

Threads of the Past:

Exploring Fullerville's Textile History



*Villa Rica Hosiery Mill Boarding Room.
Courtesy of Teddy Williamson.*

Self-Guided Tour



The Villa Rica Spur
of

The West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail

West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail Regional Map



The West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail is a heritage tourism initiative which utilizes historic sites, buildings and other cultural remains to interpret the area's rich textile past. The heritage trail is a **regional** project spanning from Columbus to Dalton. Keep an eye out for new West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail Spurs as they develop along Highway 27.

**For more information about the West Georgia
Textile Heritage Trail contact:**

The Center for Public History

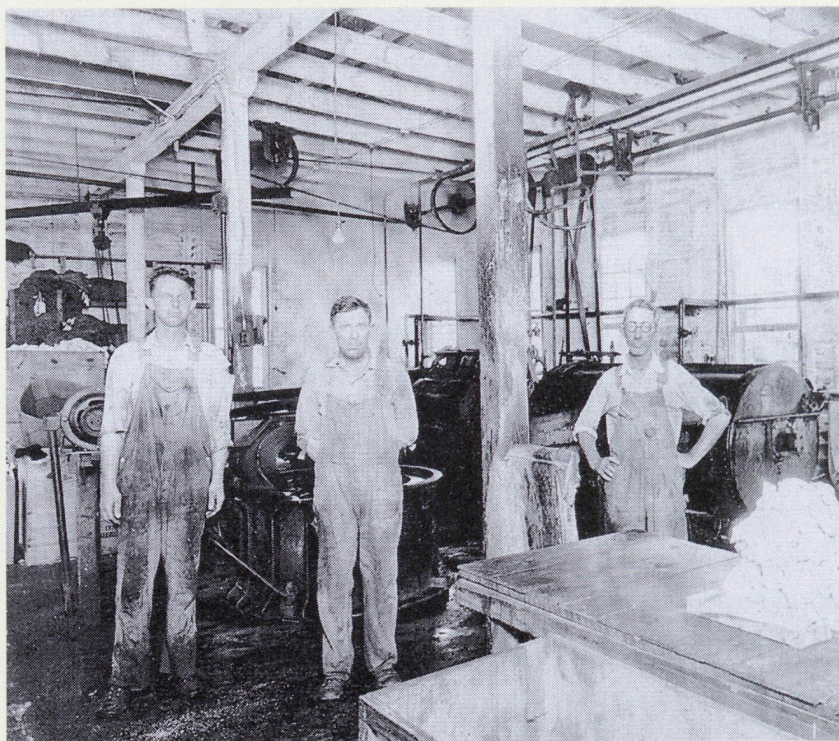
678-839-6141

www.westga.edu/cph

www.westgatextiletrail.wordpress.com

For over a century, the community of Fullerville played a major role in Carroll County's textile history. Incorporated in 1916, Fullerville is home to a historic textile mill and hosiery mill, a mill school, a one-room jail, and over sixty carefully arranged homes built by the mill company for its employees. We invite you to explore the fascinating history of this area through the Fullerville Spur of the West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail and see how the textile industry has helped to shape the history of Villa Rica and the west Georgia area.

Use this brochure, with its trail map inside, to explore this history and the historic Fullerville community.



Villa Rica Hosiery Mill Dye Room. Courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

Threads of the Past: Exploring Fullerville's Textile History

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, "King Cotton" reigned supreme in Georgia. Carroll County experienced economic growth and transformation of its rural landscapes. Businessmen and investors established cotton mills to process the raw fibers grown in the countryside.

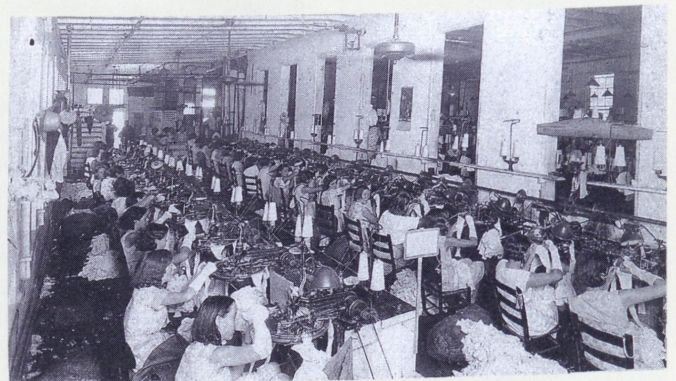
In 1906, Judson T. Fuller founded the Villa Rica Cotton Mill at this location. At a time of economic uncertainty in agriculture, cotton mills such as this one paid cash wages that provided relief to struggling farm families in the region.



Villa Rica Hosiery Mill. Courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

Building on the success of the Villa Rica Cotton Mill, Fuller's sons Hardy, Tom, and DeWitt established the Villa Rica Hosiery Mill to produce men's socks in 1911. Hosiery mills moved to the South at this time to lower their labor costs and install modern high-speed, power-driven circular knitting machines that could be operated by women. This was one of the first in Carroll County.

The financial success of the Fullerville mills led to the creation of other hosiery operations in Villa Rica. Rica-Tex Hosiery Mill opened in 1927 followed by Golden City Hosiery Mills two years later. By 1935, Carroll County boasted the largest number of hosiery mills of any other Georgia county, with three in Villa Rica and Fullerville and three in Carrollton.



Villa Rica Hosiery Mill. Courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

The transition from farm to mill proved difficult for many workers. Mill work required employees to work according to a prescribed schedule under the direct supervision of a manager. While farmers were accustomed to hard work, they experienced a loss of independence and control over their labor when they entered the mill.

The mills hired primarily female workers, to whom they could pay a lower wage. Men worked on the machinery and in more skilled jobs. It was not until Civil Rights legislation passed in 1964 that the mills began to hire African American workers.

Production in Fullerville's mills boomed during World War II, when the Villa Rica Hosiery Mill had a government contract to produce socks for the military. After the war, between three to six hosiery companies operated in Fullerville and Villa Rica every year through the 1980s. The passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 ultimately brought an end to most of the textile production in west Georgia as manufacturers closed or relocated plants overseas.

Threads of the Past: Exploring F

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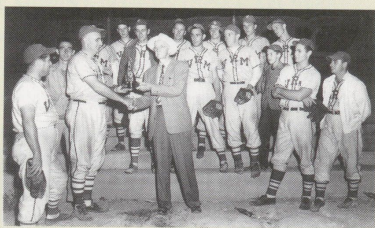
Villa Rica Hosiery Mill. Courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

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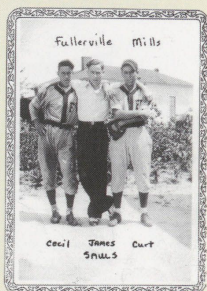
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1 "Take me out to the Ballgame:" The Fullerville Ball Field

Start your journey around Fullerville at the ball fields. America's favorite pastime helped Fullerville's mill workers let off steam and relax after grinding shifts on the mill floor. Mill companies formed teams and their players competed against those from other mills from across the region. Mill teams were a source of pride and entertainment. Fullerville's workers celebrated their team's athletic achievements, especially when they defeated local rival Mandeville Mills in Carrollton.

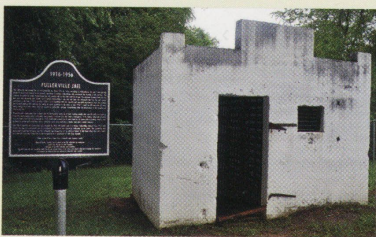


Villa Rica Mill Baseball Team. Photos courtesy of Teddy Williamson.



2 Ain't Misbehavin'! The Fullerville Jail

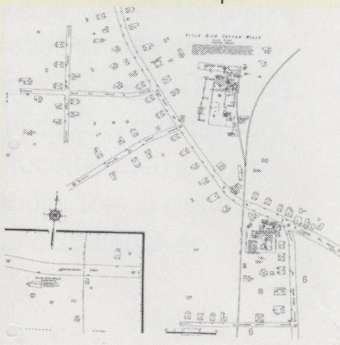
Work at the mill was hard. The work days were long and the pay was typically low. As in most towns, violence and unlawful behavior occasionally occurred. This one-room building was used as a holding cell, sometimes called the "drunk tank" by locals. Similar jail buildings can be found in many small towns throughout the United States.



Fullerville Jail. Photo courtesy of Jessica Pugh.

3 Getting the Goods to Market: The Railroad Spur

Look for the remnants of an old switch track railroad spur between the cotton and hosiery mills. This portion of the railroad is no longer operational, but you can still see evidence of its path between the mill and the old jail. The track was originally built to connect an old sulphur mine in northern Carroll County to the Georgia Pacific Railroad, (which still runs along U.S. Highway 78 in downtown Villa Rica). This spur line allowed the Fullerville mills to connect to the main railroad line running through Villa Rica and thus ship and receive goods to and from distant locations.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

4 Spinning Cotton: The Villa Rica Cotton Mill

In 1901, Judson T. Fuller settled in Villa Rica and purchased 60 acres of land five miles north the city. Five years later, he opened the Villa Rica Cotton Mill here to process raw cotton into yarn. Openers and pickers opened giant burlap bales of cotton and



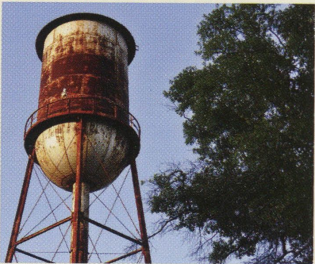
Villa Rica Cotton Mill, 1933. Photo courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

removed the debris before sending it to other employees called carders, spinners, and spoolers for processing it into yarn. Sometimes entire families worked in the mill to earn enough money to pay for their housing, food, and other necessities. Even with everyone pitching in, most families still struggled to make ends meet.

along the Trail

5 Where is the water? Water Towers, Outhouses, and Wells

Cotton mills were a fire hazard, as the raw cotton was extremely flammable. Like most rural southern communities, Fullerville did not have running water, so the company built this water tower to provide a water supply and protect the mill against fire.



Water tower at Villa Rica Cotton Mill. Courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

Can you imagine living in a home without any indoor plumbing? The mill families who lived in Fullerville used outhouses and relied on well water for cleaning, cooking, and sanitation. Sometimes several homes shared the same outhouse. Can you find any surviving outhouses or wells?

6 Readin', Writin', and 'Rithmetic: The Mill School



Fullerville Mill School, 1936. Courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

In 1912, the mill company opened a school for the children of its workers. Most mills provided a school for residents in their mill villages, even though many of the children also worked in the mills.

Prior to the Great Depression, mills throughout west Georgia frequently employed child workers under the age of 14 so many children only received a few years of formal education. Mill owners and Georgia leaders alike believed that mill children only needed enough schooling to teach them to read and do basic addition and subtraction.

7 Knitting Socks: The Villa Rica Hosiery Mill



Villa Rica Hosiery Mill. Photo courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

This hosiery mill was the Fuller family's most profitable enterprise. Established in 1911, the company produced seamless socks of cotton. At this time, hosiery mills produced unisex socks of cotton, silk, and rayon with a ribbed top that could be worn by men, women,

children, and infants. In the early years, the majority of the company employees were women.

In 1980, Pam Bruce, daughter of company president E.T. Doyal, acquired this mill building and operated the Villa Rica Knitters, which produced a variety of knitted items, including scarves, hats, and slippers, but this company has also closed.

8 Serving the community: The Fullerville Baptist Church

For several generations, Fullerville's churches, including the Fullerville Baptist Church, have served as the focal point of the community's spiritual life. Known for its homecoming activities and traditional services, Fullerville Baptist Church has held services here since 1933.



Fullerville Baptist Church. Photo courtesy of Teddy Williamson.

Can you find the different mill house types?

Many textile companies built homes for their workers in the early twentieth century. By offering housing, textile companies could attract and better control their workforce. The companies charged rent, which provided another source of income for the mills. Typically, the mill provided larger houses to those families with more workers or those workers who had higher status jobs.

As you tour Fullerville, see if you can identify the different types of mill houses. Each reflects typical construction techniques of the early 1900s. If you travel to other mills in the South, many mill-built homes will have similar housing plans and styles.

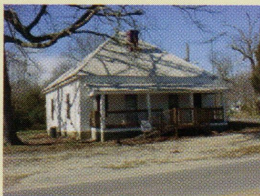
Built as duplexes, almost every residence could house one or more families. Families often took in boarders to help pay their rent. Each residence was required to supply at least one member of the family as labor for these mills.

In the 1930s, the average rent for these houses was \$3 to \$6 a month. Each section of the house had two or possibly three rooms for the entire family, as well as a shared front and private back porch. There was no central heat, so families used a fireplace. Can you find the central brick chimney that served both sides of the homes? Many have been removed, but you can still see the original location.

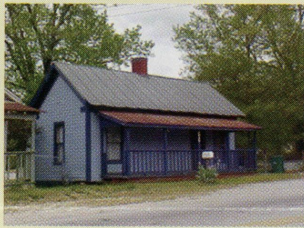
Today, many residents use the whole house as a single family residence. Though many of the houses have received modern makeovers, the essence of their original plan and many of their historic features are still visible. Driving or walking through Fullerville is like taking a step back in time.

1 Pyramidal Cottage

The Pyramidal Cottage is one of the first house types built near the cotton mill in the early 1900s, and there are 15 of these remaining. They are one-story, wood-frame homes with pyramidal roofs, a central chimney, and a full front porch. All of these duplexes had two front doors, each leading into a two-room deep unit. Some have been enlarged over the last 100 years. See if you can spot some of the remaining outhouses.



2 Saddlebag House Type







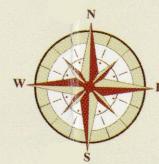
There are seven examples of the Saddlebag house type scattered throughout the village. These houses feature a one-room deep plan with a gable roof, central chimney, full front porch, and two front doors. Many also have a kitchen ell.

3 Double Shotgun

The Double Shotgun plan is particularly common around the hosiery mill. There are at least 18 examples of these found along Rockmart Road in front of the hosiery mill and others on Pate Road. They are one story, wood-frame structures with the gable end facing the road. As with other mill houses, they have a full front porch and a central chimney. These are also duplexes, with two front doors.



-  Sites along the Trail
-  Roads
-  Main Road
-  Railroad



Other Historic Locations to see in Villa Rica

Thomas Dorsey Gospel Historic Site

133 Thomas Dorsey Drive
Villa Rica, GA 30180
(770) 459-5918

Freedom Riders Stop Historic Site

106 South Carroll Road
Villa Rica, GA 30180
Historic marker in downtown area

Bank of Villa Rica Historic Site

208 W. Montgomery Street
Villa Rica, GA 30180
Historic marker in downtown area

Wick's Tavern Historic Site

212 West Wilson Street
Villa Rica, GA 30180
By appointment only
770-942-2692 or 770-328-9825

Berry's Pharmacy Historic Site

130 W. Montgomery Street
Villa Rica, GA 30180
Historic marker in downtown area

Pine Mountain Gold Museum

1881 Stockmar Rd Villa Rica, GA 30180
(770) 459-8455
Open to public

For more information contact:

Department of Community Development City of Villa Rica

571 W. Bankhead Highway
Villa Rica, GA 30180
770-459-7000.

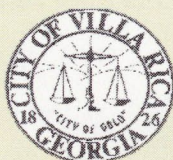
www.villarica.org/historic-preservation-commission.html.



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GEORGIA
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This project is supported by the Georgia Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities and through appropriations from the Georgia General Assembly.