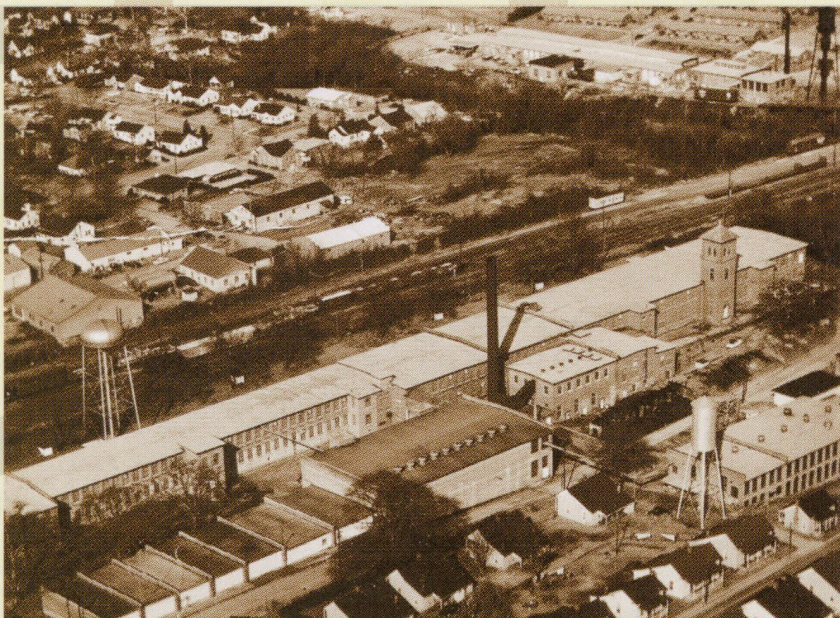


Reminiscing Riverdale

Exploring Canton's Textile History



Self-Guided Driving Tour



The Canton 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.

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

The Center for Public History

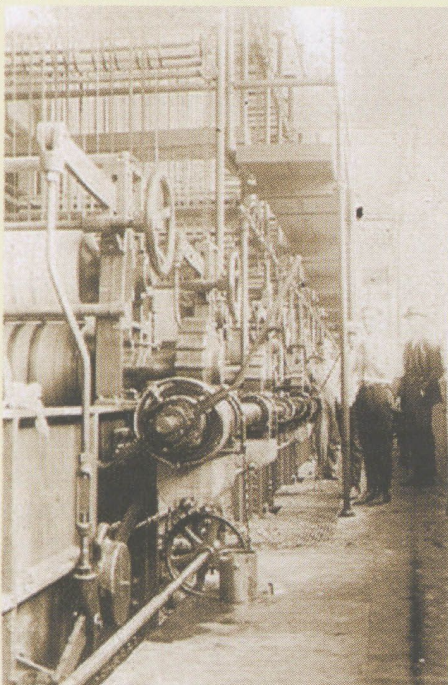
678-839-6141

<https://uwgcph.org>

www.westgatextiletrail.com

Canton, the seat of Cherokee County was home to a leader in the Georgia cotton textile market in the early 20th century, Canton Cotton Mill. The cotton textile industry began in Canton after the success of a booming cotton and mercantile market in Georgia in the late 1800s. With the development of a rail line through the city in 1880, operated by the Marietta and North Georgia Railroad Company, Canton's cotton products had the potential to be shipped all over the country. Textile manufacturing flourished in the area for decades, providing employment and housing for generations of residents.

Wealth from the cotton industry, in addition to a locally grown cotton crop, encouraged entrepreneurs to raise funds to build a textile mill in Canton in 1899. The new mill, built on Railroad Street, used the flow of the Etowah River to run the steam-powered turbines that powered the mill machinery. The mill housed 5,000 spindles, 160 looms, and employed 125 local residents when it opened in 1901. The mill owners also built houses for mill employees on the hill near the Etowah River, convenient to the mills and the business district in town. This section of mill housing, called Riverdale or Roosterville, included its own church and school. A separate section of housing, built along Hill and Academy Streets, brought the total amount of worker housing around the original mill to 75.



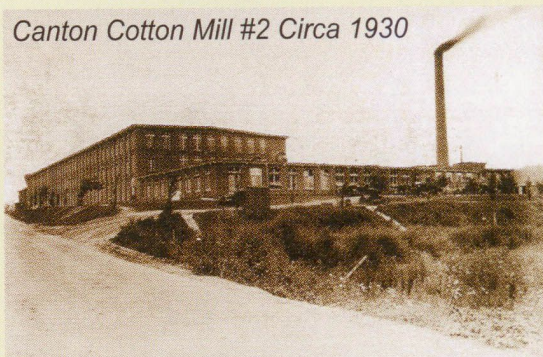
New dye machine being inspected after installation in the dye house.

Financial issues affected the Canton Cotton Mill shortly after opening. In 1902, the mill lost ten percent of its total capital. In response, the mill's first president, Robert Tyre (R.T.) Jones, added a dye house to the mill to produce denim cloth. These changes proved profitable and, by 1905, Canton Cotton Mill doubled its loom capacity and capital, which doubled again in 1910. Canton Cotton Mill's production continued to grow over the next forty years.

Reminiscing Riverdale: Canton's Textile History

In May of 1923, mill owners built a second cotton mill, Canton Cotton Mill #2, one mile north of the original mill. The new 3-story mill allowed for the hiring of 600 additional mill

Canton Cotton Mill #2 Circa 1930



workers and the construction of 150 new employee homes nearby. Canton Cotton Mills provided employment for one-third of the area's population. By 1936, the mills employed 1,100 people and used about 35,000 bales of cotton annually producing "Canton denim," a nationally known cotton product. Wartime production allowed Canton Cotton Mills to flourish in the late 1940s through the 1950s.

Jones Mercantile Store circa 1957.



During World War II, the mills produced cloth for U.S. Navy and P.O.W. uniforms and osnaburg for tents and sandbags. During Canton Cotton

Mills' 50th anniversary in 1949, R.T. Jones' son, Louis Jones, was president and the mill employed 1,000 men and women. Throughout the years, Canton Cotton Mills created several facilities for their employees, including Riverdale Baptist Church and Riverdale School within mill village #1 and North Canton School and North Canton Baptist Church in village #2. Mill employees also frequented Jones Mercantile Store, opened by R.T. Jones in 1879. Mill employees could cash their paychecks at the store, or buy things on credit against future earnings. In the 1960s, the mill village's small, four-room cottages sold for \$4,000, and mill workers were given the first option to become owners. Canton Cotton Mills also sponsored both baseball and basketball teams.

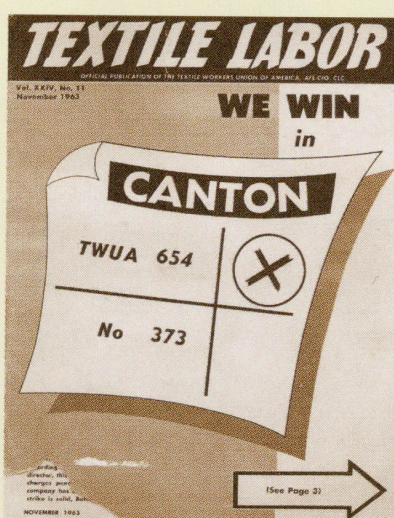
The industrial boom created by World War II ended in the early 1960s and many industries, including the textile industry, felt pressure from overseas competition and the need to modernize. At the same time, America was transitioning from blue-overall work clothing into a

sportswear-centered textile economy. In 1962, under a new name, Canton Textile Mills, Inc., the company initiated a long-range plan to diversify and upgrade its fabrics. Canton Textile Mills, Inc. continued to make some denim products but the bulk of production



Canton Mills baseball team in 1946.

and leisure clothing. The transition worked for a time as the company's sales jumped to a record 26.5 million in 1966.



The move to a more efficient production also called for a better training program for mill workers through the company's new employee-training program. Many mill workers expected higher wages to accompany this new program, which led to a 14-week strike in October 1963, in collaboration with the Textile Workers Union of

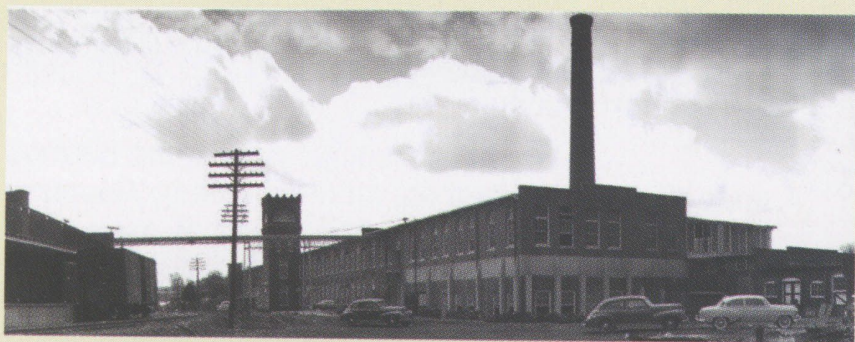
America. After a loss of one million dollars in wages, the mill workers were able to reach an agreement with mill management and return to work.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the demand for cotton fabrics decreased due to the growing dominance of polyester fabric, production at Canton Textile Mills, Inc. continued to decline. Shrinking market demands and a losses exceeding \$10,000,000 over a four-year period led the company to cease all operations in 1981. The impact that Canton Cotton Mills had upon Canton is still visible today. Many of the structures such as Riverdale Baptist Church, North Canton Baptist Church and both Canton Cotton Mill #1 and #2 are still in use by the residents and businesses of Canton.

1

Canton Cotton Mill #1, 141 Railroad St., Canton, GA 30114

In 1899, prominent Canton citizens raised funds to build Canton Cotton Mills. R. T. Jones, the mill's first president, received a charter to build the mill in the southwestern corner of Canton near Railroad Street. The mill was designated Canton Cotton Mill #1 after the creation of Canton Cotton Mill #2 just one mile away in 1923. This mill created an array of products ranging from the famous "Canton denim" to osnaburg fabric during World War II to scrub denim in the late 1960s. During the decline of the textile industry in the city, Canton Cotton Mill #1 had largely become a storage facility for the mill and no longer produced any material before it closed in the late 1970s. The mill is now home to several active businesses and a church.



2

Canton Cotton Mills #1 Office Building 221 W Main St., Canton, GA 30114

This building served as the center for all of the administration needs for Canton Cotton Mills. The building is located just a short walk from Canton Cotton Mill #1. Canton Cotton Mills, during the post-strike years, introduced computerized accounting methods in an effort to stay competitive with overseas markets. Today, the former mill office building houses several businesses.



What to see along the Trail

3 Jones Mercantile Store 130 E. Main St., Canton, GA 30114

Jones Mercantile's history intertwines with mill life in Canton Cotton Mills and its mill villages. Operated by the founding president's son, Paul W. Jones, Jones Mercantile Store served the mill workers as well as the residents of Canton in general. As a general store, the products sold ranged from hardware

supplies to groceries to furniture and even cars. Mill workers were able to purchase goods on credit if needed and cash their paychecks. The store closed in the 1980s.



Jones Mercantile Store employee photo circa 1940.

4 Riverdale Mill Village #1 Entrance on North St. & Riverdale Cir., Canton, GA 30114

It was common for cotton mill companies to build housing for its workers near the mill. Originally, houses in this mill village rented for \$5 each month and Canton Cotton Mills provided all maintenance. Residents even had a small amount of land to keep a garden or chickens in their yards. Near Riverdale Church, located within the mill village, there was a communal barn for residents to keep livestock. During the 1960s, the mill houses were sold to the current mill worker residents. Riverdale is still an active neighborhood today. Please respect the privacy of its current residents when viewing.



Young boys pose near Riverdale Cir. in mill village #1.

5 Riverdale Baptist Church and Riverdale School 15 Riverdale Cir., Canton, GA 30114

Riverdale Baptist Church and Riverdale School, served the spiritual and educational needs of the surrounding mill village residents. Riverdale Baptist Church and Riverdale School shared a building until the school closed in 1939. Canton Cotton Mills provided the building maintenance and salaries of the pastor and schoolteachers. In 1969, the church congregation purchased the building from the mill.

6 Canton Cotton Mill #2 550 Riverstone Pkwy., Canton, GA 30114

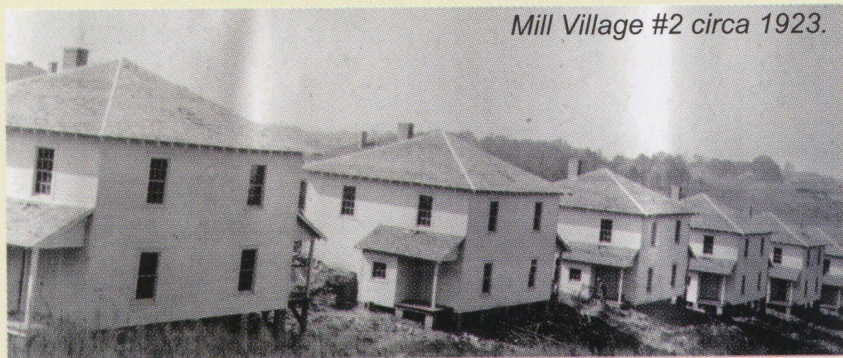
After the success brought by Canton Cotton Mill #1 and its "Canton denim," a nationally known cotton product, R.T. Jones was able to start a second mill at a nearby location. Canton Cotton Mill #2 opened in May of 1923, one mile north of Canton Cotton Mill #1. The new mill was much larger than the first mill and employed 600. The mill remained in operation until the Canton Cotton Mills locations closed in 1981.








Denim fabric weaving room at Mill #2

7 Canton Cotton Mill Village #2 Entrance at the intersection of Center St. & Juniper St., Canton, GA 30114

A second, larger mill necessitated another mill village. Mill village #2 was much larger than the one downtown. The company built multiple modern homes in a rapid period by using a method derived from Henry Ford's use of the assembly line production. Building each house very similarly, cut down on added costs and increased efficiency of construction. The modern amenities within these homes included indoor plumbing, running water, and electricity. Similar to Riverdale, it is still an active neighborhood.



Mill Village #2 circa 1923.

-  Sites along the Trail
-  Main Roads
-  Secondary Roads
-  Hwy.
-  Railroad



Other Historic Locations to see in Canton

Cherokee County History Museum and Canton Visitor's Center

100 North Street, Suite 140
Canton, GA 30114

Cannon Park

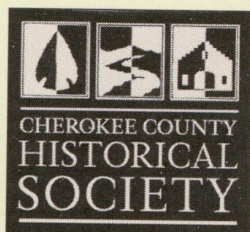
130 East Main Street
Canton, GA 30114

Historic Canton Theatre

171 East Main Street
Canton, GA 30114

North Canton Baptist Church

150 Juniper Street
Canton, GA 30114



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