

Tufts of the Past



Self-Guided Tour



The Dalton-Whitfield 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

TUFTS OF THE PAST: Exploring Dalton's Textile History

In 1884, the Crown Cotton Mill was established. Beginning with 75 looms and 3,000 spindles, the mill used two bales of cotton a day. By 1899, 256 looms and 10,000 spindles were in operation, using 20 bales of cotton a day and employing 325 hands. At the turn of the century, an addition was built for 250 looms, 10,000 spindles and an 800-horsepower compound condensing engine. Employees increased to 700, and 40 bales of cotton were used daily. The mill produced wide and narrow sheeting, duck and natural yarns.



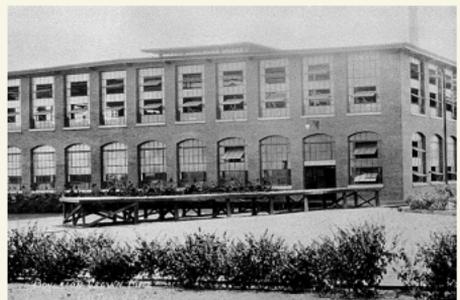
A candlewick bedspread that was a family heirloom inspired an industry. Catherine Evans—later Whitener—created her first hand-tufted bedspread in 1895 and sold her first spread



in 1900. For a decade after this initial sale, Evans and neighbors she asked to help her made tufted bedspreads to fill individual orders. Women in Dalton became interested; and Evans showed them how to

stamp and work the spreads. The early patterns were copied from quilt patterns.

Early bedspread operations were conducted in homes. A company purchased square sheeting by the case and tufting yarn from local mills. Patterns were stamped onto the sheets which, along with



yarn for tufting, were delivered to tufters. Women—and often children and men—tufted the bedspreads and then clipped the stitches. The painting, “The Hauler,” by artist John Clymer, depicts the home-based business. Haulers filled their automobiles with stamped spreads and yarn and delivered them to homes. Later they





returned, paid for work done, and brought the completed bedspreads back to Dalton where they were laundered, packed and shipped.

The Elk Mill, later Boylston Crown, joined Crown Mill in producing raw materials for the textile industry.

The American Thread Co was the only industrial plant in Dalton to receive the Army-Navy E award for production efficiency during World War II. The plant made parachute rip cords and other cords under government contract.

Crown, Elk and American Thread all had mill schools for the children of their employees. The schools were under



the direction of both the Whitfield County Schools and the mills.

The mills paid the teachers extra money beyond their usual salaries and furnished classroom supplies. Children attended grades one through seven. However, Georgia did not have compulsory school laws until 1916; before that, many children worked in the mills. The mill schools offered kindergarten

classes decades before regular public schools. This Atcooga School kindergarten class photo was made during the 1928-29 school year.

FDR and the New Deal changed the flourishing cottage industry. Under NRA workers had to be paid minimum wages. Tufting machines were



developed to do the work of a woman's fingers and the needle and scissors she used.

Mechanics adapted sewing machines to use the heavy tufting yarns and adding multiple needles to speed up the work. Many people were working on the idea at the same time. Most converted Singer or similar commercial sewing machines. Machine stitches were closer together than hand-tufting.



Machines meant factories. Empty store buildings—and many were available during the Depression years—became “spread houses.” Sometimes chicken houses were used to make spreads.

Often garages, barns or outbuildings were filled with machines to mass-produce spreads. Relatives and neighbors pitched in to make spreads. This photo shows workers at Brooker Spread Company.



Cabin Crafts products were considered the finest designs and construction in the industry.

Advertising brought customers to the area to buy a wide variety of chenille products. Bedspreads, bathrobes and rugs were popular. Other items made from chenille were house shoes, dolls, even ladies' purses!



Mill ball teams built camaraderie. These ladies played on the LaRose Spread Co. softball team.

By the 1940s, wider tufting machines appeared,



forerunners of giant carpet tufting machines. These early 40- to 50-inch wide tufting machines could tuft materials in continuous rolls for robes. The narrow-gauge versions, many built immediately after World War II, tufted cotton rugs.

By 1950, nine- and twelve-foot machines were built to make cotton pile carpeting.

1 Morgan Manufacturing Company



The last full-time vendor of chenille, was located between Tunnel Hill and Rocky Face on Highway 41. The owner/operators were Willene & Jack Morgan. 3325 Chattanooga Rd.

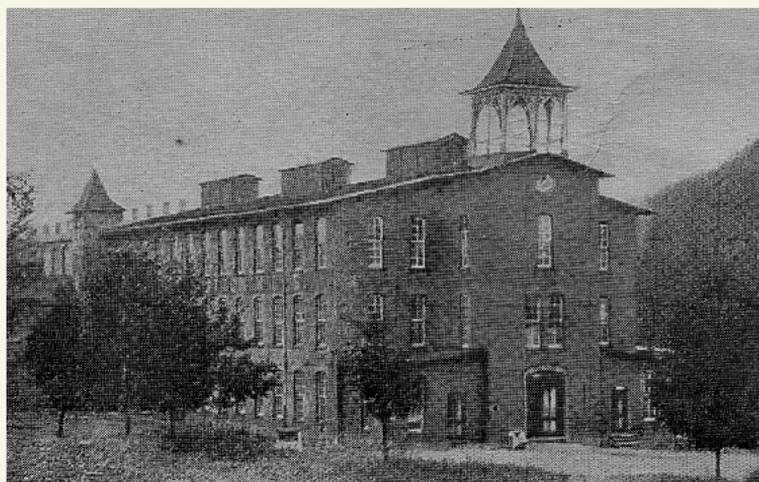
2 Colonial Craft #2

3707 (or so) Chattanooga Rd., built by Elbert Putnam in the mid- to late 1950s. Putnam & his wife, Georgia Lee, built at least a dozen chenille businesses along Highway 41 in Whitfield County. Many were operated by family members.



3 Crown Cotton Mill

809 Chattanooga Ave., began operations in 1884. Today, through adaptive reuse, it houses condominiums and apartments.



4 Crown Mill Store

702 Chattanooga Avenue, Dalton. The Crown Mill Store allowed employees to run a tab that was deducted from their pay.



5 Crown Mill District houses

Turn left on Matilda St. beside the old Crown Mill store, and drive through the district. To accommodate the increasing number of workers moving to town from rural areas, the Crown Mill built homes in what is now the Crown Historic District. Homes were rented to families, and the rent deducted from their pay.



What to see along the Trail

6 Brooker Spread Co.

105 Tyler Street, Dalton, is now a storage facility.



7 Roberts Machine Shop

451 N. Hamilton Street, was one of many area shops that made, adapted and repaired textile machinery.



8 W & A Depot

110 E. Depot St., was built in 1852 and in use as a depot until 1978. The railroad was pivotal in shipping textiles from the area. Today the depot is a restaurant.



9 Cabin Crafts

Now occupied by Shaw Industries, the building at 120 East Morris St., is one of several that housed Cabin Crafts.



10 Elk, later Boylston Crown Mill

1029 S. Hamilton Street, has housed a number of businesses and is now for sale.



11 Old Boylston Crown School

Now City of Refuge, 201 Bryant Avenue—served the children of mill workers.



12 Old Atcooga School

(American Thread Co. of Ga) —1306 S. Thornton Ave., Dalton, GA 30720—is now the central office of the Whitfield Co. Schools. 706-278-8070



13 Old Beckler's Chenille

3800 S. Dixie Road, SE, Dalton. The first building constructed by Burch & Claudelle Beckler stood in front of this building and sold chenille products. This building, unlike its predecessor, was constructed with a concrete floor so a hyster could be used to move carpet.

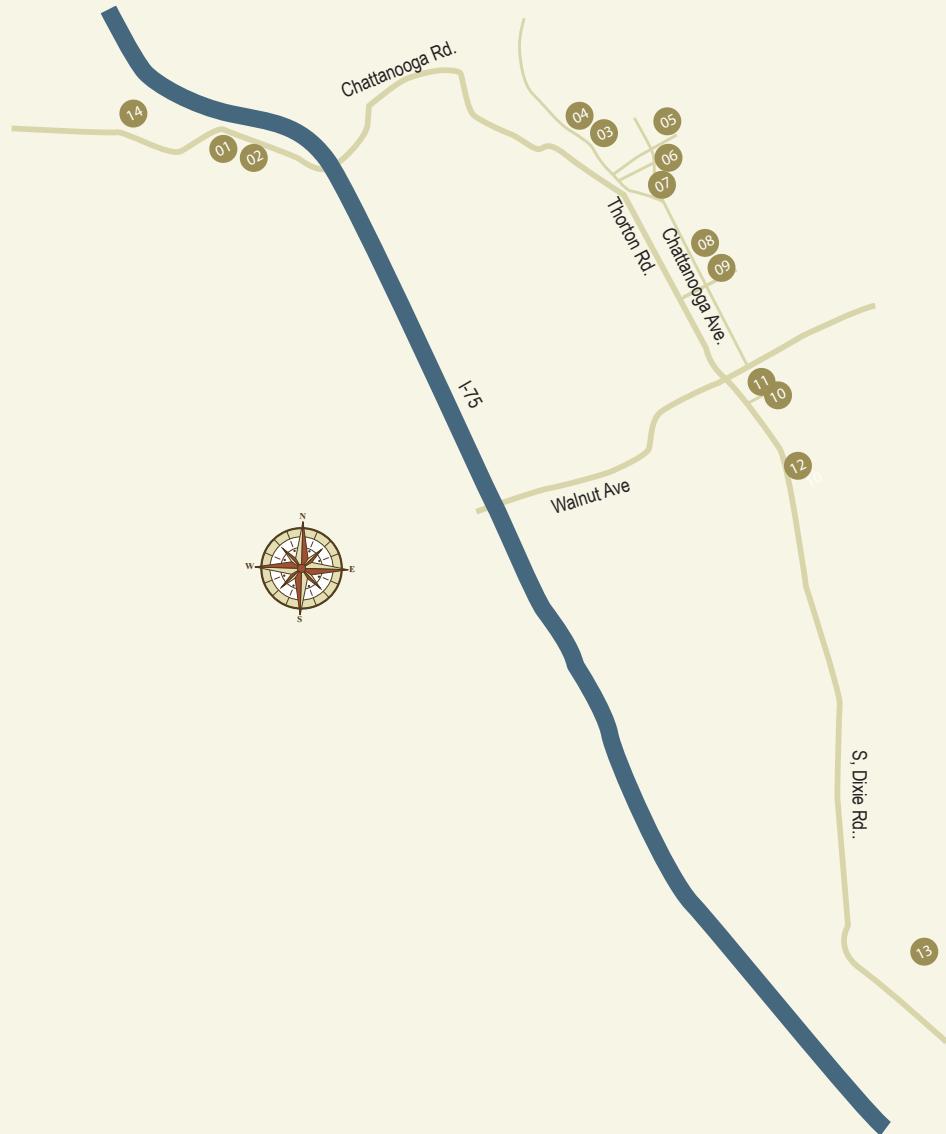


14 Putnam Chenille

Just off Old Dixie Highway--still stands on Ben Putnam Rd., Dalton. Built by Elbert Putnam and operated by Bertie and Effie Collins, the structure is one of the few surviving "spread houses" that have survived. Many others have been torn down or vastly changed in appearance.



- Sign Location
- Related Sites
- Roads
- Suggested Route
- - - Railroad



Other Historic Locations to see in Dalton & Whitfield

Crown Gardens & Archives

715 Chattanooga Avenue
Dalton, GA 30720
706-278-0217

1890 Offices of Crown Cotton Mill
Headquarters of the Whitfield-Murray Historical Society

Hamilton House

701 Chattanooga Avenue
Dalton, GA 30720
706-278-0217

Oldest house in Dalton, circa 1840

Huff House

314 Selvidge Street
Dalton, GA 30720

Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Headquarters
Nov.-Mar. 1863-64

Blunt House

704 S. Thornton Avenue
Dalton, GA 30720
Built 1847

Home of Dalton's first mayor

The Emery Center

110 W. Emery St.
Dalton, GA 30720
706-277-7633

African-American Cultural Center

Gen. Joseph E. Johnston Statue

Miss Belle Kinney, sculptor
Intersection of Hamilton & Crawford Streets
Dalton, GA 30720

Dug Gap Battle Park

W. Dug Gap Battle Road
Dalton, GA 30720

Site of Battle of Dug Gap, May 8, 1864

Prater's Mill

5845 Georgia Highway 2
Dalton, GA 30721
706-694-6455

1855 grist mill & 1915 cotton gin

Western & Atlantic Railroad Tunnel

215 Clisby Austin Road
Tunnel Hill, GA 30755
706-876-1571



UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA
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