

THE VOICE

of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and
Cobb Memorial Archives

WEST POINT ON THE CHATTAHOOCHEE: HOW IT ALL BEGAN

On Sunday, July 26, at 3:00 pm EDT, the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society will present its summer quarterly program on the development of the city of West Point along the banks of the Chattahoochee River. The outdoor public gathering will be held at the large covered pavilion that is located next to West Point City Hall and, appropriately enough, alongside the river.

Henry Jacobs, Middle Chattahoochee Director for the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper(CRK), will discuss the natural history of the river, particularly the benefits and challenges of the Fall Line geography that defines West Point and the Greater Valley Area. Jacobs will also examine the most significant

tributaries in our region, including Oseligee Creek, Tanyard Creek, Moore's Creek, and Osanippa Creek, and talk about recent efforts by CRK to address issues concerning the health of the local watershed including sediment erosion and the proposed removal of Langdale and Riverview Dams.

CVHS President Malinda Powers will provide additional commentary about the history of settlement at this western-most point of the Chattahoochee. Originally, these lands were settled by the Creek Indians, who were still living on the west bank at the time Troup County was organized in the 1820's. Powers will address the influence of the Chattahoochee River on the early

development of the city and examine the effects of major flooding in the 19th and 20th centuries.

"As always, our public programs are free. The general public is invited to enjoy Henry Jacobs presentation. One of our Society's publications contains a wonderful history of West Point that was written in 1876 and delivered on the occasion of the nation's centennial celebration. We will have copies of Proudest Inheritance for sale at our program for \$10 each," says Powers. "We encourage those interested in local history to attend. For more information about our organization, go to www.cvhistoricalsociety.org."



Members of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and the general public are invited to attend this program.

PLEASE NOTE the LOCATION.

**THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY MEETING**

Sunday, July 26, 2020 3:00 p.m. EST

*Outdoor large covered pavilion near City Hall
West Point, Georgia*

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Malinda Powers*

We are looking forward to our outdoor program on July 26, as our Summer Program series continues. The necessity of finding an alternative to the Bradshaw Library for our summer quarterly meetings has provided us with opportunities to spotlight special historic places in our locale. Last summer, we met at the Fredonia Community House for a program about the nearby Rosenwald School, then caravanned to the site to view preservation efforts currently underway.

In July, our program will be held at the outdoor pavilion next to City Hall in West Point, along the banks of the Chattahoochee River. For hundreds of years the Creek Indians and their ancestors lived along these banks. In the 1820's, Troup County was formed and land lots sold. By 1836, the Indians were forcibly removed

and the town of West Point spread across the river to the west bank and the adjacent Alabama state line. The settlement of West Point marked the beginning of what we today refer to as the Greater Valley Area. The city of West Point developed, at least initially, due to its particular location on the Chattahoochee River, the "western-most" point of the river. Therefore, we chose this particular program to inaugurate our long-range plan for the future: VISION 2020. Over the next decade, we plan to highlight historic sites throughout Chambers County.

In the previous issue of *the VOICE* we announced the postponement of our 2020 Bus Trip until October. However, as the uncertainty of the pandemic continues, we have postponed our plans until June 2021. These trips have been very successful

fundraisers since our first trip in 2015. Many of our travelers have been on several trips with us over the years as we have developed an excellent reputation for the quality of our tour program. This particular trip, *Creek Indians in Alabama*, has the potential to be the best trip yet! For more information please consult our website.

As I write this message, our country is in turmoil. Wholesale destruction of our nation's historic monuments by vandals with a political agenda is heartbreaking. Ben Franklin's famous admonition upon approval of the Constitution in 1787 has never been more relevant: "We have given you a republic, if you can keep it." We must never lose sight of the precious freedoms we enjoy for which so many over the generations have laid down their lives. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Speaking for our Board, we wish to express our appreciation of the following article, *My Mama Worked at the Shell Plant During the War*, to Captain USN (Ret.) Charles Todd Creekman, for his good work in research and writing about our local history. We commend his initiative in recording the past experiences of our families and neighbors in the Chattahoochee Valley. We would like to encourage other members of our Society to submit articles about past events which they believe require documentation, before collective memory is lost.

The VOICE is a quarterly newsletter of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 718, West Point, Georgia 31833

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Find us on Facebook and visit our website at <http://cvhistoricalsociety.org>

MISSION STATEMENT: As a non-profit membership organization, the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society seeks to preserve and promote the history and heritage of Chambers County, Alabama, West Point, Georgia, and the greater Chattahoochee Valley area. CVHS produces and sells historical books and media, publishes a quarterly newsletter, and presents programs with speakers on historical topics of local and regional interest.

VISION STATEMENT: Having been in continuous operation since its founding in 1953, the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society strives to uphold the vision of its founders while posturing the organization for growth in the 21st century.

MY MAMA WORKED AT THE SHELL PLANT DURING THE WAR

by Captain USN (Ret.) Charles Todd Creekman

INTRODUCTION

“And my Mama worked at the Shell Plant during the war,” said my wife’s aunt, Pat Mayes (born Patricia Ann Adams in 1933), casually, just after I finished recording an interview with her in January 2019 about what it was like growing up in a rural Georgia family in the 1930s and 1940s and particularly during World War II.

I married into that Adams family of Troup, Harris and Carroll Counties, Georgia, in the fall of 1972 as I pursued graduate studies at Georgia Tech in Atlanta. Three years earlier, I had received an ensign’s commission in the U.S. Navy at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland and then enjoyed two years of sea duty aboard a San Diego-based destroyer before heading east for a master’s degree in mechanical engineering at the Navy’s expense. Falling for my future wife, Deborah Carole Adams during my Atlanta studies while she was flying as a stewardess for Delta Airlines. I got to meet her West Point, Georgia, family when she took me to her family home a few miles east of that town.

I met Debbie’s grandparents, Charlie D. (76) and Louise Ward Adams (69), who lived off Georgia Highway 18 in an 1850s Greek Revival-style farm house that had been in their family since just after the Civil War. I enjoyed listening to stories of their lives that spanned three-quarters of the 20th century, and included major events like two world wars and the Great Depression, and local events like Chattahoochee River floods and family lives and deaths. But I was not smart enough to record their stories for posterity.

Years later, after their late-1980s deaths, my wife Debbie and I inherited that old farm house. Living in northern Virginia, I completed my 30-year naval career and spent nearly two decades more running a naval history nonprofit in Washington, DC. That experience made me aware of the value of oral history, and I resolved to document some of the

Adams family history that way during future Georgia visits. I started by talking with Pat as she described her early years growing up in Carroll County and then moving to Troup County and that farm house around 1941. She completed elementary school at Gray Hill Elementary and then attended high school in LaGrange, the county seat.

I was aware that Pat’s only sibling, my father-in-law, Lewis D. “Luke” Adams, who was a decade older than Pat, had joined the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II and served in aviation training assignments in the continental U.S. Pat had described to me how her father (too old at age 45 in 1941 for military service under the recently enacted Selective Training and Service Act of 1940) had managed the Cotton Producers Association Farmers’ Mutual Warehouse in LaGrange during the war, where he also ran the associated cotton gin. With the local textile mills turning out massive amounts of cloth for uniforms, tents, etc., Charlie D. Adams’ part in getting cotton from field to factory was important home front support for the war effort.



Pat Mayes, January 2019



Charlie D. Adams and son, Lewis D. Adams, at West Point home, circa 1942

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WOMEN AT WAR

I am a product of the baby boomer generation, and I remembered my mother as a stay-at-home housewife raising my sister and me while my father was often at sea during his own naval career. So I simply assumed that Pat's mother, my wife's grandmother Louise, was a busy farm-wife taking care of her family's needs during a complicated time in our nation's history. And then Pat said, "My Mama worked at the Shell Plant during the war," opening up a local chapter in the nation-wide story of women doing their parts for the World War II home front production effort.



Louise and Charlie D. Adams at West Point home, circa 1940s

I was intrigued by Pat's hint that her mother had played her own home front role in the war effort, and I was sensitized to the importance of that story for several reasons. First, the 2016-2020 75th anniversary of World War II has been a highly-visible national commemoration and celebration of the "Greatest Generation's" hard work to achieve victory. I have attended several 75th anniversary events at the National World War II Memorial in downtown Washington, DC, and my wife Debbie and I visited the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, LA, in May 2018 and toured its newly opened "Arsenal of Democracy" exhibit, saluting home front accomplishments.

That exhibit reacquainted us with iconic art images of women in the World War II work force: "Rosie the Riveter," immortalized in a popular 1942 song and the 1943 *Saturday Evening Post* cover image by Norman Rockwell; and the "We Can Do It!" poster created in 1943 as a morale builder for Westinghouse Electric factory workers. While these two female figures came to symbolize the millions of women

who responded to the urgent national call to fill men's jobs when those men donned uniforms for the fighting, a U.S. Army poster from 1944 titled "Soldiers without guns" is, to me, just as good a representation of the war's female work force.

With my awareness raised about this important social phenomenon, I belatedly turned to my own family history to document a related story which had been hiding in plain sight my whole life. My mother, Virginia Chapman of Minneapolis, MN was a young art student at the University of Minnesota when the call went out in the fall of 1942 for women with art training to



"Soldiers without guns" – Adolph Treidler for the U.S. Army, 1944 (Library of Congress)

apply for jobs in the nearby Northern Pump Company, which was rapidly retooling to design and build Navy gun mounts for the battleships, cruisers and destroyers coming down the ways of the nation's shipyards. Her successful "audition" led to specialized engineering drawing training and she was hired to be part of the company's Tracing Department—and eventually managed that department by war's end. While I had failed to question her in detail during her lifetime on her World War II role (she died in 2016), her well-stocked scrapbooks from those years, a 1996 high school English class assignment by my oldest daughter on her grandmother's wartime experiences, and the detailed memoir my Mom had dictated during her later years to my sister Laura provided the basis for my research efforts. I wrote that story in 2018, and the following year my wife Debbie and I visited Minneapolis and saw my Mom's childhood home, high school and the factory site where the Northern Pump smoke stacks still stand, emblazoned with a proud Navy "E" and five stars, awarded to the company for excellence in wartime production.

So, I guess you could say that when Pat Mayes mentioned her mother's World War II work, I was motivated enough by my own mother's experience in that regard,

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and knowledgeable enough about women in the WWII work force to want to dig deeper into the Adams family experience. But the first thing I had to figure out was what a “Shell Plant” was!

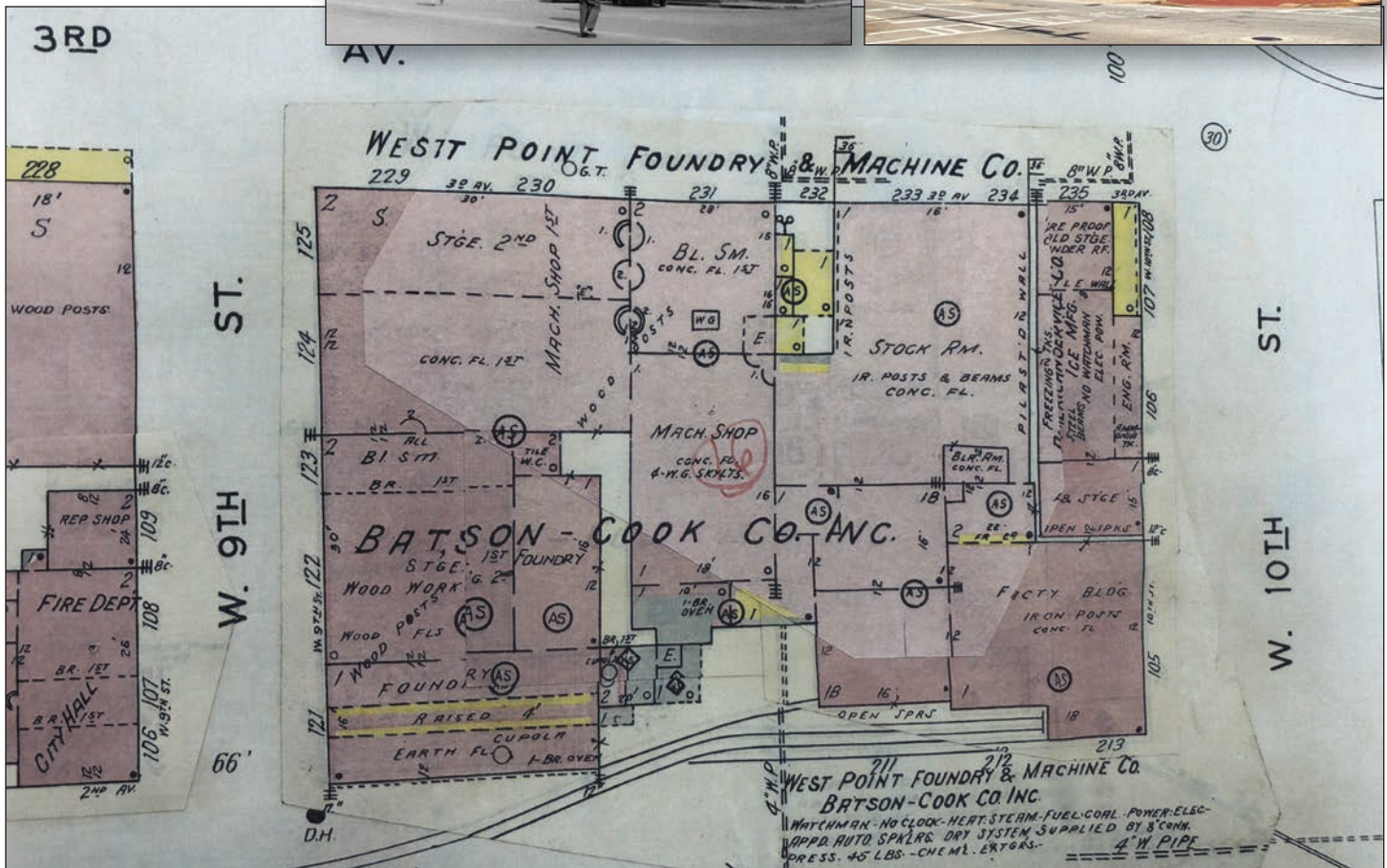
THE SHELL PLANT

My probing questions to Pat Mayes to jog her memory revealed that the Shell Plant was located in downtown West Point, and that her mother had gotten to that job by riding, along with her sister-in-law Kitty Ward, a daily bus that was sent out into the countryside to pick up workers and take them downtown. Further, the Shell Plant had been an operation of West Point Foundry; and the product that Louise Adams worked on was an ammunition component. I figured that it was possibly a brass shell casing, because I couldn't imagine ammunition

being safely manufactured in that downtown location. That turned out to be a bad guess!

I knew that the West Point Foundry had taken up an entire city block on the northern edge of the business district bounded by West 9th and West 10th Streets, and 2nd and 3rd Avenues.¹ I knew that because the site was now an empty lot that I passed on the way to church, with the buildings having been demolished in 2016 to make way for eventual dormitories for recently-arrived Point University. I assumed therefore that the Foundry's corporate identity was now defunct. That turned out to be a bad assumption!

West Point Foundry & Machine Shop, looking north from the corner of 3rd Avenue and West 9th Street, circa 1940s (left), and 2020 (right)



West Point Foundry & Machine Company building layout in downtown West Point, Georgia, as described in the Sanborn Insurance Map for 1930, updated in 1949

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Being a long-time member of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, I paid a visit to the Cobb Memorial Archives at the Chambers County Library in Valley, Alabama. There I met Archivist Robin Brown who shared with me their historical files on the Foundry. From an unpublished history written in 1989,² I learned that the Foundry had started business in 1868 as the West Point Iron Works and had specialized in repairing and rebuilding machinery for the burgeoning textile industry at mills in the surrounding towns. Times were hard in the Great Depression and the Foundry went bankrupt in 1931. Purchased by The Batson-Cook Company later that year, West Point Foundry and Machine Company became a productive division of that long-established local construction enterprise, and became known for specializing in slasher machinery for the textile mills. The Foundry was thus in the right place at the right time to benefit from the surge in government orders as World War II transformed the nation.

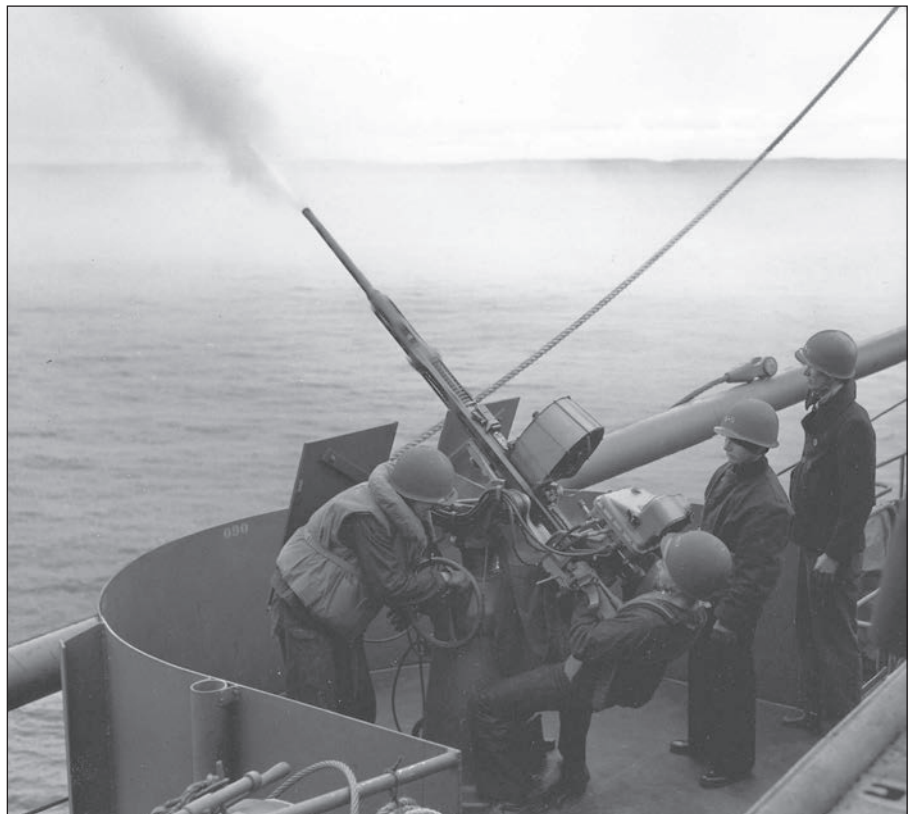
That Foundry history also revealed that the firm had, early in the war, converted to the manufacture of 20-mm shells for the U.S. military. This gave me the clue I needed to do more detailed research back home in the Washington, DC area. Paying a visit to the Library of Congress's Science and Business Reading Room in the John Adams Building, I located the war contract summary published at war's end which listed every contract over \$50,000 awarded to a U.S. business during World War II.³ I found to my surprise that under both the Batson-Cook Company and West Point Foundry headings, the Shell Plant operation had fulfilled nearly \$2 million in contracts, primarily for 20-mm projectiles or shells—worth an estimated \$27 million in today's dollars.

Armed with that knowledge, and my belated discovery that before its downtown production facility had been demolished, the business had become West Point Industries and had simply relocated a mile north of town on Stateline Road to a more modern and spacious facility, I knew where my next visit would be when we returned to our Georgia house.

THE 20-MM OERLIKON ANTI-AIRCRAFT CANNON

Meanwhile, I needed to better understand the Foundry's war-time product. My years of naval history work paid off as my research in the Naval History and Heritage Command's Navy Department Library, Document Archives and Photo Archives filled in more details of World War II anti-aircraft (AA) gunnery aboard ship.

Faced with the prospect of multiple high-speed aircraft attacks, particularly in the Pacific against likely adversary Japan, the U.S. Navy was determined in the late 1930s to replace its outmoded anti-aircraft guns with a simple, reliable, easily installed gun with a high rate of fire. In 1940, with war looming for America, the Navy turned to the Swiss firm Oerlikon for its proven 20-mm anti-aircraft cannon. When trials showed that gun could be manufactured in quantity by U.S. factories, and could be installed on virtually any ship with no power requirements, America's industries geared up their production lines. The first 20-mm Oerlikon cannon were installed aboard Navy ships in 1941, ready for combat. Between December 1941 and September 1944, when the harder-hitting 40-mm Bofors AA guns made their appearance in substantial numbers in the fleet, the 20-mm Oerlikon was responsible for 32 percent of all Japanese aircraft shot down by the Navy.



20-mm Oerlikon cannon aboard unidentified Navy ship during World War II (U.S. Navy photo)

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*“Gun Watch”
 painted by U.S. Navy Seabee
 Nat Bellantoni aboard troop ship
 MS Day Star in the Pacific, 1943
 (Courtesy of
 Hoover Institution Archives;
 copyright Stanford University)*



*“Wave with Gun Crew,”
 McClelland Barclay, 1942
 (Navy Art Collection # 48-031-K)*



*USS Iowa (BB-61) 20-mm gun crew on battleship's bow
 (U.S. Navy photo, 80-G-K-16469)*



*Newly installed 20-mm guns along the flight deck of aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CV-6)
 firing at a target drone during gunnery practice off the Hawaiian Islands on 28 March 1942. (National Archives)*

With a designed maximum rate of fire of approximately 450 rounds per minute, they could sustain about 250 to 320 rounds per minute in the heat of combat. The Oerlikon could be installed as single or dual barrel mounts, and large ships like battleships and aircraft carriers could each accommodate upwards of 50 such gun mounts. With 88,000 of these guns manufactured by US industries, the Navy would need and expend a lot of 20-mm ammunition during the four-year war; records showed that over a billion rounds were produced at a cost of nearly \$800 million.^{4,5}

And that's where West Point Foundry came in. 20-mm rounds were effective because they were filled with an explosive compound and tipped

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20-mm shell; machined hollow body with inert nose plug in lieu of fuse



20-mm shell assembled



Complete 20-mm round as it would look after loading of the explosive and fuse in the shell and mating it to shell casing with propellant and primer. (this is an inert example)

with point detonating fuses. So what the Foundry was manufacturing were 2.6-inch long, 20-mm diameter steel bodies with cavities to hold the explosive mixture. Those machined hollow projectiles would be packaged and shipped to a military arsenal (far from any commercial downtown setting) where they would be filled with that explosive mixture, capped with screw-on explosive nose fuses, and then crimped into brass shell casings filled with propellant and fitted with a base-mounted primer. Those completed 7.18-inch long fixed ammunition rounds were then loaded aboard ship into spring-enabled 60-round magazines which were easily attached to the 20-mm Oerlikon cannon when ready to fire.

THE SHELL PLANT WORKERS

My February 2019 visit to West Point Industries on Stateline Road introduced me to company leaders Mr. James “Butch” Dorman and Mr. William H. Huguley IV, the grandson of Batson-Cook executive Amos Huguley who had helped rescue the Foundry from bankruptcy in 1931. From family lore, Mr. Huguley recalled that the Shell Plant was located in the stock room area depicted in those Sanborn Insurance maps, and noted that the U.S. government had shipped in special lathes to enable the Shell Plant workers to precisely machine the 20-mm shell bodies to their required specifications.

So now I had pretty good data on where and what the Shell Plant was, and what it manufactured. Now I needed to learn more about the workers who produced those shells.

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While Robin Brown continued to search the records and particularly the microfilm copies of contemporary World War II newspapers in the Chattahoochee Valley area, I focused on finding data on individual workers, with Louise Adams as my first data point.

Not being a permanent resident of the Troup County-area, I didn't have a network of friends and relatives to consult. But I had been a long-time reader of the local newspapers *The LaGrange Daily News (LDN)* and *The Valley Times-News (VTN)*. So I turned to the then-publisher of *LDN* and *VTN*, Mr. Baker Ellis, who saw the value of a story related to the local area's World War II activities. In May 2019 he enthusiastically agreed to run a "Letter to the Editor" from me in both papers' print and digital editions, followed by his own editorial article supporting my search for Shell Plant worker data. In my letter, I provided an outline of the data I had gathered so far on the Shell Plant at West Point Foundry and asked for recollections and images of the men and women who worked there.^{6,7}

Within a week I received my first response from retired Air Force Colonel John Marcellus Copeland of Dallas, TX. His family was originally from Gabbettville, GA and he recalled that his mother Mildred had worked at the Shell Plant in 1942. I was off and running! He also remembered that his mother drove the family's 1934 Ford to work, and that his father, Muller Copeland drove a bus route for the textile mills, picking up and returning home the large number of mill workers living in the surrounding countryside. Subsequent research turned up a May 1942 newspaper article announcing a 3-shift bus schedule costing riders approximately one cent per mile, with minimum fare of 10 cents and maximum of 35 cents.⁸

But it took another reader of my article, Judy Bledsoe of Valley, AL to really get the story moving. When I met with Judy at the Cobb Memorial Archives in June 2019, I brought along Pat Mayes, and Judy brought two local residents whose mothers had also worked at the Shell Plant during the war. Euthel Hill of Valley displayed a photograph of her family around 1943 showing her mother, Eunice Ethel Goodman Garrett, dressed in the trousers and jacket that comprised her Shell Plant work outfit. Euthel commented that it was the first time she had ever seen her mother wearing trousers! In that photo, her father, who worked at the local Riverview Mill, proudly wears an Army-Navy Production Award pin. The first such production awards in the area—flags to fly at the facilities,

pins for the employees to wear—were presented to the West Point Manufacturing Company, which ran the Lanett, Shawmut, Langdale, Fairfax and Riverdale Mills and to the Lanett Bleachery and Dye Works at a big ceremony in Shawmut, AL, in September 1942.^{9,10}

Euthel also recalled that her mother got to work each day by riding a "Dinky Bus" as she described it, which apparently referred to the small or "dinky"-sized bus that wound its way through the countryside picking up downtown workers at designated spots. A grainy photograph from that era shows a bus about half the size of a regular passenger bus, similar to the mini-school buses we routinely see on the roads today.

Ken Rearden of Lanett, AL, recalled that both his mother and aunt worked at the Shell Plant and also remembered visiting the Foundry; the predominantly female workforce at the Shell Plant made an impression on him even at his early age.



*Artis and Eunice Garrett
with children Euthel and Arlon, circa 1942-1943*

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Gathering momentum, Judy found more local residents whose mothers (and sometimes fathers) had worked at the Shell Plant, and who, motivated by reading the May articles, were willing to share their memories. By May 2020, at the one year point from my call for help, we have identified 21 such workers. Of the 16 women on our list, their ages ranged from 17 to 45. As with Pat Mayes, most of their offspring had been children or perhaps teenagers during the war years; nonetheless, their recollections were essential in gaining an understanding of the Shell Plant operations.

We learned, for example, of several husband and wife couples who worked at the Shell Plant, but on different shifts, to ensure an adult was at home to care for children, and to avoid supervisor-subordinate relationships on the job with potential perceptions of favoritism.

During the search for Shell Plant worker descendants, Robin and Judy continued research into the record collections and newspaper archives at the Cobb Memorial Archives. In the James Watson collection, Robin discovered a Batson-Cook Company wage receipt for Mr. Watson's mother, Willie Jo Watson of West Point, whose job was listed as "20 mm" and who earned \$9.04 for her week's work!

Wage Receipt, Mrs. Willie Jo Watson, possibly February 1945

As we perused the microfilm copies of the local newspapers, we were a little disappointed that we didn't find more about the Shell Plant. But a related article about wartime security designed to alert folks not to speak openly about sensitive war production matters (similar to the "Loose Lips Sink Ships" message created by the War Advertising Council) helped us realize that we were not likely to see detailed descriptions or photographs of the ordnance being turned out by the Shell Plant—Valley-area residents were taking their war-time responsibilities seriously!

We did see general articles, like the September 1942 column reflecting that "It still seems a little strange to see so many women working in the mills, shops and offices. To see women driving busses, manning machines, wearing overalls, doing jobs we never dreamed of seeing women do—until we got knee-deep in the War." ¹¹

An April 1943 story continued that theme as it reported "Women in surprisingly large numbers are being employed in Valley industries to take over many of the jobs formerly held by men in order that the manufacturing of war materials may go on, despite the ever-increasing depletion of male personnel necessitated by enlistments in the armed forces of the nation. Already more than 3,500 women are at work in the plants of the West Point Manufacturing Company, the Lanett Bleachery and Dye Works, and the Batson-Cook Company.... The Batson-Cook Company now employs 72 women." ¹²

Where the Shell Plant was explicitly mentioned in the newspapers, it generally had to do with special patriotic events. In October 1942, two merchant mariners, survivors of ships torpedoed by German U-Boats during the Battle of the Atlanti, visited West Point Foundry during a speaking tour of factories and exhorted the workers to redouble their efforts in support of the war effort. Foundry manager O. P. Roberts assured the two men that "the employees of the West Point Foundry and Machine Company are doing a swell job, and that the company is turning out its war orders ahead of schedule." ¹³

Just two months later, the "employees of the Shell Plant Division" of West Point Foundry, "a large percentage being women, took part" in a War Bond drive to mark the first anniversary of the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. ¹⁴

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CONCLUSION

The Shell Plant work force did their part to meet their production goals for 20-mm shells and help achieve victory in World War II, but that national achievement brought a predictable development to the Valley-area industrial scene. In August, 1945, “Despite the fact that the Government has cancelled all its contracts with the West Point Manufacturing Company and with the West Point Foundry and Machine Company division of the Batson-Cook Company,...there is very little unemployment in this section today. Only the local shell plant has been closed down, affecting some 128 employees, a number of whom, however, will be transferred to other departments of the Batson-Cook Company.... Included in the some 128 people who were working at the shell plant when it was closed down immediately after the Japanese surrender, approximately 75 were women. Late in August and early in July, some 45 employees were separated from the shell plant, which was the only actual war plant in the Valley, this plant having been constructed solely for the production of war material.”¹⁵

The Shell Plant closed, the 20-mm shell machinery was shipped off, and the production area was converted to other uses. The women workers were, for the most part, discharged to resume homemaker duties while the returning servicemen were expected to take the remaining industry jobs in the region. How those women felt about their wartime work was not documented as far as I could determine. But their service and sacrifice were not forgotten.

A recent book about women’s roles in World War II made an important point about the unprecedented shift of women to the predominantly male work force.

“It was a rare moment in American history—unprecedented—when educated women were not only wanted but competed for....The men were gone but the war industry was complex and ongoing, and somebody had to staff it.... There are of course many reasons why the Allies prevailed in World War II....But the employment of women also was one of these factors. It wasn’t just that the women freed the men to fight, enabling General Dwight Eisenhower to load more men into landing craft at Normandy, or Admiral Chester Nimitz to staff more Pacific aircraft carriers. Women were more than placeholders for the men. Women were active war agents. Through their brainwork, the women had an impact on the fighting that went on. This is an important truth, and it is one that has often been overlooked.”¹⁶

Valley-area life returned to a more predictable rhythm, but not to the pre-war routine; too much had changed in the lives of the men and women who fought and won the war at home and abroad. And while for the most part that generation’s voices are now stilled, their stories and accomplishments live on in descendants’ memories of witnessing their parents work or hearing about what their grandparents had done in the war. So I paid attention when Pat Mayes looked up and, with a note of pride in her voice told me “My Mama worked in the Shell Plant.” ■

¹ Library of Congress, Geography & Map Division, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from West Point, Troup County, Georgia*. Sanborn Map Company, April 1930-February 1949. 1949.

² T. E. Bryant, “West Point Foundry: World Class Company in a Small Southern Town” (unpublished manuscript, December 26, 1989), typescript. Vertical File (Batson-Cook Histories), Cobb Memorial Archives, Chambers County Library, Valley, Alabama.

³ Civilian Production Administration, Industrial Statistics Division, *Alphabetic Listing of Major War Supply Contracts: Cumulative June 1940 Through September 1945*, (Washington, GPO, 1946), Vol. 1 (A-C), 330; Vol. 4 (Rey-Z), 3354.

⁴ Thomas Wildenberg, “Armaments & Innovations – The Instrumental Oerlikon,” *Naval History Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 2: April 2016, 10-11.

⁵ “20 mm Oerlikon Marks 1,2,3,4,” Naval Weapons, Naval Technology and Naval Reunions, last updated April 22, 2020, http://www.navweaps.com/Weapons/WNUS_2cm-70_mk234.php#.

⁶ Charles T. Creekman, “Looking into West Point War effort,” *The LaGrange Daily News*, Weekend May 11-12, 2019, Letter to the Editor, A4.

⁷ Baker Ellis, “Retired Navy captain working on West Point historical project,” *LaGrange Daily News*, May 17, 2019,1.

⁸ “Bus Transportation Offered Valley Textile Employees,” *Chattahoochee Valley Times*, May 6, 1942, 1.

⁹ “All Six Valley Textile Mills Now Included in War Department’s Army-Navy ‘E’ Awards,” *West Point News*, September 24, 1942, 1.

¹⁰ “Six Valley Mills Now Fly Army-Navy ‘E’ Pennant,” *West Point News*, October 1, 1942, 1.

¹¹ Floyd Tillery, “Up and Down the Valley,” *Chattahoochee Valley News*, September 9, 1942, 2.

¹² “Over 3500 Women Doing War Work in Valley Industries,” *West Point News*, April 3, 1943, 1.

¹³ “Torpedo Victims Bring Message to the Valley: Work or Fight,” *West Point News*, October 8, 1942, 1.

¹⁴ “Foundry and Machine Workers Remember Pearl Harbor,” *West Point News*, December 10, 1942, 1.

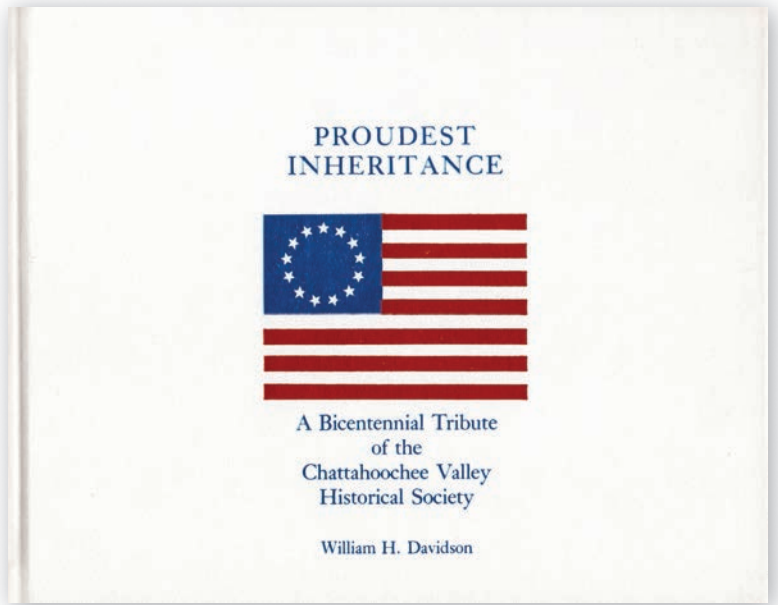
¹⁵ “Unemployment Here Negligible Declare Industry Executives,” *Chattahoochee Valley Times*, August 23, 1945, 1.

¹⁶ Liza Mundy, *Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II* (New York: Hachette Books, 2017), 28-29.



\$10 *Proudest Inheritance*

An unsung hero in our cadre of publications available for purchase is “Proudest Inheritance: A Bicentennial Tribute of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society”. Published in 1975, this little gem of local history features the early history of West Point, as delivered in a stirring oration by Captain J.W.F. Little at the West Point Female College on July 4, 1876, on the occasion of our nation’s centennial celebration. The book is filled with information from the local D.A.R. chapter in West Point (1917 - 1933), and includes a roster of Revolutionary soldiers and lineal descendants from West Point, Georgia and Chambers County, Alabama. 74 p.



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