

Maps

Georgia info

Historical atlas of Georgia counties; Chatham County

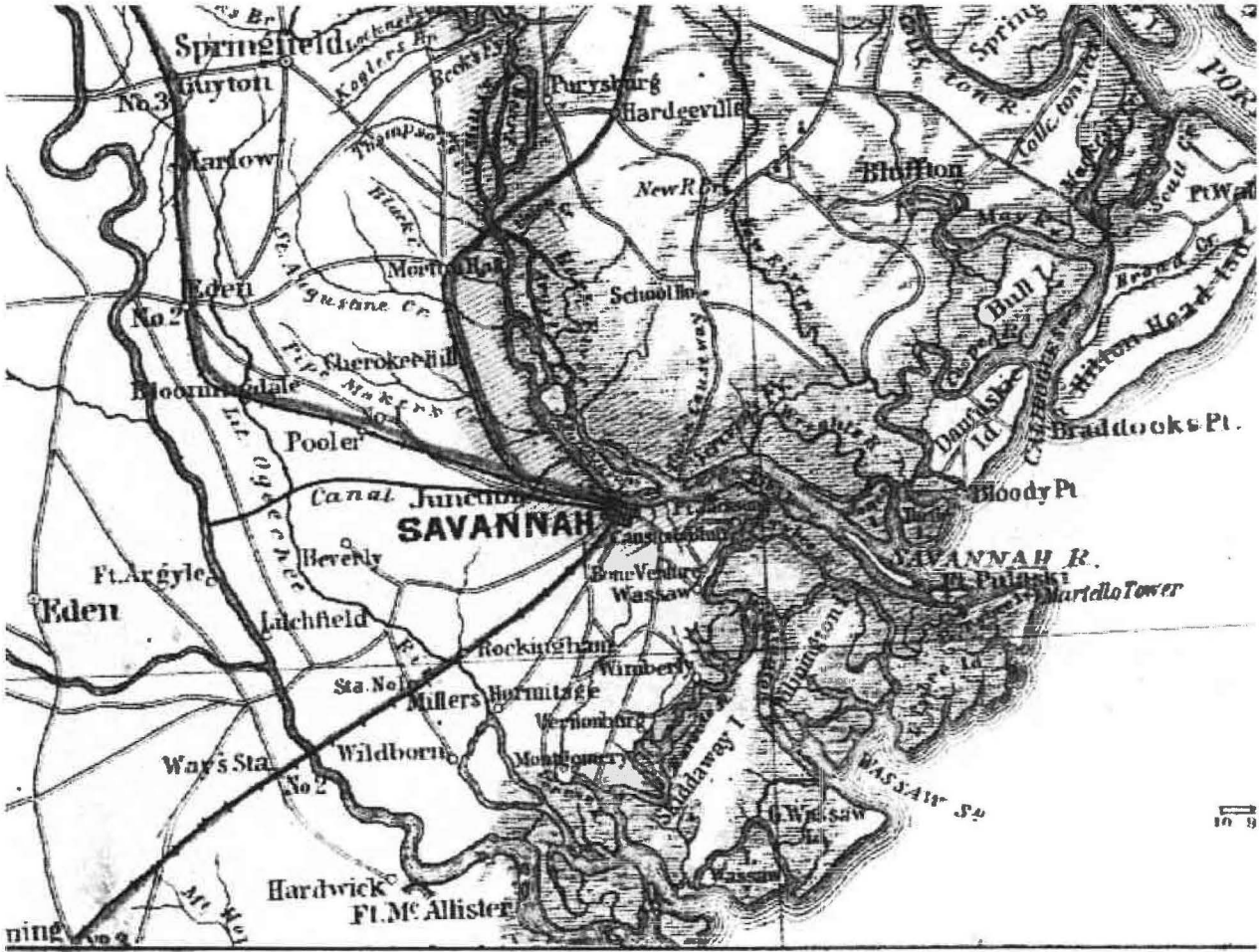
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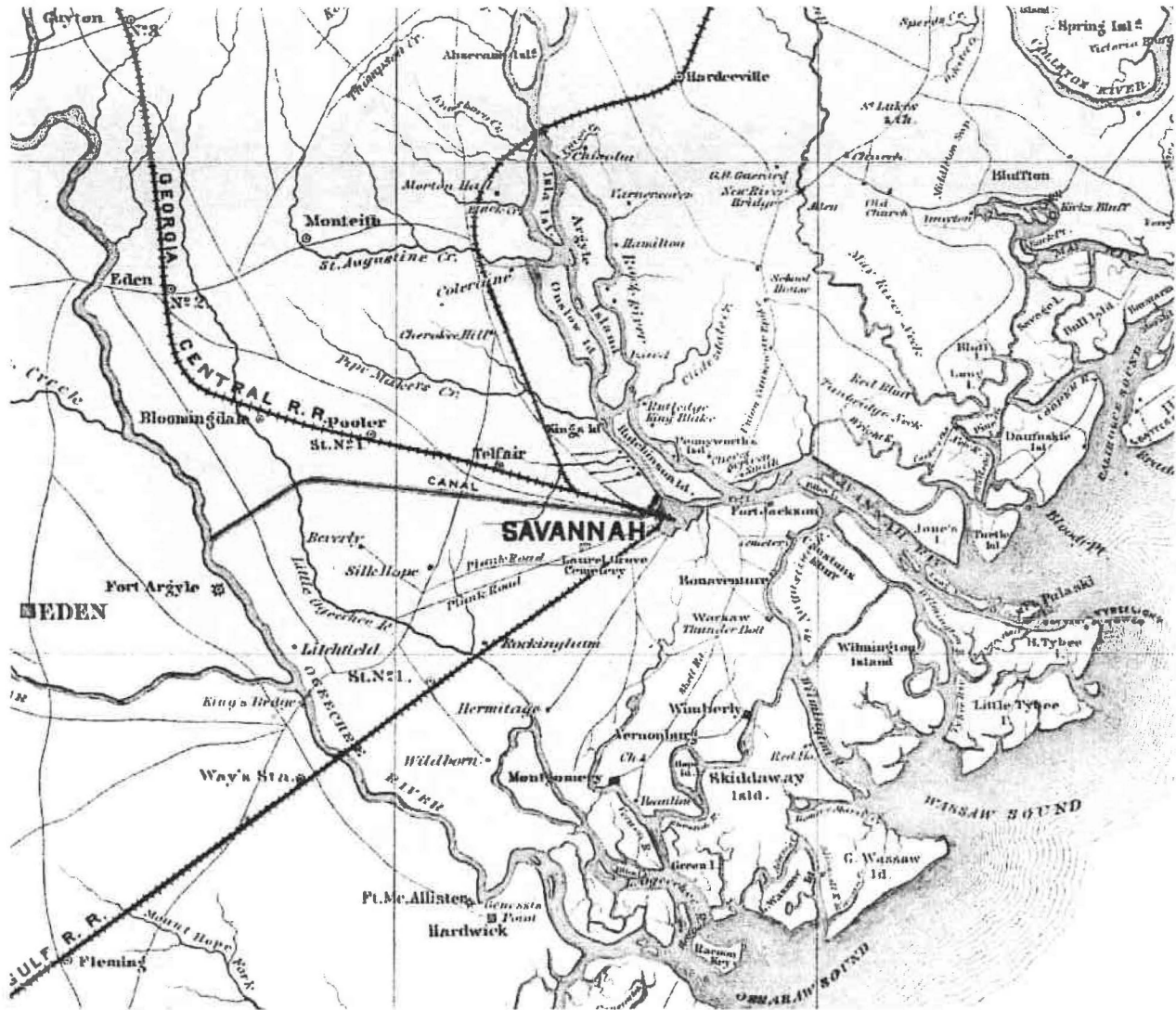
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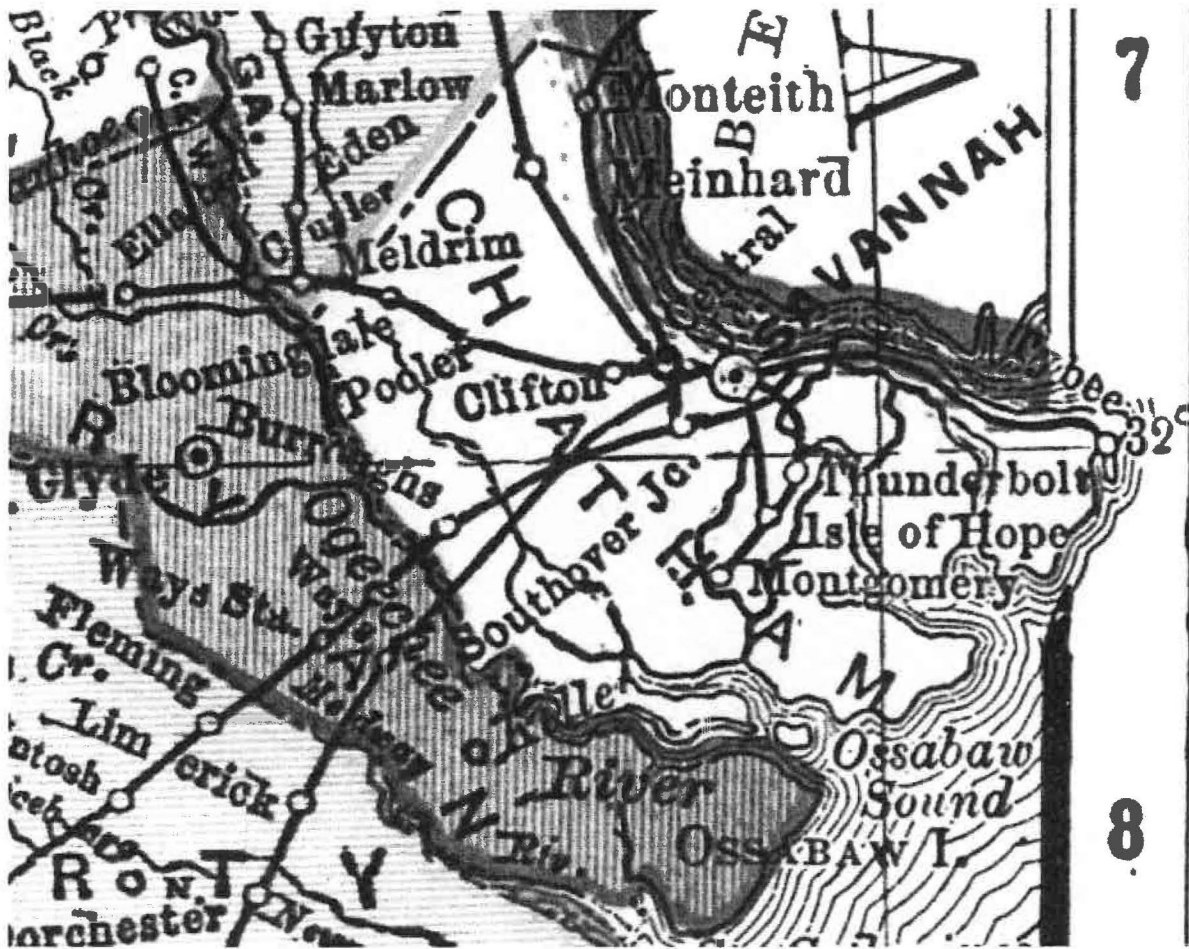
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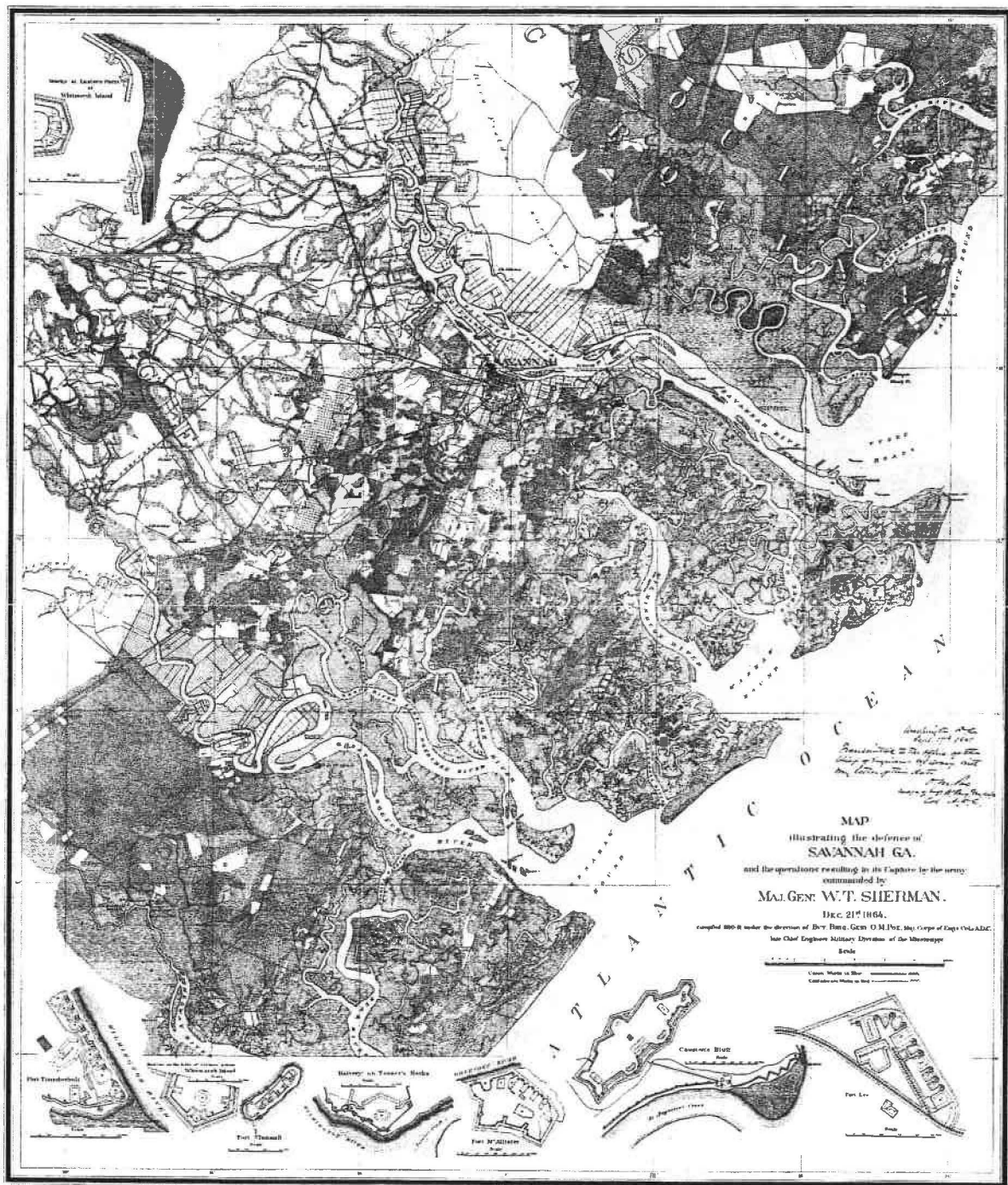
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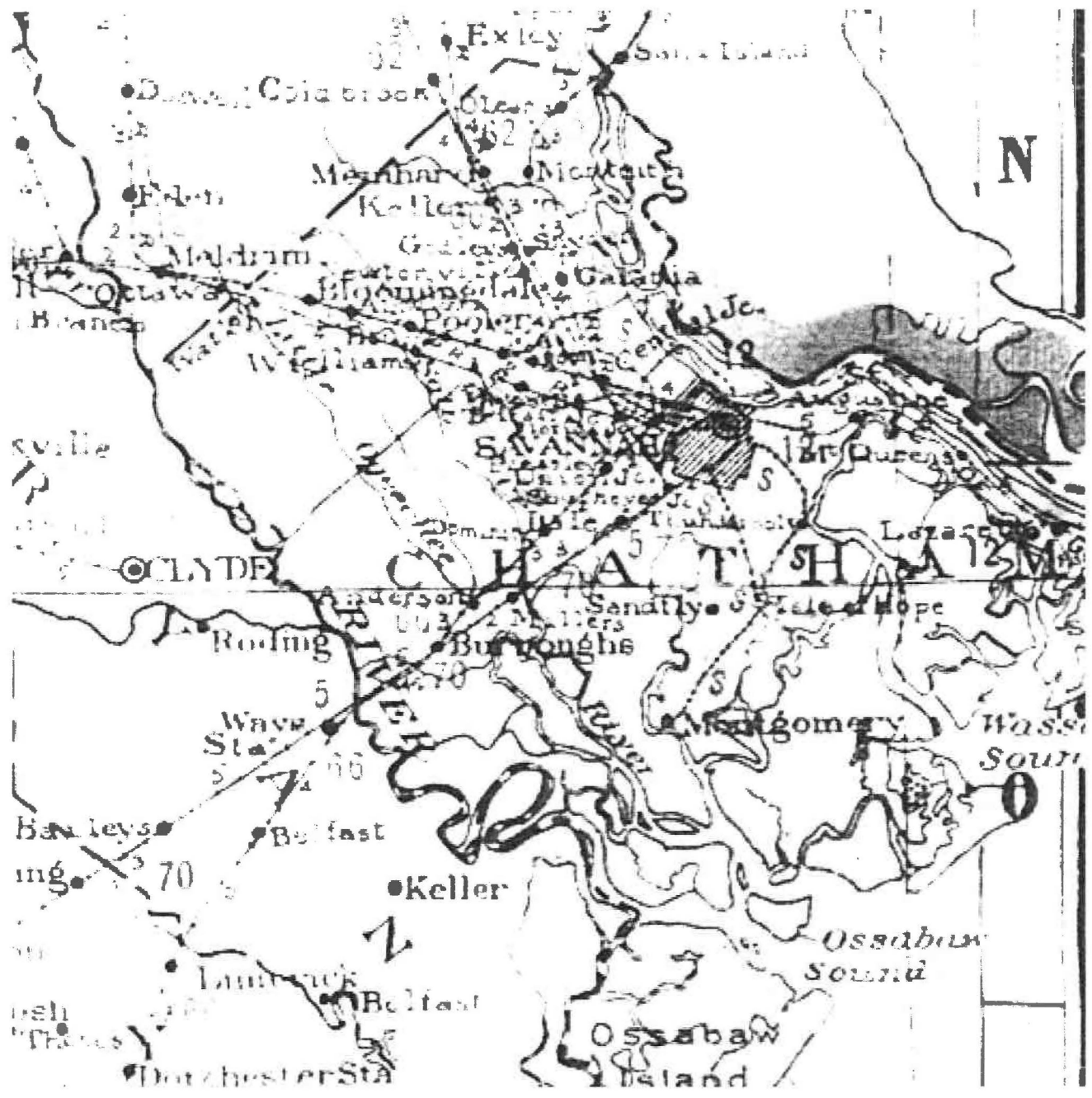
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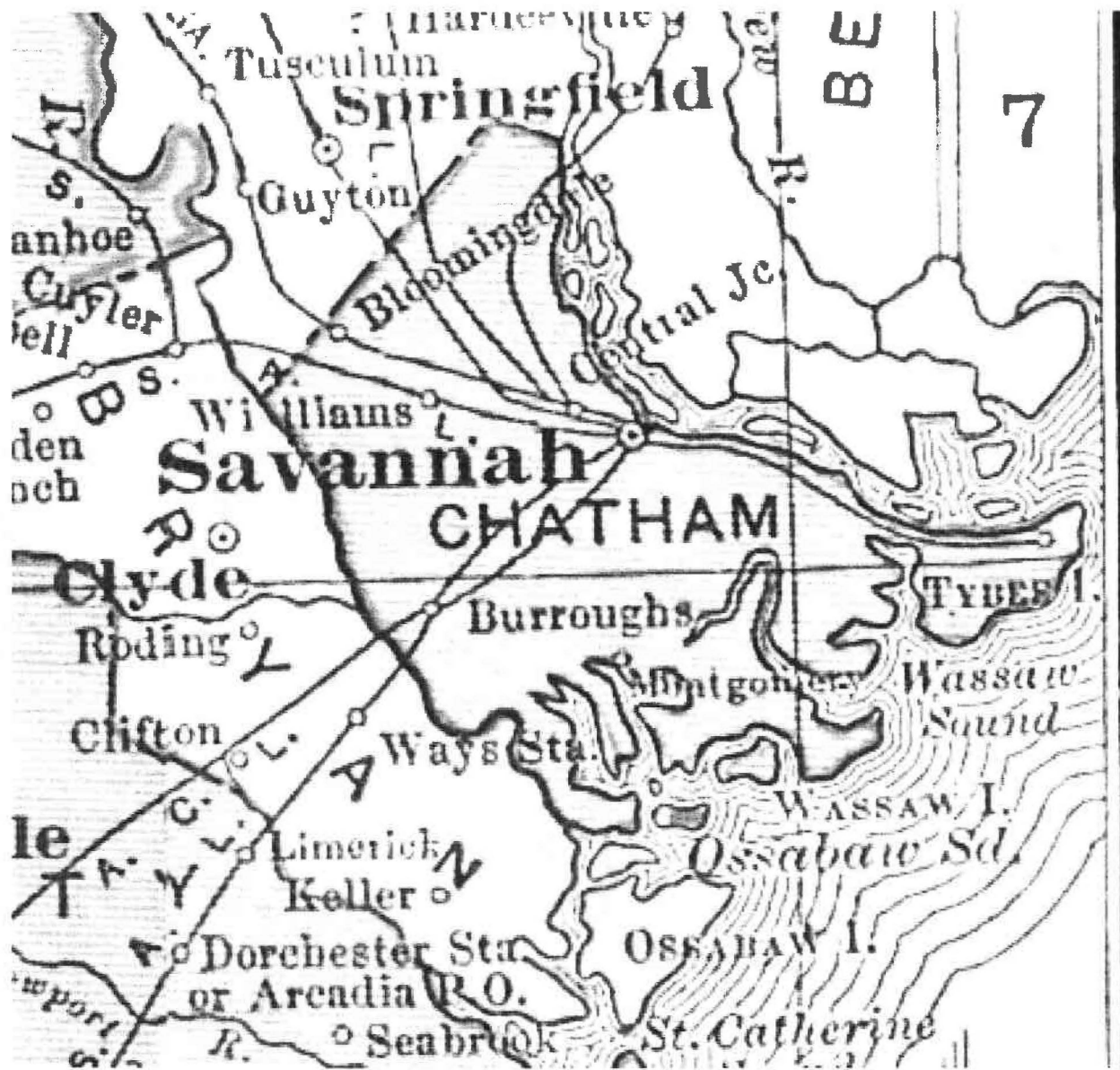
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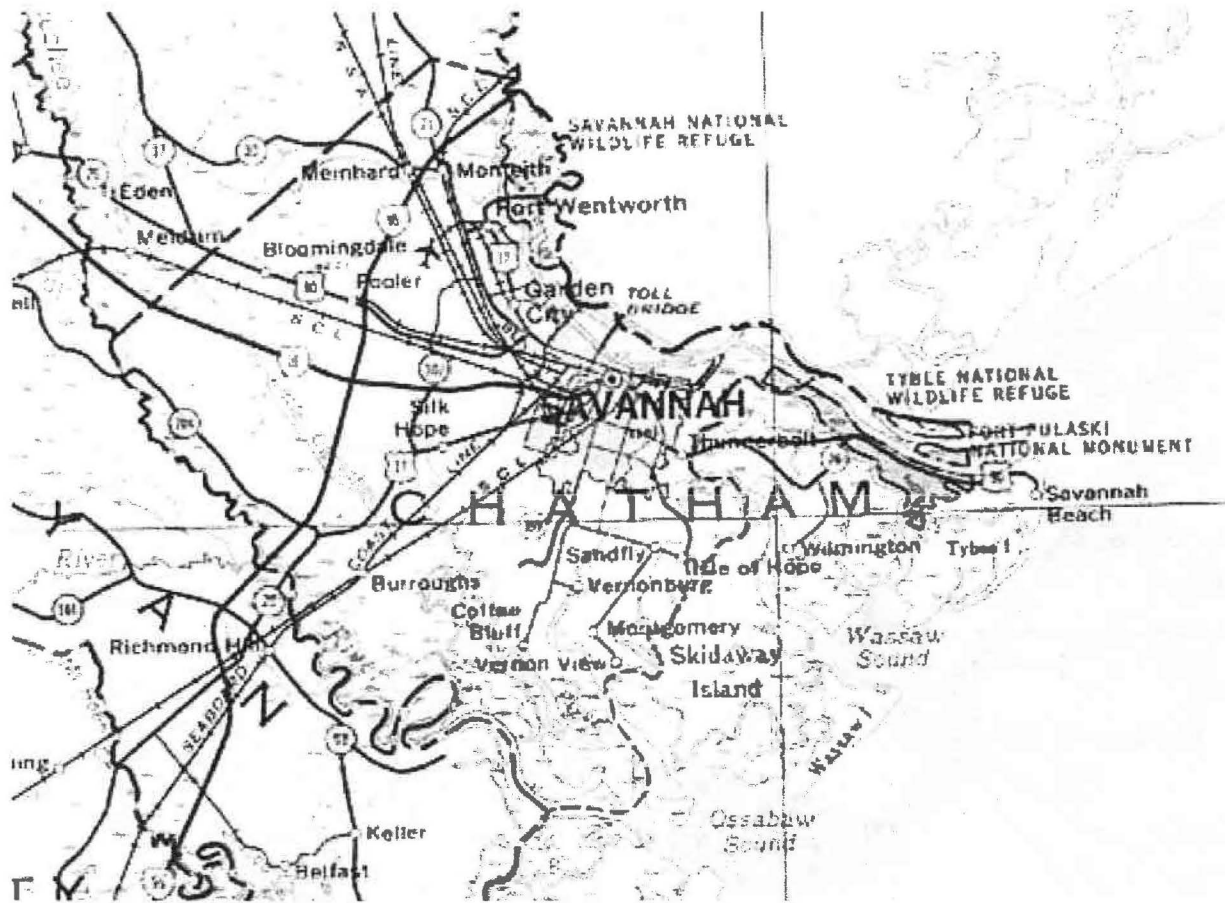
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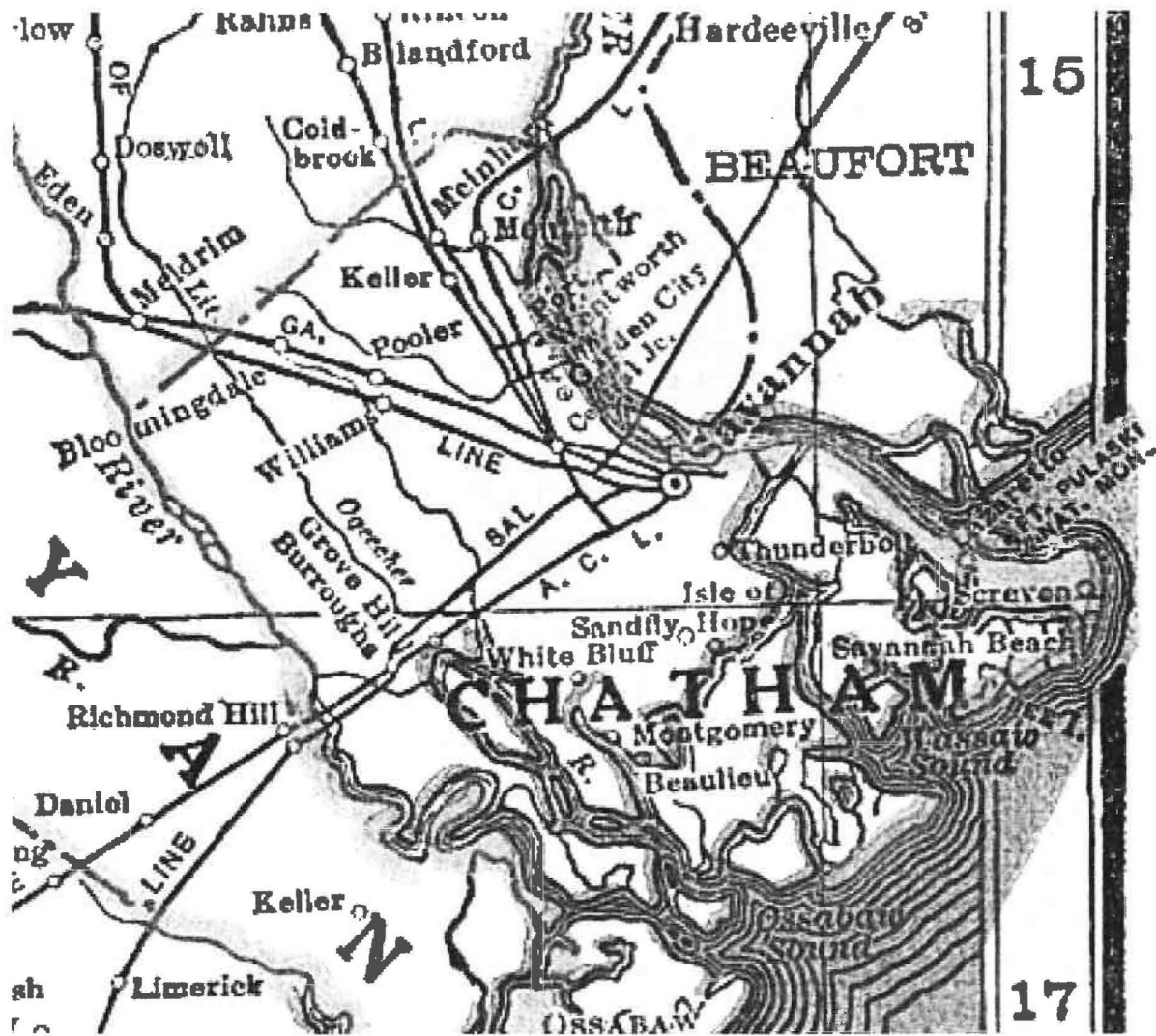
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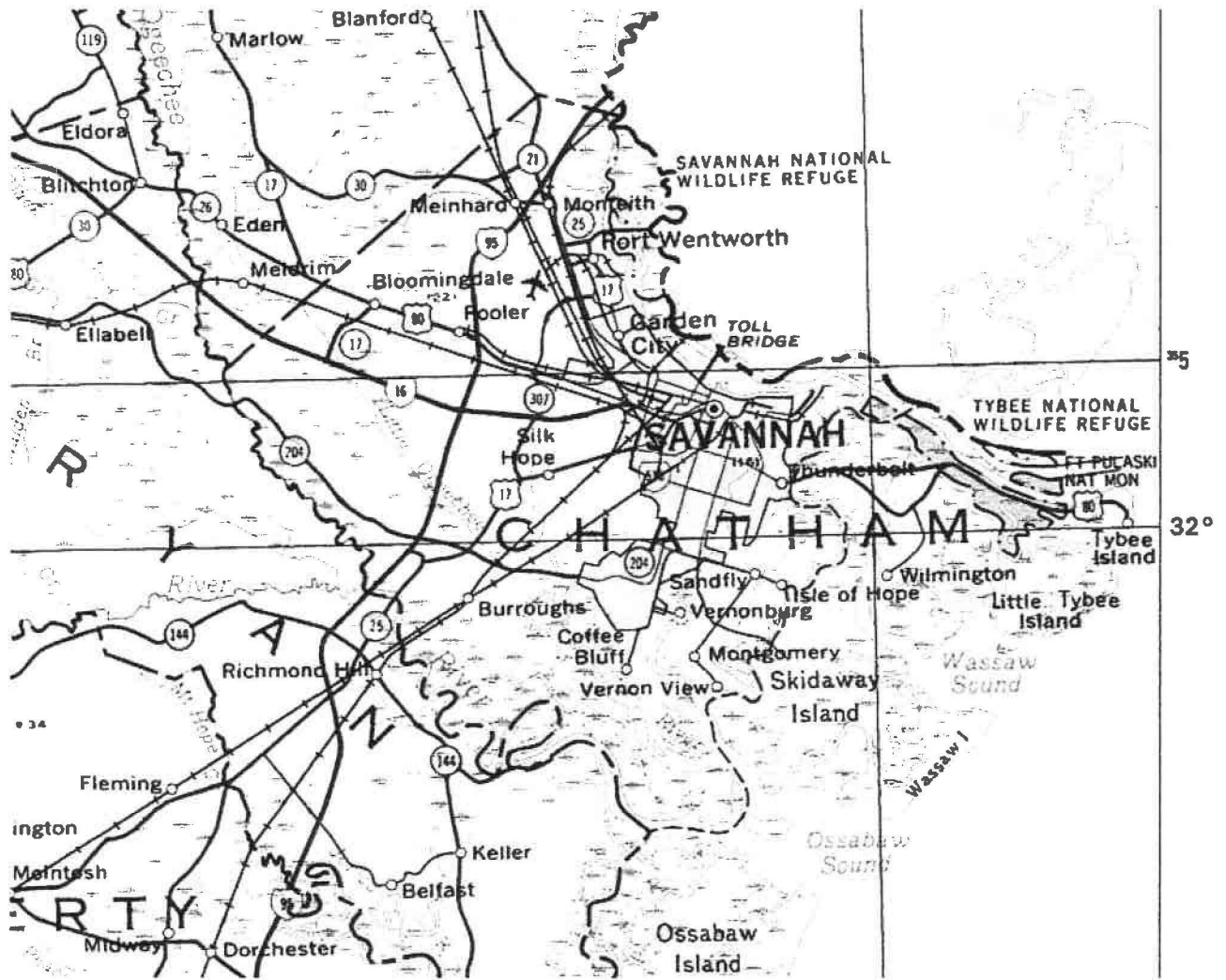
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Document of MPC

Savannah: Cultural Resources. Chapter 8

<http://www.thempc.org/documents/CompLRPlanning/Plans/CHAPTER8.pdf>

resort development followed in 1927 with the Hotel Wilmington Island (later called the General Oglethorpe), a popular destination for golf. Today this building is restored as condominiums.

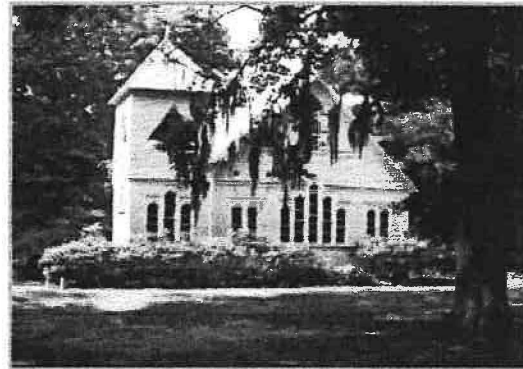
On Oatland Island, the Brotherhood of Railway Conductors built a large retirement home, which from WWII to 1974 became a mosquito control research center. Today it serves as a natural resource education center for the Board of Education.

Cockspur Island held a strategic location at the mouth of the Savannah River for the protection of Savannah. Two forts preceded Fort Pulaski, which was built as a part of a line of fortifications along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts after the War of 1812.



Fort James Jackson, was built on Salter's Island, about three miles east of downtown Savannah. Its purpose was to protect Savannah from naval attack. In the early Nineteenth Century the marshes around the fort that were cultivated for rice were drained and filled in

with dredge spoils from the River. The fort is significant as one of the few preserved Second System Seacoast Fortifications in the United States. During the Civil War, three lines of defense were adopted to protect Savannah. The first line of defense extended from Causton's Bluff to the Ogeechee River and embraced Greenwich, Thunderbolt, Isle of Hope, Beaulieu and Rose Dhu. Detached works were also constructed on Whitmarsh, Skidaway, and Green Islands. Many of these defenses are still evident.



8.5.4 Southwest Chatham

In the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, several large plantations were located between the Great and Little Ogeechee Rivers. Built in 1756, Wild Heron Plantation, located at the intersection of Wild Heron and Grove Point Roads, is one of the oldest domestic structures in the state. By the 1830's, almost 1,000 slaves worked in the rice fields of several large rice plantations on the Ogeechee. Following the Civil War, many



of the former slaves remained in the area. Burroughs was one such rural African-American community, carved out of land originally associated with Wild Heron Plantation. The New Ogeechee Missionary Baptist Church (1893) and St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church served this community of approximately 50 houses, a school, and a store. The one room school is situated next to St. Bartholomew Church. The community of Burroughs became a railhead for the shipping of rice and vegetables into Savannah.

Not far from Burroughs is the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal a 16.5 mile long canal constructed from 1826 to 1830 by slaves and Irish immigrants. The canal, upon its completion, shipped various commodities. The Bethel community near the canal had its start in the late 1770's when Jacob Gould built a house on Little Neck Road. The nearby Bethel Cemetery dates from 1848 and is contemporary with the 19th century Gould house (now restored as a private residence).

Lebanon Plantation is another colonial-era rice plantation located on the Little Ogeechee River. The main house dates from 1873 and in the Twentieth Century was the location for the development of the Savannah Satsuma orange. During the Civil War, Lebanon was the site of Federal troop headquarters. Confederate and Union army camps and emplacements can be found all over southwest Chatham County.

Just north of the Ogeechee River, at Ogeechee Road and Canebrake Road, stands the plant introduction station established by Barbour Lathrop in 1920. A Cuban rice planter, Andreas Moynelo introduced bamboo plants from Japan on nearby Vallambrosa Plantation. These were transplanted to the site of the Bamboo Farm in 1890 and came to the attention of Mr. Lathrop in 1915. This fascinating site is still an active plant testing and coastal garden facility run by the University of Georgia.

8.6 Issues and Opportunities

In the introduction to this Chapter the economic impact of tourism and its direct correlation to historic resources was demonstrated. The renovation of historic resources is also good for business. Between January 2001 and March 2004, \$50.3 million was invested in the Broughton Street Urban Redevelopment Area (BURA) and \$75.2 million was invested along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and the Montgomery Street corridor. Appraised property values in both targeted areas have increased exponentially. In 1986, at the inception of the BURA designation, commercial properties in the 12 block area were valued at \$38.7 million. Today, that figure has dramatically increased to more than \$123.3 million, excluding public properties. In 2000, commercial properties along the 52 block MLK and Montgomery corridor were valued at \$75.9 million. Today that figure has increased to \$174.6 million, excluding public properties.⁵

Historic commercial buildings provide interesting space for retail, inns, lofts and condominiums. In 2002-2003 approximately \$6.5 million has gone into condo/loft acquisition and improvements in the Broughton Street Urban Redevelopment area.⁶ The housing stock in historic neighborhoods provides a range of housing choices in unique landscapes settings close to existing transportation lines. New developments in proximity to historic neighborhoods gain value from that location. In turn, these developments need to reinforce the street patterns, public accessibility and aesthetics of the surrounding historic neighborhoods.

Despite the positive statistics not all communities recognize the value of historic preservation. In a recent survey of Certified Local Governments across Georgia, six main concerns were raised. In order of magnitude these were: demolition by neglect and

⁵ Figures obtained from Savannah Development and Renewal Authority

⁶ Savannah Development and Renewal Authority.

the physical integrity of the plan has not been preserved in these towns. Professor John Reps of Cornell University has written that “Savannah...used the power gained through municipal ownership of the Common to shape the growth in the public interest. The decisions to do so and, in the process, to replicate the original, spatially nonhierarchical system of uniform open squares produced America’s most unusual city plan.”

The outlying settlements were connected to the City of Savannah by waterways and colonial road systems. These colonial roads followed the high ground (usually the ridges of old barrier island dune structures). Early development naturally occurred along these routes including the Western Road (Louisville Road), the White Bluff Road (an extension of Bull Street), the Great Ogeechee Road (Southern Road), Wheaton Street (to Thunderbolt and the ferry to Skidaway Island), and the Augusta or River Road. Plantations were established along the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers and on the islands such as Ossabaw, Skidaway and Wassaw.

Oglethorpe’s policies against slavery restricted the size of farms and plantations in colonial Georgia, in stark contrast with South Carolina landholders and their slave labor force. The ban was lifted in 1752 when control of the colony reverted to the crown. Subsequently, rice production began in the Savannah and Ogeechee River basins. Slaves were housed on the plantations or in the city where they lived in lane cottages or along the edges of the old city. Notable pre-Civil War African American resources include the tabby slave cottages on Ossabaw Island, the Owens Thomas House carriage houses and the First African Baptist Church. During Reconstruction many of the former slaves established communities on the mainland near waterways such as Coffee Bluff, Nicholsonboro, Pin Point, Sand Fly and Grimball’s Point. In Savannah, the Beach Institute and Brownsville were urban neighborhoods occupied by Freedmen.



Between 1826 and 1830 the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers were connected by the Savannah and Ogeechee Canal. When completed, the canal was 16.5 miles long, 48 feet wide at the top and five feet deep. During the Antebellum period, the canal improved the transportation of products to the port of Savannah. Communities such as Bethel in Southwest Chatham grew up in conjunction with the canal. Competition from rail access to upland cotton through South Carolina, however, spurred the construction of the Central of Georgia Railway system. The railroad soon eclipsed the canal as an economic force. Railhead communities such as Burroughs grew up in outlying portions of the county from which farmers could ship their produce by rail.

After the Civil War, street railroads encouraged suburban and river resort development. With the advent of the automobile many of these summer resorts became year-round residential suburbs and palm-lined causeways connected these communities to the mainland. Street railroads enabled urban expansion into the former farm lots where larger lots and deeper setbacks were the norm. These neighborhoods are now desirable residential districts.

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Content of Act/Resolution

ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA 1921

PART III.--CORPORATIONS TITLE 1. Municipal Corporations.

1921 Vol. 1 -- Page: 740

Sequential Number: 209

Short Title: BURROUGHS CHARTER REPEALED.

Law Number: No. 13.

Full Title: An Act entitled an Act to repeal the Charter of the Town of **Burroughs** granted to said Town of **Burroughs** by the Superior Court of Chatham County, Georgia, on the 22nd day of January, 1898, and for other purposes.

Whereas by order of the Superior Court of Chatham County, Georgia, passed on the 22nd day of January, 1898, the Town of **Burroughs** was incorporated; and
[Sidenote: Preamble.]

Whereas at a meeting of the Councilmen of the Town of **Burroughs** it was resolved that necessary steps be taken to repeal the charter of said Town of **Burroughs**; and

Whereas the qualified voters and residents of the Town of **Burroughs** have concurred in said request;

Section 1. Now then be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, and it is hereby enacted by authority of the same, That from and after the passage of this Act the charter of the said Town of **Burroughs** be, and the same is, hereby repealed.
[Sidenote: Act of 1898 repealed.]

Sec. 2. Be it further enacted, That all laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act be, and the same are, hereby repealed.

Approval Date: Approved July 21, 1921.

Burroughs Seeking To Raise Living Standards Of Negroes

South from here

June 16, 1935 BY HUGH BROWN

Less than fifteen miles from Savannah there is a small colored community known as Burroughs, Ga. Like hundreds of similar settlements in the heart of the Southland its inhabitants live in the midst of large white holdings and work on the farms of the whites.

The town itself is small, a typical "general store and half-dozen houses" whistle stop on the main line of the Atlantic Coast Line. The only difference between it and a thousand others is that a revolution is occurring there.

It isn't a violent revolution. In fact one could pass through Burroughs and never even be aware of it. But it is there.

The whole idea of revolution is contained in the Burroughs Community Club, an organization that has assumed the task of leading the citizens of the town in a determined effort to raise the standard of living by increasing food production (both crop and animal), landscaping, repairing run down buildings, and instilling a spirit of civic pride in the citizens.

Under the leadership of Robert A. Young and Mrs. Mildred Milledge, both of the Fair Haven adult education program, Burroughs has made progress in both economic and social improvements.

The single example of one citi-

zen, Aaron Grant, president of the Burroughs Community Club, is enough to show what can be done by an individual for his community and for himself.

Aware of the fact that a single concrete example is much more likely to provide inspiration than a dozen theoretical word pictures, Grant has set himself the task of leading the way by repairing his home and installing modern equipment.

He repainted his house, screened the porch and windows, landscaped his yard and planted a garden of good south Georgia food crops.

After actively leading his fellow townsmen in petitioning for electric power, Grant installed an electric kitchen and bought electric appliances for his home.

With the aid of new appliances his wife has taken the lead. In canning and preserving fruits and vegetables from the garden. The canning and preserving received their initial push from Mrs. Milledge who conducted demonstrations of modern preserving techniques for the women.

A community house lies in the future. The dream of a centrally located house with complete facilities for the cooperative effort necessary to the revolution will not be realized for a few years, but the Community Club already has begun accumulating funds for the building.

Group work and recreation are part of the program. Under the leadership of Young, the community has established regular celebrations of the yearly festivals and anniversaries common to Americans. The practice of holding an Easter egg hunt has been re-established.

The story is not complete. It is in the incuante stage. Needs are still many and the work goes on slowly, but it goes on.

The townsmen have done the work and raised the money needed to carry on the program without outside financial assistance. They have not applied for government help, but once awakened to the needs of their community have gone about supplying them.

The Burroughs plan is an experiment in better living; a vivid and splendid example of the hopes of a people beginning to take shape. Continued individual effort and group cooperation will guarantee its success.

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Burroughs:

Rebirth of a Once Forgotten Community

By DEBBY LUSTER
Religion Editor

Off the beaten coastal path of U.S. Highway 17 between Savannah and Richmond Hill sits the small community known as Burroughs. Life as city people know it today has nothing to do with this small, unincorporated area of Chatham County. There are no paved roads, only two business establishments and plenty of peace and solitude.

Yet, the Burroughs community—as serene as an Andrew Wyeth landscape at first glance—is not all fine and pretty. At one time, according to Mrs. Gertrude Greene, a retired caseworker who worked with many of the community families in the 1930's, Burroughs was nothing but "mud—almost swamp" after rains, people wanted for proper health care and they knew great poverty.

But something exciting has happened to the town of about 45 families. The people of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Savannah decided to help the people of Burroughs.

Much of their assistance has revolved around St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church—a small white wooden structure which has occupied the same spot in Burroughs since 1890.

A project headed up by Mrs. Greene, also a St. Matthew's member, and began about two years ago, Burroughs is gradually taking shape as a productive little community. Those families attending St. Bartholomew's have picked up a new enthusiasm for their church, and the enthusiasm has spread into the community.

As a St. Matthew's mission, St. Bartholomew's is served twice a month—the second and fourth Sundays—by rector emeritus, the Rev. Gustave Caution.

With the encouragement of St. Matthew's members and with a grant supplied by the National Episcopal Church, the community used money saved by members of both churches to renovate what was once an old school building next door to St. Bartholomew's. Now the dwelling is used as a parish hall and a community house.

Before the renovation project was begun, the windows and flooring had decayed, and when a hard rain came up, "water poured in everywhere," Mrs. Greene said.

Now all windows have been replaced and the inside has been covered with stained paneling.

Not only church members, but other members of the community use the parish hall.

Meeting regularly at the house is the newly formed Youth Club. President of the club is Catherine Davis, now a student at Draughton's Business College in Savannah. The hall also is used by community teenagers who are teaching reading to younger children.

In its many years of existence, Burroughs contained no recreation facilities for its families until about two weeks ago. Now the beginning of a playground can be seen about a quarter of a mile down the road from St. Bartholomew's on a plot of land left to a member of the church by her mother, Amanda Brown. Eventually, Mrs. Greene said, the church hopes to erect a sign saying "Amanda Brown Playground."

Thanks to the Chatham County Recreation Commission, new swings, a sliding board and a merry-go-round have been installed. Next on the list are a baseball field and tennis and basketball courts.

"We foresee a lot of things happening in Burroughs," said Mrs. Greene. She hopes to reactivate a health station which closed down many years ago and to begin a food cooperative for the community.

A retired school bus driver from the Chatham County

School System and junior warden of St. Bartholomew's, Aaron Grant, has lived in Burroughs all his life. Like most of the town's inhabitants, he is a descendant of the slaves who worked the cotton fields in the old plantation community.

"All we (living in Burroughs) were doing was marking time...marking time. I thought I would die markin' time until she (Mrs. Greene) came, and now we can look up and say thank you, Jesus," explained Grant, whom Mrs. Greene calls "Mr. Burroughs."

The only two businesses in Burroughs are small confectionaries, one owned by Grant. Inside the small, wooden store is a juke box and space for community teenagers to dance. There they may purchase soft drinks and snacks.

Church members are in the tedious process of compiling a history of St. Bartholomew's and Burroughs. "We hope to really occupy a unique spot in the Bicentennial celebration," Mrs. Greene said. "We have a unique culture which we really need to spotlight."

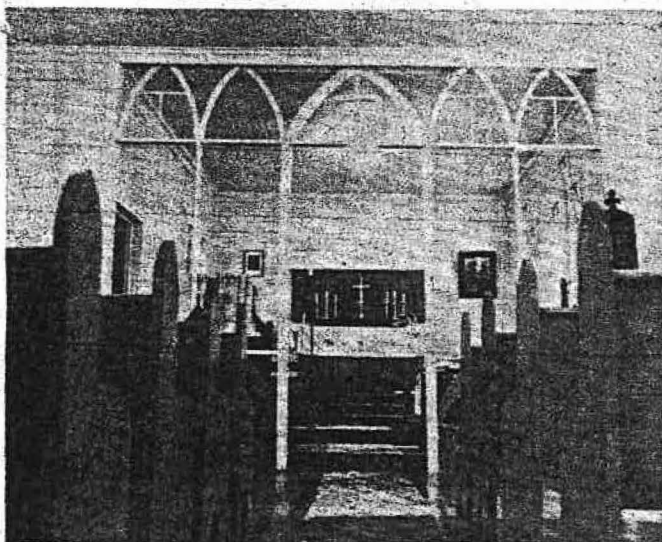
According to Grant, Burroughs was once an official town, with a black mayor and a black police chief. But, Mrs. Greene pointed out, she has found no documents yet carrying this information.

St. Bartholomew's began in 1874, when it was called St. Mark's Chapel and was situated on Moynelo Plantation, Mrs. Greene said. In 1890, a plot was purchased on a section of Wild Heron Road, now Chevis Road, from Joseph and Eleanor Burroughs, plantation owners. Today on the same spot sits St. Bartholomew's.

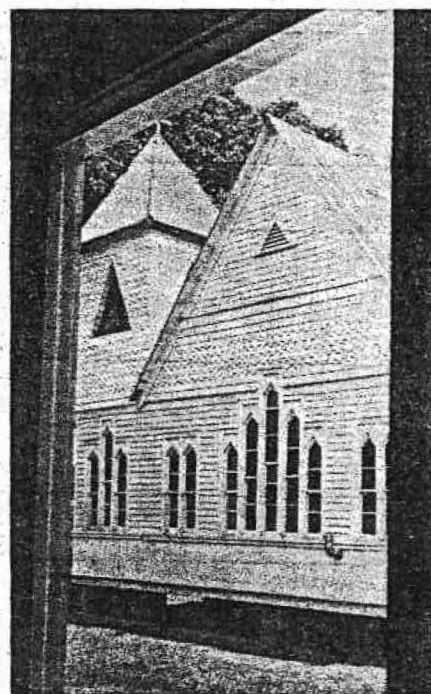
Mrs. Greene pointed out what she called a better side to the slavery story. White plantation owners often were eager to provide both religious and educational teaching to their slaves, and, she said, records show that both whites and blacks attended St. Bartholomew's together.

The Burroughs chapel represents the beginning of the black Episcopal Church in the Savannah area, according to Mrs. Greene. Growing out of the small congregation was St. Augustus' Episcopal Church, now St. Matthew's, which is predominantly black in membership.

Today the mother church is prospering because of the love and efforts of her offspring. Only two years of planning and hard work on the part of a dedicated St. Matthew's "Outreach Committee" has already made a difference that members of St. Bartholomew's and others living in Burroughs won't soon forget.



Inside St. Bartholomew's Chapel in Burroughs



Outside View of St. Bartholomew's Chapel

...BERTSON, 86, of Brooklet, who served as the city's mayor for 25 years, died early Friday afternoon at a nursing home in Statesboro after a long illness.

He was a native of Oudley County and a lifelong resident of Brooklet. He was the retired

Ga. Gazette 2/11/8

Burroughs Seeks Historic Status

The Burroughs community in the southwestern corner of Chatham County has been nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, ending a year-long campaign by black community activist Gergrude Green.

The Chatham County commission unanimously approved a resolution Friday asking that the isolated community of U.S.17 at the end of Chevis Road be recognized as an important historic district. The tiny settlement consists of a church and a collection of run-down shanties which constitute the second-oldest Episcopal congregation in Georgia.

The St. Bartholomew congregation was formed in 1832 to serve rice plantation owners and their slaves. By 1845 the first priest, Rev. Williams, was retained by the white landowners. The church has served an educational as well as a religious center to the community ever since.

"We're always taught that educational training didn't come to the former slaves until the Yankees came in here after the Civil War, but this simply is not true. They taught reading, writing and arithmetic to the slaves here before the war," Green said.

The community was incorporated into a town in 1898 and black residents served as mayor, town council members and constable. The town prospered as a railhead for shipping locally-grown vegetables and rice north to Savannah. The church congregation alone swelled to over 400 members, Green said.

Things are slower now. The town's population has declined to about 300, Green estimated, but the community



Gertrude Greene and Burroughs' St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church

Georgia Gazette/Richard Sommers

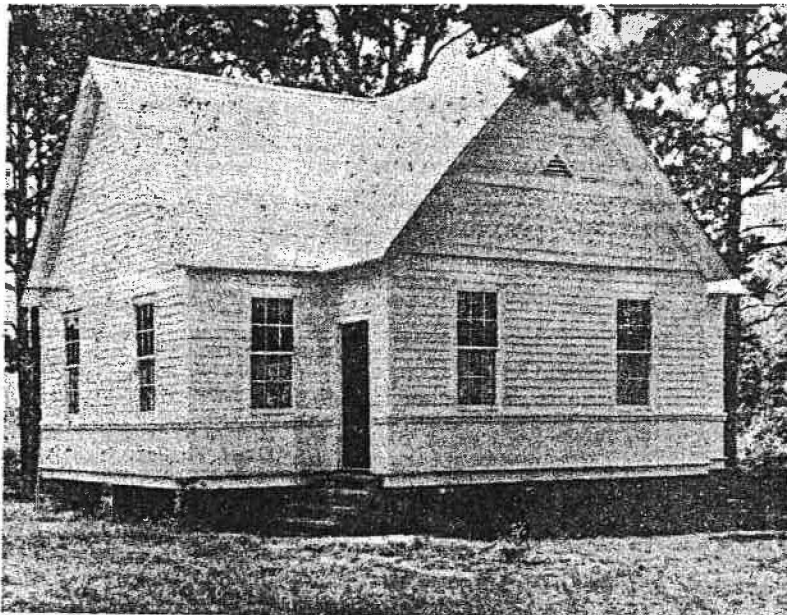
endures. "When I came out here in 1971, the parish hall was almost on the ground and the roof was caved in, but everyone has pitched in to help."

Along with support from the residents, St. Bartholomew's also received financial assistance from

local, regional and national Episcopal groups. The current church building was erected in 1897 after the first two were destroyed by a cyclone and then a hurricane.

Green said she will meet with Bill Martin of the Coastal Area Planning

and Development Commission this week to learn final details for the town's inclusion into the National Register of Historic Places. She also hopes that the state will erect on its highway markers in front of St. Bartholomew's

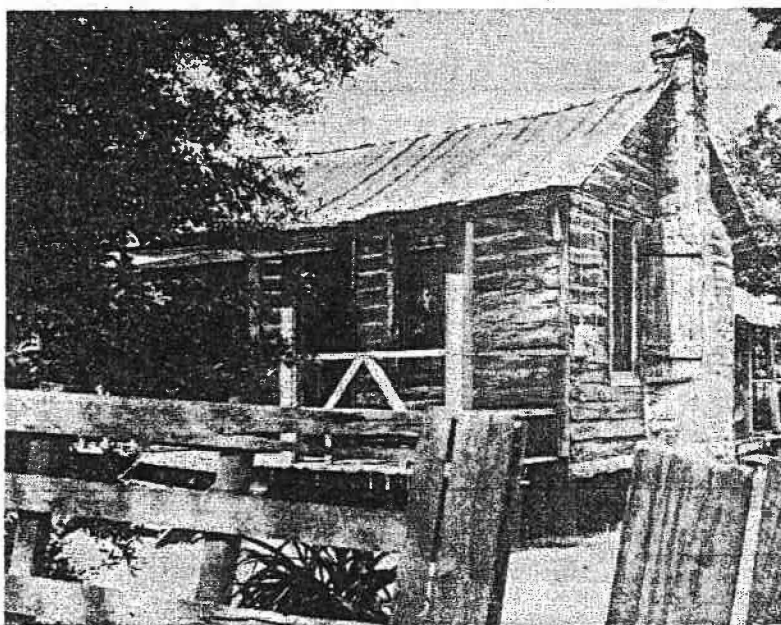


Staff Photos by Steve Woodford

The Renovated St. Bartholomew's Parish Hall



Mrs. Greene and Grant in His Confectionary



Staff Photos by Steve Woodford

A Typical Dwelling in Burroughs

Bio-Greene

ACCENT

LENDING A HAND

Gertrude Greene has spent her life helping others

By Tanya Fogg Young
Savannah News-Press

When Gertrude Greene first visited the community of Burroughs in 1934, she found only hopelessness and poverty.

In Burroughs, located in southern Chatham County, she saw children with skin marred by pellagra. She saw other children with rickets feebly trying to stand.

She saw people who needed an advocate.

Fifty years and many acts of assistance later in Burroughs, Greene helped about 30 homes in Burroughs get indoor plumbing.

"They were in some terrible living situations," Greene said simply, leaving you to wonder whether she was talking about 1934, 1984 or both.

Known widely as the "mother" of social work in Chatham County, Greene, now 88, officially ended her work in the field in 1971 after more than 40 years of service.

But, Chatham's first black professional social worker still continues to give, even though her health requires to spend most of her time at home.

In her small Southside apartment, she has scrapbook after scrapbook of photos, old newspaper clippings, letters and citations that attest to her years in the often thankless field.

A driving force behind the movement to establish a social work program at Savannah State College, Greene saw that dream realized more than a decade ago.

She isn't content, though, with the undergraduate social work program at SSC.

Having earned her master's of social work degree nearly 50 years ago from what is today Clark Atlanta University, Greene's next dream is a graduate social work program at Savannah State.

"Mrs. Greene has been instrumental in keeping the flame alive for social work and social work education," said Kanata Arnold, head of Savannah State's social work department.

Greene is the honorary chair for the school's advisory council, which is heading the effort to get the graduate program. One of the advisory council's goals is to establish a scholarship fund in Greene's name for undergraduate and graduate social work students.

The group will begin a scholarship fund drive next year.

The impetus for much of the county's development in social services, Greene last worked as a psychiatric social worker at the Chatham County Health Department.

But it was her work outside her job as a clinical social worker that has made the most impact on Otis Johnson, executive director of the Youth Futures Authority.

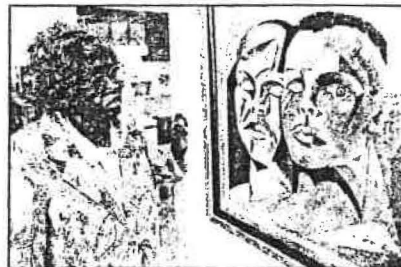
"Burroughs became her full-time job," said Johnson, who started working at Savannah State about the time of Greene's retirement. "She worked out there years ago and helped them see their potential. She's one of the retired people I want to be like when I retire."

Like Johnson, Mary Hill considers Greene a role model. "She was the kind of social worker who never quits," said Hill, a staff development specialist for the county's Department of Family and Children Services. "No matter



Photos by Carl Eklora/Savannah News-Press

Above: Gertrude Greene looks over scrapbooks about her career and interests. Right, Greene looks at a painting by Jonathan Green titled "Two Faces."



"She was the kind of social worker who never quits. No matter what, she'll find some resource. And if there isn't one, she'll develop it."

Mary Hill, a staff development specialist for the county's Department of Family and Children Services.

homeowner," said Thomas, 43, a private duty licensed practical nurse. "I remember admiring her antique furniture and her telling me not to worry about getting things like that right away because it took her and her husband 25 years to do it."

Thomas, a mother of four and grandmother of nine, said she learned of Greene's many works in the community from church members at Bethel Baptist.

"She really educated me in the little time I spent with her," Thomas said. "I didn't want to leave. She had my total attention."

Before Greene officially entered social work in 1933, the Screven County native became a home demonstration agent in Glynn County in 1930 for the Department of Agriculture.

Without a car for the first few months of the job, she depended on the horse-drawn wagons of her clients to transport her from home to home, teaching them better food preparation and conservation and how to weatherize their homes.

She taught them to strip cardboard boxes and to hang them on the walls as a type of insulation.

Social work was not immune from the racism of the community harboring it. Greene remembers when social service funding was designated for use by "white children only." She was refused service and accommodations at hotels where social work conferences were held.

Greene was also ordered to go to the back door on occasions when she had to go to the homes of white employers to verify information about some of her black clients.

Despite the indignities, she persevered. "I felt the brunt of it before I got to my clients," Greene said. "I helped pave the road with a lot of pain and took all the shortcomings."

Whether her dream for Savannah State to have a graduate social work program will be realized remains to be seen. But, characteristically, Greene is optimistic.

"Yes, I've gotten discouraged over the years, wondering if the idea would ever take root," she said. "But I just felt like I could never give up hope."

what, she'll find some resource.

"And if there isn't one, she'll develop it."

Greene was also among the original organizers of the Coastal Empire Habitat for Humanity, part of an international group dedicated to helping low-income people find homes.

One of Habitat's most intensive, ambitious projects, begun in 1991, is in Burroughs. At the project's end, there will be about 50 Habitat homes in the community.

"She's just one of those unusual people who has spent her whole life doing good things for other people," local architect Murray Barnard said of Greene. Barnard spent a decade working with her on Habitat projects.

"She has worked long hours behind the scenes," Barnard said. "She's a real inspiration."

Greene often attended dedications of the new Habitat homes. Too sick in 1992 to attend the upcoming dedication of Faye Castelow Thomas' house in Burroughs Village, she asked the then single mother to come to her home.

"I had a long talk with her about how to survive as a new

BLACK TOWNS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

Acres

Continued from page 10

long after the order was issued, President Johnson reversed the order, giving special pardons to Confederate rebels and returning their land to them.

"The unfulfilled promise of land left most of the newly freed blacks with nothing to start their new lives. After being stolen and sold from Africa, stripped of their language, family and education, they were suddenly released from the bondage of slavery into a hostile environment without any of the tools necessary to build a future.

Even the lucky few who were able to buy and hold onto a plot of land often lacked the capital and equipment needed to farm the land or build a home. Crop failure was common and many freedmen left the sea islands and drifted back to Savannah, according to *The Negro in Savannah, 1865-1900* by Robert E. Poole.

Many were also driven off the land after President Johnson reversed Field Order 15. Thus the phrase 40 acres and a mule has become synonymous with an empty promise among African Americans.

The failure to provide freedmen with 40 acres and a mule had an enormous impact on African Americans and the South as a whole, according to Howard Robinson, Armstrong Atlantic State University professor of history.

"African Americans fell into the share-cropping system and out of that system grew debt peonage," he said. "It was a way for white planters and merchants, who were also legislators, to keep local control."

"Although they were legally free men, blacks had to rely on the same people who had enslaved them for all of the things they needed to survive — food, clothing, shelter, farm land and farming supplies. Each year they grew deeper and deeper in debt, binding them once again to a life of servitude.

"It was another form of slavery," Robinson said.

Had black people received their 40 acres and the supplies to get through the first season in 1865, had embittered and fearful whites not fought reconstruction and stood in the way of black political gains, had blacks been empowered and encouraged to become self-sufficient, Robinson believes there would not have been a need for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

"Just think of the energy that went into the Civil Rights Movement," Robinson said. "Had these issues been resolved 150 years earlier, the gains the South is just now making may have been made far earlier."

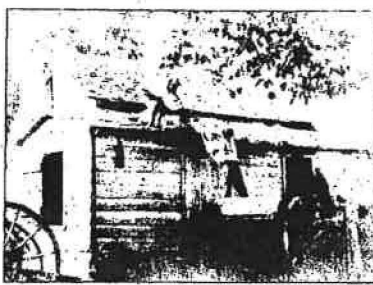
While most blacks lost their 40 acres and their mules, St. Helena Island blacks, who purchased abandoned land during the occupation of Ulster County in 1862, were able to keep their property.

During Union occupation of the Confederate states, the Fort Boyal Experiment for freedmen was launched on the island. Northern missionaries and teachers set up an education program to assist blacks in the transition from slavery to freedom and land was sold to them. Many of those farms still remain in the hands of slave descendants and the Fort Boyal Experiment School survives today as the Penn Center, a cultural preservation center.

But Veronica Gerald of the Penn Center's office of History and Culture said some of the land is currently being lost to developers and people seeking scenic lots for vacation homes.

"Each year they have a land sale at the courthouse and people lose land," Gerald said. "We still have a great deal of land ownership but it's a struggle to keep it."

Samuel Johnson, like many St. Helena Island farmers, works the



St. Helena Island residents dry rice on the roof of a house.

land his forefathers worked.

"I grow turnip greens, collards, beans, peas and okra," Johnson said in his distinct Gullah accent.

But unlike his father and grandfather, Johnson relies on the South Carolina Coastal Community Development Corporation business incubator to help sell some of his crops.

"You don't make a good living at it," he said. "Too much competition."

The SCCDC operates a business incubator and commercial kitchen in the heart of the island. Local farmers can sell their goods there, and Gullah cooks can use the kitchen to make traditional dishes to sell.

"We're trying to find mechanisms for the farmers to sell their crops — it's been tough," said Executive Director Elizabeth Santagati. "The community can purchase the vegetables from the farmers, cook them and sell them in the Gullah Crab restaurant."

Currently they're dishing up plates of Johnson's greens, cooked tender with a sweet and spicy taste.

"The restaurant started because we realized that Gullah cooks are also a dying breed," Santagati said. "The goal is to train young folks to cook the food grown by local farmers."

In Savannah, slaves who had once toiled for wealthy planters on South West Chatham plantation took advantage of Sherman's order and acquired the property for their own benefit.

The land was taken away from them when the order was reversed. But large numbers of them saved enough money to purchase 10-acre plots and, with the help of a sympathetic white attorney, William Burroughs, they acquired enough land to establish a community of their own.

The Burroughs Community was incorporated in 1890. It was the first and the only incorporated, all-black town in Chatham County," said Karen Bell, a Savannah State University history professor.

Bell wrote her thesis on the community in 1991 and interviewed Peter Warner, who was 101 years old and the last descendant of the original Burroughs settlers still living in the community.

Burroughs, according to Bell's research, was self-reliant. The townspeople elevated their own mayor and sheriff and sold their crops in Savannah.

However, utter independence was part of Burroughs' downfall. They didn't have enough money and resources to keep the community running.

"They struggled to survive from the beginning," Bell said. "It was never a thriving community."

Eventually, migration, generational change and taxation caused them to lose their land. The Wild Hired and Grove Point Plantation subdivisions

now stand on what was once the Burroughs Community.

More tragic than the end of Burroughs Community was the destruction of the black settlement on St. Catherine's Island.

St. Catherine's Island is now a private nature preserve known for its exotic animals, scientific research and a 1580s-era Spanish fortification.

But in 1865 it was the capital of the freed slave territory. Tunis G. Campbell set up an all-black government on the island with executive, legislative and judiciary branches. Positioning himself as a defiant royal, Campbell organized his huge following of black workers and gained bargaining power with white landowners.

In 1868 his followers elected him to the state senate. However, he and a small group of other black senators served just four months before Campbell's white political power structure ousted them from the legislature.

Campbell fought back, setting up a black voting majority in McIntosh County that kept black officials in power for an unprecedented five years.

But Campbell's power to organize and empower blacks generated fear and anger among their former Confederate neighbors. Angry white mobs eventually burned down his home, had him arrested and placed in the state's convict lease imprisonment system. St. Catherine's Island was returned to state control when President Johnson reversed Field Order 15, and the freedmen's settlement was broken up.

Campbell, the man who had done so much to send former slaves upon the rest of his life as a state prisoner being leased out to work on private plantations. He died in 1891.

Historians can only speculate about what would have happened if the promise of land was fulfilled. But they agree that the life and legacy of many African Americans would have been much different.

"Black people would have had some kind of economic base to operate from," said Savannah State University Professor of African and African-American History Modibo Kattale. "A black middle class would have emerged much more quickly and there may never have been a Jim Crow. The skilled labor classes would have been stronger and we'd have a bigger presence in the capitalist class."

Some 125 years later, there are African Americans who have begun to demand their 40 acres.

"The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, NCBRA, is a Washington D.C.-based group that lobbies for reparations for slavery and discrimination after slavery."

"We have suffered a great injury,"

said Kabongi Obusegun, NCBRA's treasurer.

Many of the economic and social ills in the black community stem from enslavement, which led to Jim Crow, which led to segregation, which led to discrimination and present-day glass ceilings and limited resources, according to Obusegun.

Although generations of African Americans have been free since emancipation, he believes that the struggles of enslavement have yet to be fully eradicated.

"It's more retributive," Obusegun said. "But it will continue. Obusegun admits that reparations would be complicated. But he said it needs to be done if the country hopes to heal wounds that run so deep.

"There's no way you can repair damage to a people who for 500 years have been so devastated," he said. "But the injury must be evaluated and all of the people affected must be involved in the discussion about viable solutions."

A Michigan congressman, Rep. John Conyers, R.-D-Mich., has introduced House Resolution 40 to acknowledge the injustice, brutality and inhumanity of slavery on this continent between 1619 and 1865.

The bill would establish a commission to examine slavery and the impact of the racial and economic discrimination it caused, and ultimately make recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies. However, the proposal has been referred to House subcommittee and has not gone before the House for a vote.

Given the impact that era has had, Kattale said reparations make sense. But figuring out what to give and how to go about giving it will take much more time, he said. He said you can't put a dollar amount on the impact and give all the descendants a stipend.

"African-American people, by working for nothing for so long and creating the wealth for the country without being able to benefit from that wealth is the issue," he said. "You'd have to do a real redistribution of wealth and that would be a long, hard struggle."

Some Americans may oppose reparations because they can't understand how people who were never personally enslaved can be affected by slavery so long after it was abolished. But Robinson said it should be studied.

"There's this thing in our society, with this concept of a self-made man: But most successful Americans have been handed down a legacy and opportunities," Robinson said. "Black folks have not had the opportunity to hand those things down to their children."

Higher education reporter Janel Pire can be reached at 655-8335.

St. Helena Island

Ask a Gullah on why it's so special. The South's oldest Gullah Community Development Corp. is on the corner of Hwy 21 and MLK Drive.



To support black farmers on St. Helena Island or to sample their goods, call the South Carolina Coastal Community Development Corporation at (843) 838-3295 or visit the facility at MLK Drive and Sea Island Parkway across from Island Plaza.

The Gullah Crab project sells take-out dishes of Gullah foods grown by local farmers from noon-5 p.m. Friday and Saturday. They also offer catering services. St. Helena farmers sell fresh seasonal vegetables from noon-5 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

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