which all citizens were
required to pay taxes had little appeal for the Presbyterians,
Lutherans, and Baptists in the up country.*

*When an outbreak of lawlessness occurred in 1767, the men of
the up country formed a vigilante group known as the
Regulators, whose efforts to restore law and order brought
them into conflict with the colonial authorities. The
activities of the Regulators, however, did help bring about
the enactment in 1769 of the Circuit Court Act, which set
up additional courts in the back country and was one of the
first of many concessions to the frontiersmen.*

In the 1770's the colony's sectional strife was submerged in a much
greater conflict as hostilities intensified between Great Britain and the
13 provincial colonies. When Lord William Campbell, the last of the
royal governors, fled the scene in September, 1775, the colony became a
state and Charles Town became Charleston. In 1776 the British decided to
evacuate Boston, the center of revolutionary sentiment and to concentrate
upon the two colonies in which loyalist sympathy was considered greatest.
The British were successful in their New York Campaign, but an attack upon
Charleston in June, 1776, was beaten off. A palmetto log fort on Sullivan's
Island withstood a furious cannonade by the British fleet, and as a result
the enemy did not return to South Carolina for almost three years. The
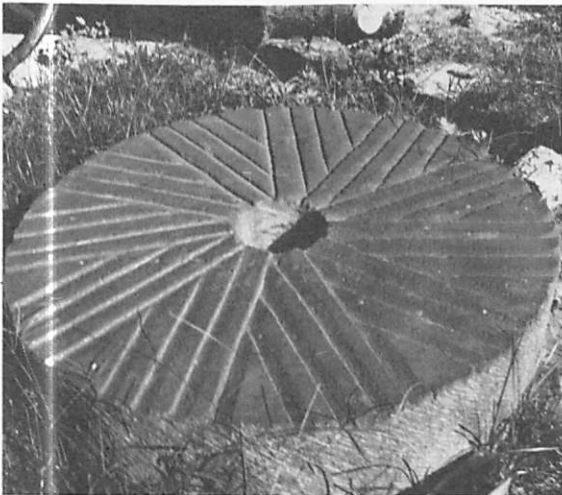palmetto tree subsequently became the state emblem.

FIG. 16. Lumber and grist mills once dotted the region's numerous creeks
and streams as the backcountry's principal early commercial enterprises.
The above structure, with overshot wheel, was typical of hundreds of
such mills, of which only scattered discarded millstones remain today.

On May 12, 1780, the British captured Charleston and about 6,000 men.
This loss was the greatest suffered by the American forces during the
entire war. In August the Americans sustained another devastating defeat
in Camden. Having crushed the Revolutionary cause in South Carolina,
Lord Cornwallis made plans to march to Virginia and from there to coordinate
with Sir Henry Clinton in New York to crush Washington's army.

*Serious blunders by the British turned the tide against them
in South Carolina. Colonel Banastre Tarleton, an excellent but
ruthless calvary officer, permitted his troops to inflict need-*

less casualties upon an American detachment attempting to surrender at Waxhaw, giving the embittered Patriots the rallying cry of "Tarleton's Quarter." Conflicting British proclamations concerning parole of American prisoners who had surrendered following the capture of Charleston indicated that they would be called upon to serve in the British Army, and as a result, Andrew Pickens and others took up arms again. Colonel Patrick Ferguson's rash march into the foothills of North Carolina mountains caused several hundred hard-bitten frontiersmen to swarm down from Virginia and Tennessee and cut his force of 1,100 Tories to pieces at Kings Mountain.

Prior to 1780 the Germans and Scotch-Irish in the back country had taken little interest in the dispute with the mother country. Their indifference disappeared, however, when an invading army appeared in their midst, and rallying behind the leadership of three notable partisan generals, they did much to bring about the American victory.

Thomas Sumter, the "Gamecock," stung the British badly at Hanging Rock, Rishdam Ford, and Blackstock. Francis Marion, the elusive "Swamp Fox," cut off supply trains and captured isolated British outposts. At the battle of Cowpens, Andrew Pickens led a regiment of militia that withstood a cavalry charge by Tarleton himself.

In 1781 Nathaniel Greene, appointed commander of American forces in the South by Washington, directed a masterful campaign in which the Continental Army regulars and the South Carolina militia, under Sumter, Marion and Pickens, drove the British from their forts back to Charleston. Meanwhile, Cornwallis was forced to surrender to Washington at Yorktown in October, 1781.

Following the Revolution, the old sectional issue came to the fore again in South Carolina. It was clear that some concessions would have to be made to the up country in order to avoid a civil war that would have broken out after the British had left. The Anglican Church had been disestablished in 1778, removing one bone of contention. A new tax law was passed in 1784, and in the following year, thirty-four new counties were created, each having country seats where courts could convene.

In 1786 an act was passed moving the capital to a new location, Columbia, in the center of the state. Although the up country was granted some additional representation in 1808, and property qualification for voting were abolished in 1810, control of the state government remained in the hands of the aristocratic slave holders of the low country until 1865.

The adoption of the federal Constitution in May, 1788, was followed by a wave of prosperity. Charleston reached its heyday as the leading port on the South Atlantic coast. Increased production of rice and cotton created a labor shortage that caused the state in 1804 to reopen temporarily the foreign slave trade, prohibited after 1808 by the U. S. Constitution.

The cotton boom had a profound effect upon the up country. As cultivation of the profitable new crop swept to the foot-

hills it was followed by slave labor and the plantation system.
As the up country adopted the economic and social mores of the
low country, the antagonism between the two sections began to
diminish, although it did not disappear. Districts such as
Abbeville, Fairfield, and Newberry, which had been predominately
white in 1790 had populations more than one-half Negro by 1820.

The wave of prosperity following the invention of the cotton gin continued until the Panic of 1819. Nationalism was at high tide in South Carolina, with young John C. Calhoun joining Henry Clay in support of a program that included a protective tariff, federal aid for roads and canals, and a national bank. In the following decade, however, cotton plunged to eight or nine cents due to overproduction in Mississippi, and South Carolina politics took a sharp turn, forcing Calhoun to abandon nationalism and formulate in 1828 the doctrine of nullification.

COTTON. IN THE COAST AND UPLAND FIELDS OF SOUTH CAROLINA.— SOWING SEED.

FIG. 17. Cotton planting transformed the small farmer society into a slave-based system.

SHORT STAPLE PLANT, WHITE BLOSSOMS.

FIG. 18. King Cotton!

This doctrine, he hoped, would provide a solution to the dilemma between South Carolina and the Federal government.

During the nullification controversy the state was bitterly
divided. The nullifiers, who had a majority of about sixty
per cent, were strong in the low country parishes, in Charleston
and in the up country cotton belt.

Unionist support came from the old federalist and business
groups in Charleston, the mountain counties of Greenville
and Spartanburg and the border districts. After the nulli-
fication crisis the state was not so much a member of the
*union as a dissatisfied ally waiting for a chance to depart.*

Calhoun's political philosophy--that South Carolina was and must remain agricultural, expressed the prevailing ante bellum view point. South Carolinians also believed that an agricultural society was superior to an industrial one, and that industrial development would threaten slavery.

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Such attitudes, along with the disadvantages in transportation, lack of water-fall power and inadequate technological resources prevented the coming of industry.

> *The coming of the railroad opened a new era during the ante-bellum period. In the 18th century the rivers of the low country had served satisfactorily as a means of transporting crops to Charleston. Attempts were made to navigate the streams in the up country above Columbia, but these rivers were shallow, swift and filled with obstructions. Efforts in the 1820's to build canals around these obstacles were largely unsuccessful. Transportation by rail proved a much better means. And in 1833 a line 136 miles long was completed from Charleston to Hamburg, near the Savannah River. The road was extended to Columbia in 1842 and by 1860 the state had a good network of railroads.*

> *But grave defects loomed beneath the facade of the glittering plantation society. One half of the whites in the state owned no slaves at all and another large proportion owned four or less. Public schools were very inadequate and law enforcement and social services left much to be desired.*

The greatest weakness, of course, was slavery. While in the 18th century slavery had been a somewhat fluid institution, whereby it was possible for slaves to be emancipated and educated, after cotton made slavery profitable again after the Revolution, slavery became a static institution. Laws were passed in 1820 prohibiting emancipation and forbidding the education of Negroes. Any society that relegated 60 per cent of its population to a slave status from which there was no escape was heading for social convulsion.
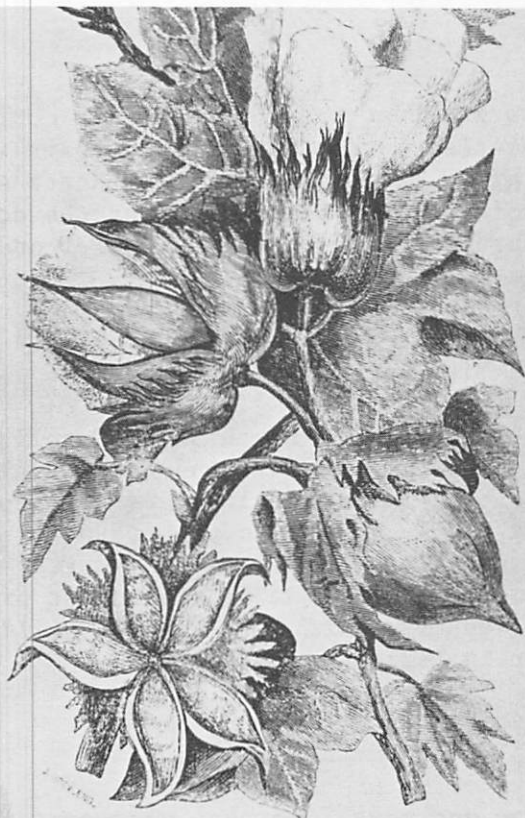
THE COTTON QUESTION.

THE

PRODUCTION, EXPORT, MANUFACTURE, AND CONSUMPTION

OF

COTTON.

A CONDENSED TREATISE ON

COTTON IN ALL ITS ASPECTS: AGRICULTURAL, COMMERCIAL, AND POLITICAL.

ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

BY

WILLIAM J. BARBEE, M. D.,
OF DE SOTO COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI.

NEW YORK:
METROPOLITAN RECORD OFFICE, 424 BROOME ST.
1866.

COTTON PLANT.   PLATE 1.

FIG. 19. Long before--and after-- the Civil War, arguments continued on whether cotton growing was an agricultural necessity in maintaining the South's economic health.

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Slavery was the fundamental issue that drove the North and South apart, with states rights becoming the shield with which the Southern states defended their peculiar institution against the threat of federal intervention. The election of Abraham Lincoln indicated to South Carolina that it could no longer safely remain in the Union. The slavery issue also reduced the once potent unionist minority to a corporal's guard. When the Civil War came in 1861, South Carolina was almost completely united.
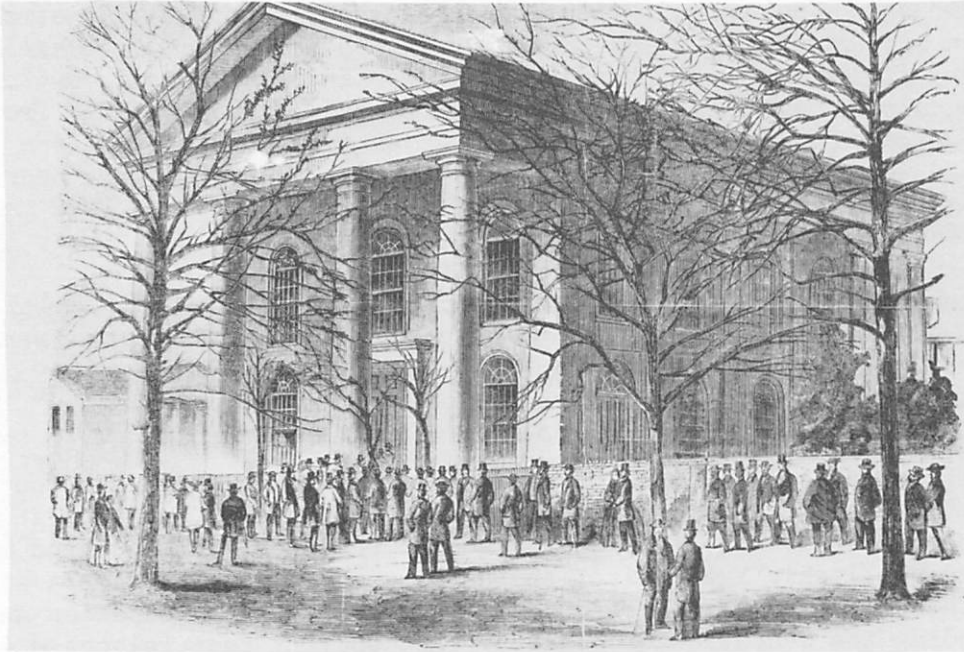

FIG. 20. Contemporary engraving of Columbia's First Baptist Church, scene of the Secession Convention.

The Civil War was South Carolina's greatest tragedy. In this conflict the state was not the scene of great battles, which for the most part were fought in Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia. The majority of the state's troops fought in Robert E. Lee's Army of northern Virginia under the command of officers such as Wade Hampton, Richard H. Anderson, M. C. Butler and Joseph B. Kershaw.

South Carolina units in the unlucky Army of Tennessee were led by Generals A. N. Manigault, States Rights Gist, and Ellison Capers.

Militarily, the full impact of the war did not reach South Carolina until Sherman's army arrived in 1865. Although Beaufort and Port Royal fell to the United States Navy in November, 1861, the federal forces were content to maintain a naval base there and made little effort to penetrate further. Charleston, under heavy attack during much of the war, was ably defended by General P. G. T. Beauregard and other commanders. The old town beat off frontal attack until the very end, but was evacuated when General William Sherman's army flanked it from the rear in February, 1865.

Sherman, the first American protagonist of total war, cut a path of destruction 50 to 60 miles wide from Savannah to Columbia to Cheraw. Although his tactics undoubtedly hastened the end of the war, the destruction and vandalism that accompanied his campaign, especially the useless burning of most of Columbia, left a heritage of bitterness.

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FIG. 21. Columbia ablaze. View of Main Street from the capitol following
the great fire of February, 1865 which devastated the capital city.

FIG. 22. View of Columbia from the State House grounds following the
disastrous fire of February 17, 1865 during Union occupation of the
city.
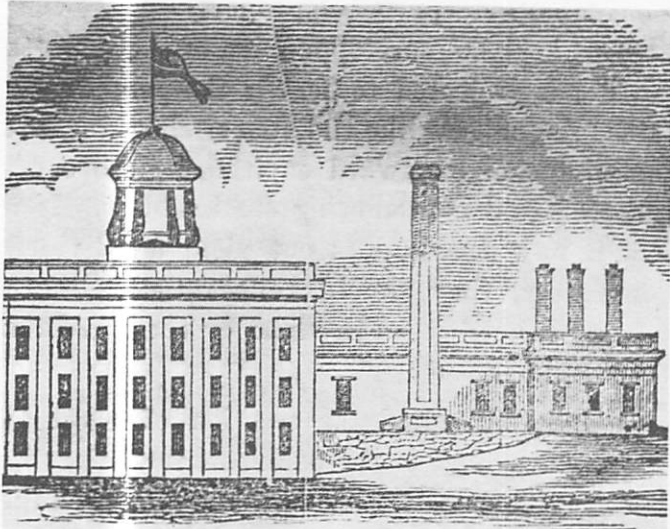
THE PALMETTO ARMORY, COLUMBIA, S. C.

Columbia After Sherman's Visit
State Armory - Arsenal Hill

FIG. 23. Drawing (left) of the Arsenal Hill armory at Columbia before the
February 17 fire which destroyed most of the city. Photograph at right
is of the armory following the fire.

*Following the war came Reconstruction, the most controversial
episode in state history. For decades after Reconstruction,
historians and politicians described this era as an "organized
hell" of "villany, anarchy, misrule and robbery," during which
the Southern people were "put to the torture." Reconstruction,
they said, was the cruelest, harshest and most vindictive
tyranny imposed upon a defeated people.*

A century later, it is possible to look back with a detachment
impossible in 1890 or 1915, and conclude that conditions imposed by the
North, while not benevolent, were not satanic, with political executions,
imprisonment or forced exile.

*The most significant development of the early 19th century in
South Carolina was the coming of the Industrial Revolution. As
of 1880 there were only a dozen or so small cotton mills with
about 2,000 employees in the state. Thirty years later the
number of manufacturing plants had increased to 167 and the
operatives to 55,000. The rivers of the up country provided
plenty of electric power, and consolidation of local lines
into the Southern Atlantic Coastline and Seaboard Airline
systems solved the transportation problem.*

Meanwhile, Calhoun's dictum that climate had made South Carolina
forever agricultural was conveniently forgotten.

Material in this narrative was extracted from R. J. Hooker's
The Carolina Back Country, (1953) and from A Brief History
of South Carolina, (1970) by Dr. D. W. Hollis used here with
the generous permission of Home Federal Savings and Loan
Association.

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Fairfield
County

Newberry County

Lexington County

Richland County

Routes of Marches of the Armies
Of Gen. W. T. Sherman
Through the Central Midlands Region
February, 1865

15th Army Corps)   Right Wing
17th Army Corps)   O. O. Howard, Commander

14th Army Corps)   Left Wing
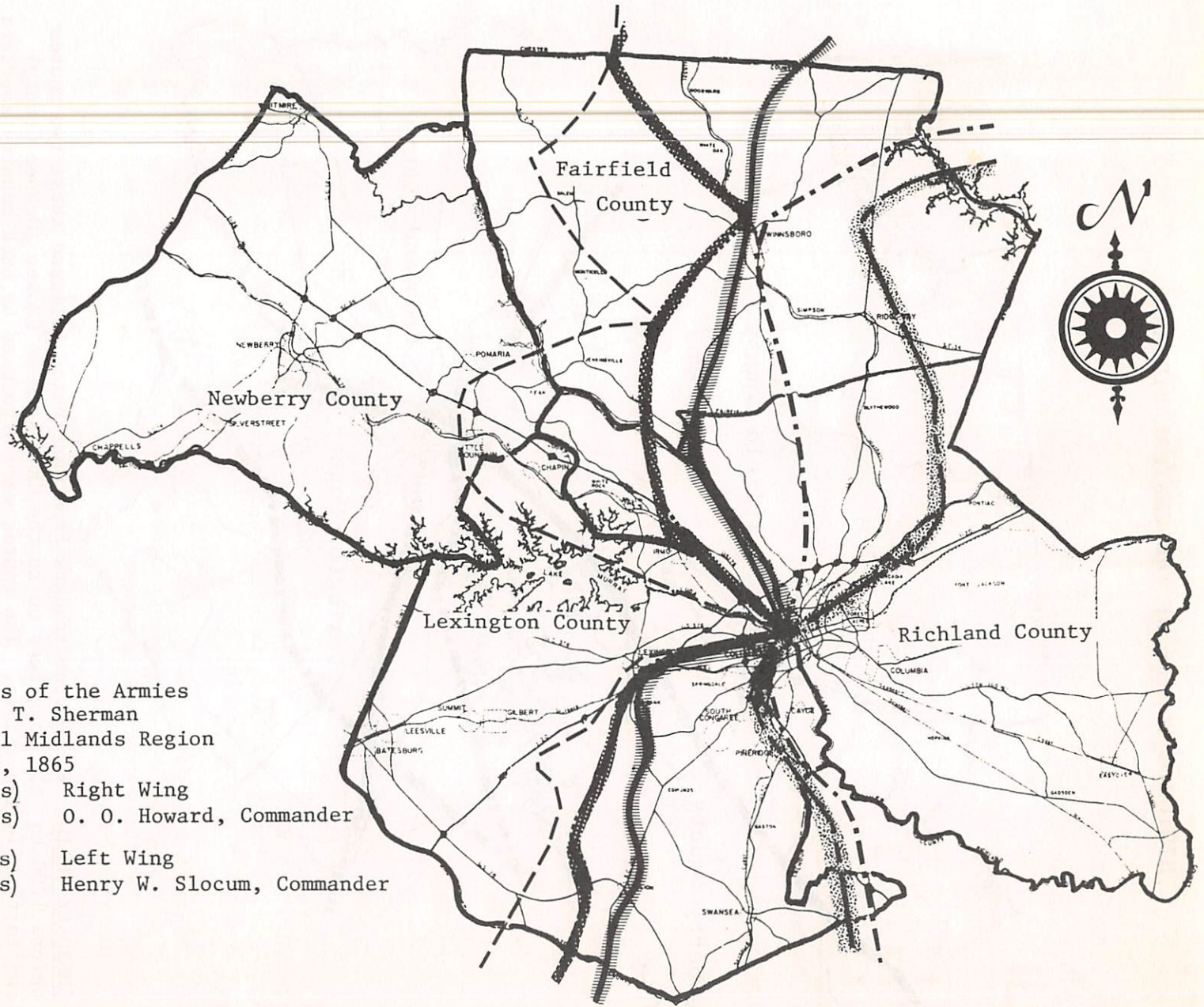20th Army Corps)   Henry W. Slocum, Commander
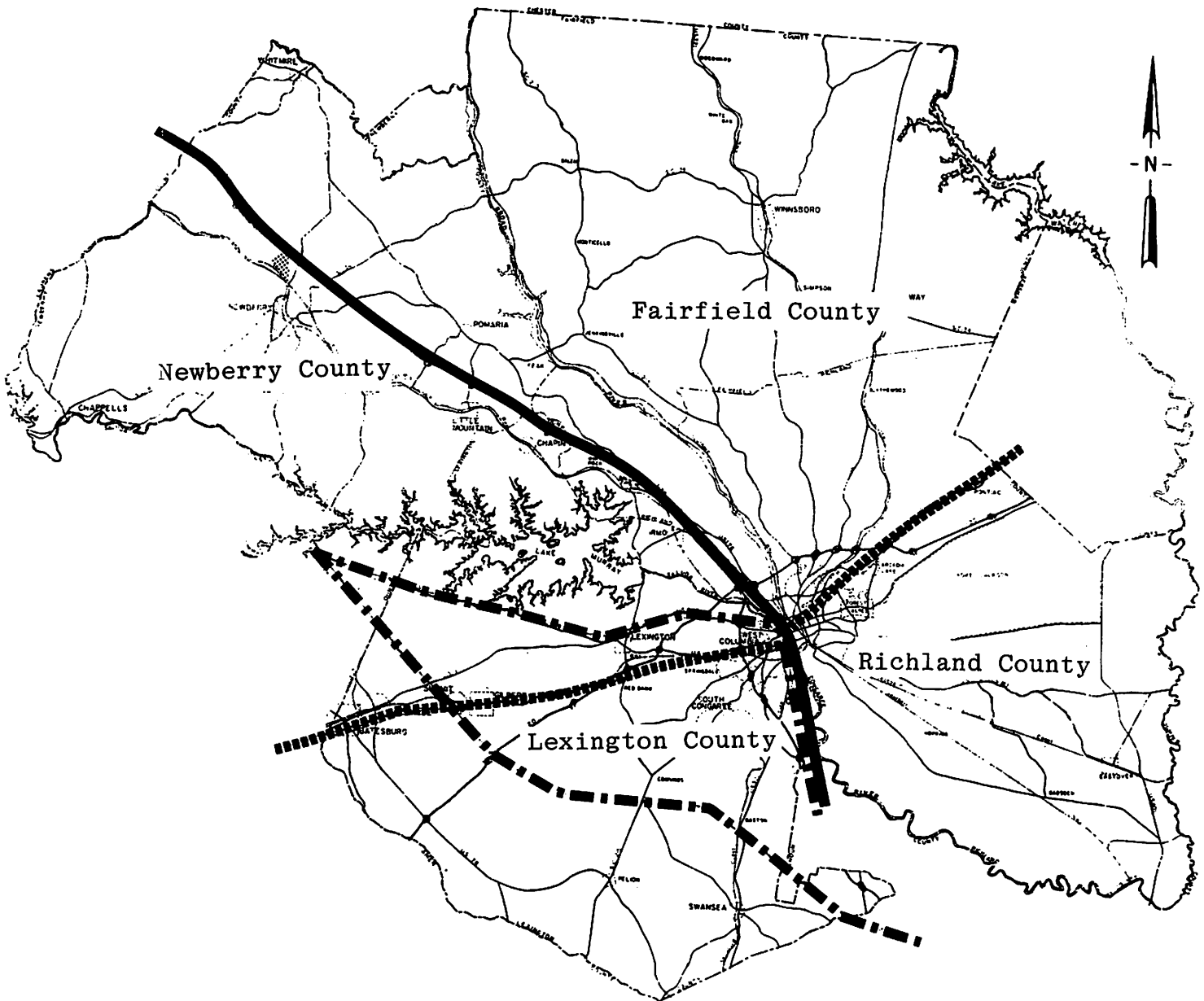
Calvary

FIG. 24

FIG. 25

HISTORIC TRAILS OF THE CENTRAL MIDLANDS

CHEROKEE TRAIL. Pack-horse traders from Charleston followed these two routes before 1700 to the Congarees on to the Cherokees at Keowee (Oconee County) and farther Indian tribes. The routes were also used by back country settlers and as military paths during the Cherokee and Revolutionary Wars.

OLD STATE ROAD. Established 1747, this road opened the up country for settlement by providing a path from Charleston to the mountains, basically along older Indian paths. In 1820 the road was improved and made a public toll road. Sections of the old road bed are still visible in some places.

GEORGE WASHINGTON TRAIL. Route taken by Washington on his 1791 tour from Augusta to Camden as recorded in his diary, which traces his path through the present region east from near Leesville, south of present U.S. No. 1 to Granby on the Congaree River and then to Columbia and Camden. For convenience, all three of these trails today are designated along modern primary highway routes with appropriate markers.

Fairfield County Historical Summary

Prior to the settlement of Fairfield by the English and Scotch-Irish, the region between the Broad and Wateree Rivers was a hunting ground of the Catawba Indians, part of the Sioux Nation.

In 1740, Thomas Nightingale, the first English settler, came to Little Cedar Creek and established a cow pen about three miles south of Winnsboro. The early settlements were made around the rivers and creeks.

The first settlement of this district took place about the year 1745. Col. John Lyles and his brother Ephraim were among the first settlers; they located themselves at the mouth of Beaver Creek on Broad River.

It was into this section with its rolling green hills and fertile valleys that the white man came in numbers about the middle of the 18th century, after Glen's treaty with the Cherokee Indians in 1755. Small groups of Germans from Saxe Gotha moved up and settled along the Broad and Saluda Rivers. English and Huguenot settlers moved up from the Low Country. The largest group of settlers were the Scotch-Irish who came down from Pennsylvania and Virginia. These Scotch-Irish were poor, but were proud-spirited, religious, and believed in education. It is natural that their culture and religion should dominate this section. Their homes were simple, emphasizing the utilitarian aspects rather than the elegance of the aristo-cratic mansions of the wealthy rice planters of the coastal areas.

After the first settlers built their homes, they next established churches or "meeting houses" as they were called. Of the churches estab-lished between 1760 and 1800, ten are still active today. Among the oldest of these churches were:

    Mobley's Meeting House, Interdenominational, 1760
    Gibson's Baptist Meeting House, 1762
    Lebanon Presbyterian, 1770
    Governanter, 1775
    Ebenezer Reformed, 1775
    Sandy Level Baptist, 1785
    Hopewell Reformed, 1787
    Rock Creek Baptist, 1790
    Bethesda Auf der Moven
    New Hope, 1796

The churches were mostly rectangular in plan and simple. In the 1850's a few had the classic Greek column and low roof. They were mostly constructed of wood. However, there were a few made from handmade brick or stone. Nearly all the old churches had galleries for the slaves.

Following the French and Indian Wars, the early settlers of Fairfield faced a new threat from bands of terrorizers and robbers who invaded their homes and drove away their livestock. Seats of the courts were too far away, and the people had but little recourse to handle the situation as best they could. This gave rise to the organization or associations which were known as "Regulation," with those operating them known as "Regulators." The thieves were ferreted out, whipped, and their carefully set-up headquarters destroyed. A noteworthy Regulator in Fairfield County was Thomas Woodward, who was described as a patron of orderly good, honest men but suffered persecution later for his well-intentioned actions as a Regulator. He was killed by a bandit. At the dawn of the Revolution, Woodward was one of those who urged his countrymen to action, and he lived long enough to see his advice carried out. The Fairfield area had over forty Regulators.
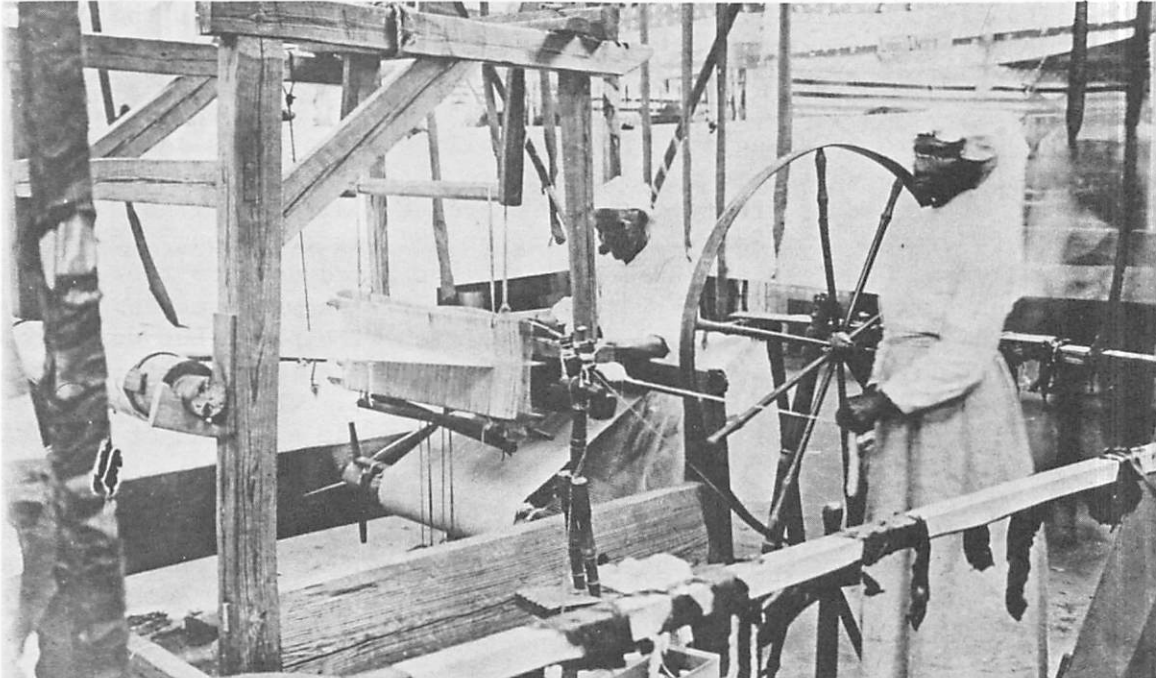

FIG. 26. Spinning and weaving were essential home crafts in the region on every plantation and farm before domestic textiles became cheap. This early 20th Century photograph, made at a state exposition, shows how the cotton wheel and massive floor loom were set up for operation.

During the Revolutionary War, Lord Cornwallis camped from October, 1780-January, 1781 in Winnsboro on the Mount Zion Campus. There were three affrays in Fairfield during the War--Mobley's Meeting House, Dutchman Creek and Rocky Mount.

Originally a part of Craven County, present Fairfield County in 1769 was part of Camden District, one of the state's seven judicial districts. It became a separate county in 1785 when Camden District was divided into five counties.

As Fairfield became more prosperous from the culture of cotton, its plantations became larger, its homes more pretentious, and much of the Low County influence became evident in its plantations and architecture of its houses, especially after the planters from the swamp regions moved into the hills because it was healthier. Perhaps there is no section of the state that can boast so wide a range in the architecture of its buildings as Fairfield, which range from simple straight lines of the early wood-framed houses to the picturesque homes which reflect southern architecture at its best.

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The first buildings were built of logs, but were soon replaced by simple wood-framed houses, the earliest of which had a "dog-run" through the center for the breeze. The typical early "up-country house" was the two storied frame house built in an "L" shape with a long piazza running across the front. The up country house always faced the road. The yard was usually fenced and contained a small shrub garden. There was usually no basement, only a small cellar with a cooling well to the rear. The kitchen of the larger dwellings was in a separate building. Servant houses, carriage house, and stables were in the back yard, and slave quarters a short distance away in the fields. The walls and frame and floors of these houses were of heart pine timber fastened together by wood pegs or hand wrought nails.

Fairfield was early a seat of education. Among the early schools established were:

Gibson's School, 1792
Mt. Zion Institute, 1777
Jefferson-Monticello Academy, 1800
Broad River Academy, 1824
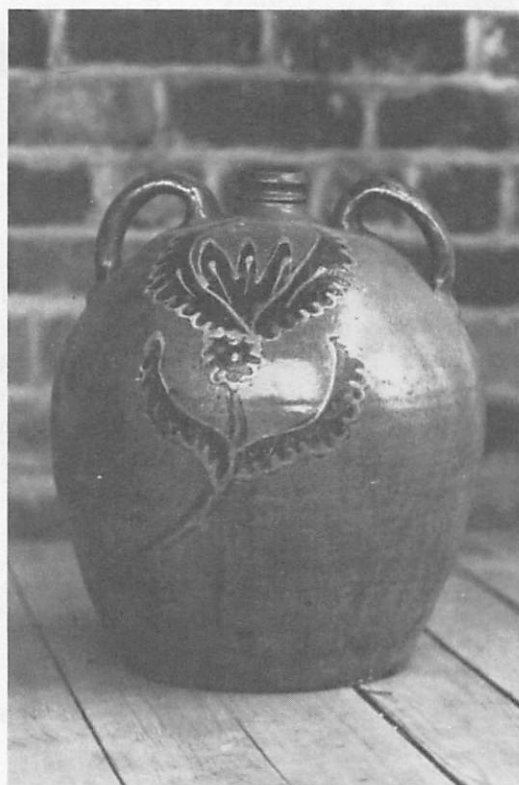Furman Institute, 1837
Feasterville Academy, 1842

FIG. 27. Household goods of small farmers usually included numbers of homemade pegged chairs with woven seats and a quantity of purchased crockery, sometimes of slipware such as this doubled handled jug with stylized flower, representative of pottery made in Edgefield County.

During the War Between the States three branches of Sherman's Army came through Fairfield, pillaging and burning. (February, 1865). The War left Fairfield prostrate and desolate. Without slave labor the plantations could no longer operate; so the system of share-cropping developed. This system caused the depletion of the soil and massive erosion of most of the county. The coming of the boll weevil about 1920 was the final straw that broke the cotton farmer's back.

FIG. 28. Fairfield Cotton fortunes created magnificent mansions such as Malvern Hall, a showplace of antebellum elegance.

Fairfield has been recognized as a center of education and culture and has produced many distinguished citizens in all walks of life. Among them were Thomas Woodward, the Regulator; Gen. Richard Winn, Revolutionary War hero; John Winn, first president of the Mt. Zion Society; Captain James Kincaid, agriculturalist; Dr. James B. Davis, Minister of Agriculture to Turkey, 1845-1849; Dr. James W. Hudson, Principal of Mt. Zion Institute, 1832-1857; and Edward G. Palmer, first president of South Carolina and Charlotte Railway.

Fairfield County has been known for many years for the fine granite quarried here. Winnsboro Blue is called the "Silk of the Trade" and is world famous.

The News & Herald, one of the oldest county newspapers in the state, was founded in 1844.

Parr Shoals Hydro-electric Plant on Broad River was begun in 1915 and the first Nuclear Reactor plant in the Southeast was built there in 1962.

Rich is Fairfield county in history and tradition, with its historical old dwellings from the log house to the elegant late colonial, its old churches, plantations, beautiful gardens reminiscent of the past, priceless antiques and family heirlooms. This is the heritage of which it is justly proud.

Extracted from a narrative by Banks Patrick,
President, Fairfield County Historical Society 1973.