



**The Furman Co.**

Community and Commerce  
Influence and Leadership Since 1888

Celebrating 125 Years

Judith T. Bainbridge

© 2008, 2013 THE FURMAN COMPANY GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
PRINTED ON PAPER CONTAINING 30% POST-CONSUMER WASTE AND  
MANUFACTURED USING ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRACTICES.

“THE FURMAN CO. IS AS STRONG AS OUR PEOPLE.”

This book detailing the leadership displayed by our founders and predecessors is dedicated to the entire team of people at The Furman Co., who for over 125 years, have provided dedicated service and the highest quality of advisory work to our company and greater community. Thank you for your integrity and character. You define us.

—STEPHEN P. NAVARRO, *PRESIDENT AND CEO*  
*THE FURMAN CO., 2013*



# CONTENTS

Dedication

Introduction

Chapter I      Alester Furman  
                    and The Beginnings

Chapter II     Alester G. Furman, Jr.  
                    Depression to Redevelopment

Chapter III    Alester G. Furman III  
                    Changing Greenville

Chapter IV    Into the Second Century

About the Author

Photo Credits

Index



# FOREWORD

IN JUNE OF 2007 ALESTER G. FURMAN, III PASSED AWAY. There was a quiet memorial of respect for this great man at Charles Daniel Chapel on the Furman University Campus. Dr. A.V. Huff, retired Furman University professor and Dean, family friend, and respected historian for over forty years, prefaced his warm eulogy by quoting a portion of Genesis (16:5): “Back then giants roamed the land...” He captured it! For Greenville, South Carolina, Alester G Furman, III, his partner, Junius Garrison, and the fore fathers of The Furman Co., Alester G. Furman and Alester G. Furman, Jr., were giants. These men with just a few others had an impact on our community that Greenville will probably never see again.

For over twenty-five years, I have had the privilege of being a part of a company that has played a significant role in shaping our community. Today, however, its legacy and this heritage are archived in books and the memory few remaining people.

Being hired and trained by one of Greenville’s great family firms was an honor. I was 24, fresh from a Southern California rearing and education and with just a few years of real estate training, and I had reversed my parents’ path and returned to the South, to my mother’s home town. I hoped to acquire the secrets of success from my prestigious and successful mentors. What I was exposed to, though, were not sophisticated formulas, techniques, or cutting-edge business tools. What I gained in those early years was the first hand opportunity to experience what I would later call “influential presence.”

Alester G. Furman, III and Junius H. Garrison Jr., shareholders of The Furman Co., recognized and took seriously the community responsibilities that they shared with just a few of their - peers. These men, along with Buck Mickel, Tommy Wyche, Roger Milliken, and a few others were iconic in my eyes; role models whose significance became even larger as I matured and could appreciate the responsibility that they took upon themselves and the care with which they went about exercising their power. These men truly loved their community and knew they were positioned to make it even better.

I remember that Alester G. Furman, III, was canny and careful. He taught me that nothing is just what it seems superficially and that the ultimate goal, if worthy, trumps the circumstance surrounding its achievement. He was relentless in pursuit of his goals, but most importantly to me, Mr. Furman was a master at risk assessment; he taught me to always “measure the downside” before making a decision.

From Junius Garrison, my mentor for fifteen years, I learned how to effect change from behind the scenes. He was a quiet but incredibly strong influence, perfectly content to let others take credit as long as the end goal was met. Mr.

Garrison shared the common leadership traits and passion of these other great leaders and always seemed to make others around him better and more effective.

Having the opportunity to study these community icons while establishing my own leadership and development principles was a unique and significant benefit. But watching these leaders and witnessing the changing community environment raised a number of questions. How did these men actually shape our community? What were the drivers that gave them the presence of mind to step up and take on responsibility? What will their legacy be? Who will remember them and how will they be remembered?

I realize now that over the past twenty-five years I have witnessed the tail end of an era. I have seen these men in action, but also, over time, I have seen a sea change in how a community is shaped. I have seen these leaders achieve goals, be praised and honored for them, then reminisced about, often with cloudy recollection, or even forgotten by a new generation of young Greenvillians not familiar with the development of our community and its recent history.

I want the employees, families, and friends of The Furman Co. to know the great men that preceded them. Alester, III, and Junius Garrison told stories of Alester Sr. and Alester, Jr. (Mr. Garrison's mentor) that helped me understand their goals and achievements. But as time goes by, I fear that they are becoming portraits on the wall, office decoration without meaning.

So I asked Judy Bainbridge to help me journey back to reclaim the stories and history of what the men of The Furman Co. have accomplished, to identify their influence and the changes in our community that this company has been in part responsible for during its first one hundred and twenty-five years of existence. This search, by interviews, media research, and in the Furman and Clemson University Archives has created a wonderful story of progress and exemplary leadership. I invite you to read it, and as you do, to consider the ways these men and this company could influence the direction of an entire community; affecting Greenville's infrastructure for future growth and future prosperity. To me, these men were Giants.

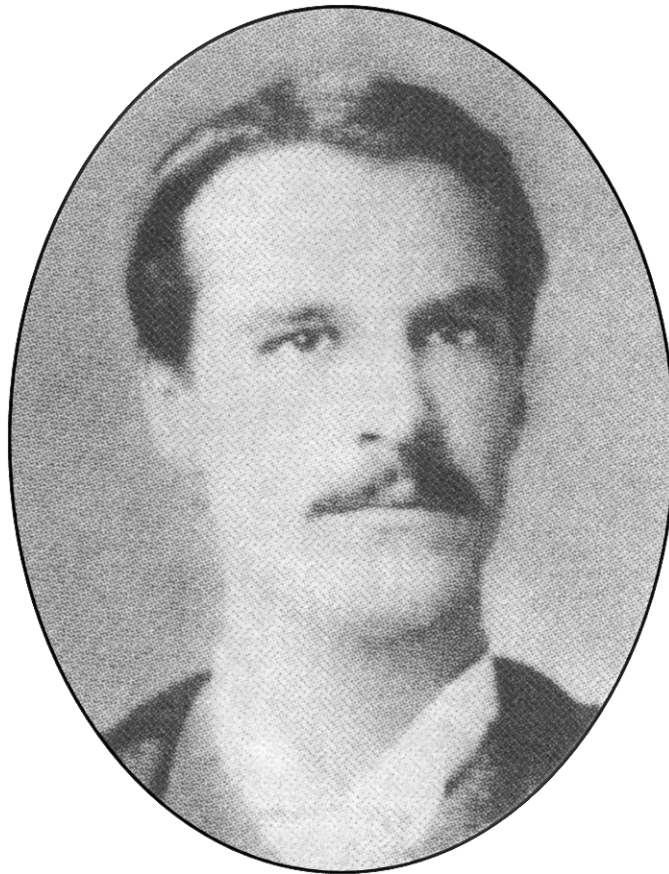
—STEPHEN P. NAVARRO







CHAPTER I



ALESTER G. FURMAN  
AND THE BEGINNINGS

PHOTO: ALESTER G. FURMAN, CIRCA 1886





AERIAL PHOTO OF ORIGINAL FURMAN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS ON THE REEDY RIVER

## ALESTER G. FURMAN AND THE BEGINNINGS

GREENVILLE: SPRING 1888. ELECTRIC STREET LIGHTS ARE COMING; WATER WILL SOON BE PIPED IN FROM PARIS MOUNTAIN; THE FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL OPEN IN SEPTEMBER. New residents are arriving daily—population has increased from 6,100 to 10,100 in eight years. It is a small city poised at the beginning of a new era.

It seemed, in fact, like the perfect time for a handsome young college student to seize an opportunity. And twenty-year-old Alester Garden Furman did so. Today, he might be considered a college dropout, but when, in January 1886, just six months short of graduating from Furman, he had left the university (and his class of two other men) to begin a sixty-year career as a community builder, he was following in the footsteps of many ambitious young men of the time—earning a living was more important than accumulating final college credits in Latin and Greek.

As a potential businessman, he was breaking with family tradition, for he came from a long line of preachers and teachers. The son of Charles Manning and Florence Garden Furman, Alester G. Furman was born on a farm at the High Hills of the Santee in Sumter County in October 1867. He spent his early years first in Maryland and then in Kentucky, where his father, an honor graduate of Furman University in 1859, taught mathematics. Struggling to support his growing family on the few dollars paid to college professors in the Reconstruction South, C. M. Furman, who had read law before the Civil War, returned to Greenville to open a one-man practice in 1877. Alester Furman later recalled that when he arrived with his family in his new hometown as a ten-year old, they left the Charlotte and Atlanta Airline Station on West Washington Street, boarded the mule-powered street railway, which slogged through the red mud of Greenville's unpaved downtown streets, and crossed the river on rickety tracks near the just opened Camperdown Mill before arriving at his grandfather's home on the Furman University campus.

Returning to Greenville was a reasonable move. The Furman family had lived in the town since 1851, when the new university began classes on a bluff overlooking the Reedy River. James Clement Furman, Alester's grandfather, was a Baptist minister who had taught at theology at the school when it was a theological institution located in Winnsboro. He had been the committee of one that had chosen Greenville—"the promised land" he called it—as the site of the new university because the climate was good, Baptists abounded, and there were plans for a railroad connection to Columbia. J. C. Furman was initially named chair of the faculty; in 1858 he was appointed president. He headed the university and lived in its president's house until 1881, and in the late 1880s, when he was nearing eighty, was still regularly teaching and preaching.

Alester Furman's great-grandfather was Richard Furman, a distinguished Baptist theologian and preacher and a Revolutionary War patriot. He dreamed of a national Baptist university in the nation's capital and academies in every region of the country. In 1819 he had formed the South Carolina Baptist Convention in order to start a school to educate pious young men, especially future Baptist ministers. Although he died in 1825, when the Convention established the Furman Academy and Theological Institution at Edgefield in 1826, they named it for the dedicated Baptist minister.

He was also descended from Alexander Garden, a colonial botanist and physician, who sent crates full of native plants to European naturalists for classification, and who, for his efforts, had a newly discovered flowering jasmine named the "gardenia" in his honor.

After the family arrived in Greenville, young Alester and his brothers and sister were sent to small private schools because there was no public school in the

city. When he was fifteen, his father accepted a position as one of two trial judges in Greenville County, but continued to practice law. (Seven years later he returned to teaching, his first love, when he joined the Clemson College faculty as chair of the English Department. He became “Daddy Furman” to several generations of Clemson cadets before he retired in 1910.)

In 1883, Alester’s mother died. The previous year he had enrolled at Furman, a floundering university that then had one building, four faculty members, about seventy students, and no endowment. There he studied English literature, metaphysics, mathematics, and classical languages; there were no electives and certainly no practical subjects.

While his lineage was distinguished, A. G. Furman was not rich. When he married Eleanor Hoyt in 1890, he later said, “We were as poor as church mice.” After leaving Furman, he applied himself to making a few dollars and preparing himself for the future. He read law with his father. He enrolled in a business course in Perry’s Business College on Main Street. He began selling insurance policies, receiving his first commission in February 1888. And, making use of an office adjacent to his father’s in the old Record Building, he set up, with broker J. F. Mitchell, his first real estate company, Mitchell and Furman, in the spring of 1888. On December 26, 1888, he was admitted to the South Carolina bar. While he never practiced law, he later commented that “It wasn’t wasted time, for I received an understanding of what lawyers were talking about in my dealings with them in later years. Besides, I never could have taken a case before a jury, for my knees would have probably shaken too much!”

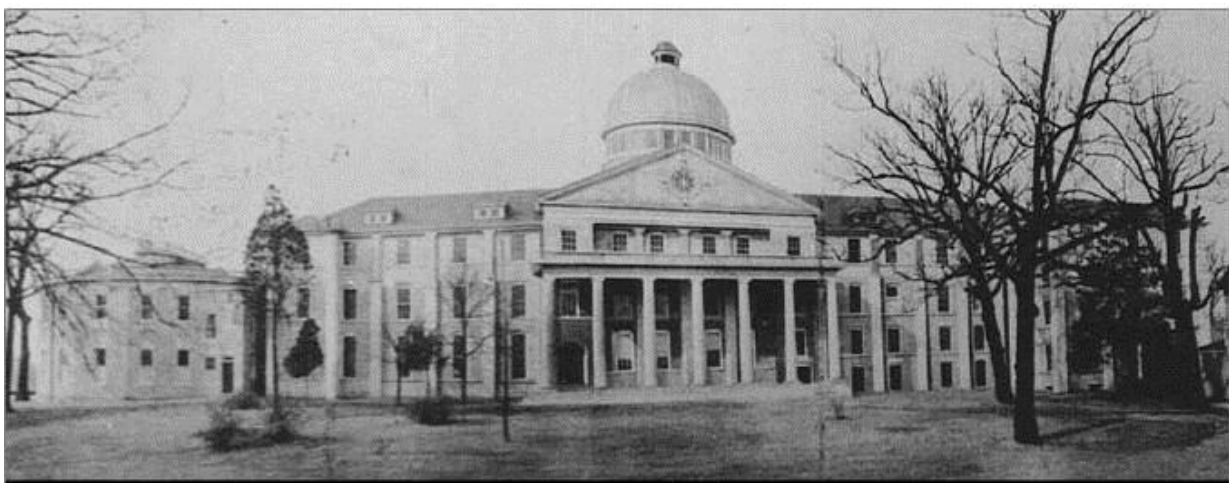
He learned early that success in business—both insurance and real estate—came about through connections and friendships, integrity and initiative, and thorough knowledge of the land and people of his community. Alester Furman had the ideal background and personality; he quickly gained the knowledge, friends, and respect. His family’s name was known and admired throughout the state. He had been reared and educated in Greenville and at Furman. He was personable—an early picture shows a movie-star handsome young man with a black mustache, velvet-collared coat, and top hat; he stands poised for action. And when he married Nell Hoyt, an honor graduate of the Greenville Female College and a daughter of the editor of the Baptist Courier in November 1890, among his twelve groomsmen was Lewis Parker, an attorney and entrepreneur who was to play a major role in developing Greenville as a cotton mill center and who shared A. G. Furman’s progressive vision for the county’s future. His best man was B. A. Morgan, later president of the Bank of Commerce, whose brother was James H. Morgan, who became president of American Spinning Company when it opened in 1896.

His first few years as a businessman were quite successful. Mitchell and Furman sold fire, life, and accident insurance as well as serving as property

brokers. By December 1889, they were doing well enough to advertise sixteen properties for sale, all residential, in the Greenville Daily News, urging prospective customers to call (in person—they did not yet have a telephone) to “get particulars to all the properties, which will be cheerfully given and property shown at all times of day.” At the same time he was working as a broker, Furman, his father, and his cousin Harry J. Haynsworth chartered the Mountain City Land Development Company and began developing real estate. They bought and sold small residential lots—six-tenths of an acre on Main Street, 10,000 square feet on Townes Street, and a single lot on Wilton Street, for example; in addition, they purchased three houses in Bucknertown, a black neighborhood, for rental income.

With this limited income (most of these lots and houses varied in price from \$500 to \$1500), the partnership then began developing larger and more extensive properties—land on Memminger Street and River Street in the West End, Stone Avenue and David Street near downtown, a hundred acres near Batesville. Although it took eight years to find a buyer for the Bates Township land, the others sold relatively quickly, with thirty-four sales in the first three years after the company was chartered. These in-town streets became popular—and in the case of Memminger and River Streets—elite residential neighborhoods at the end of the 19th century.

Among the most significant developments for Greenville’s growth in the 1890s was the Development Company’s purchase and sale in 1892 of much of Alexander McBee’s former estate, McBee Terrace, located on a bluff above the south side of the Reedy River. Although several lots were sold to substantial West End citizens—R. E. Allen, who owned a wholesale grocery store, druggist D. T. Bacot, Frank Hammond, the president of People’s Bank—as sites for elegant homes (River Street soon became one of the city’s most prestigious neighborhoods), the company sold most of the acreage, including McBee’s former home, to the



THE BUILDINGS OF CHICORA COLLEGE (ABOVE) WERE LOST TO FIRE IN 1919.



Presbyterian Synods of South Carolina and Georgia to become the site of Chicora College for Young Ladies. While the school only lasted in Greenville until 1915, when it moved to Columbia, its campus and handsome buildings (which perished in a 1919 fire) were among the city's most photographed landmarks of the time.

Real estate companies at the turn of the century had no governmental regulations, no standard commission fees, and no accepted code of ethics. Genteel advertisements, occasionally mentioning available properties but more frequently simply announcing a firm's name, address, and (if they were thoroughly up-to-date, telephone number) appear frequently. There were at least four other realtors in Greenville at the time, and while Mitchell and Furman was the youngest of the group, it did well.

And then came the Silver Panic of 1893. That depression, caused by the fall of the price of silver from over a dollar an ounce to less than forty cents, was the worst in the 19th century. It threw the nation into a multi-year recession, closed banks, bankrupted railroads, ruined companies, and depressed the real estate market nationally. In Greenville, Camperdown Mill closed, Lanneau Manufacturing went bankrupt, the Board of Trade collapsed, and substantial citizens who had invested heavily in the stock market lost their savings. Real estate sales dried up.

Perhaps as a result, the Mitchell and Furman partnership dissolved, and Furman joined William J. Thackston, one of his two former Furman classmates, who had already started an insurance business of his own, to form Thackston, Furman & Company. The new partners moved to an office on East Washington Street. Their quarters were commodious enough that Furman went into another (short-lived) business at the same location, creating Furman & Rabb, wholesale tobacconists, "purveying cigars to the trade."

Furman was also becoming involved in the community. In 1889, he had joined the Greenville Guards, one of the local militia units, where he was initially elected quartermaster sergeant and attorney (perhaps his only legal appointment), and by 1891 had been made first lieutenant. In March of 1894 the Guards saw their first action since the Civil War. In an 1892 referendum, the state had voted for prohibition, but Governor Ben Tillman, loathe to give up liquor tax revenues, had instead established the "dispensary system," policed by "revenue constables," where liquor was sold by the state in dispensaries located in each city. Administrative corruption followed. When citizens in Darlington rioted against the dispensary early in March 1894, the Governor called out militia units from around the state to put down the insurrection. According to Frank Barnes in *The Greenville Story*, Alester Furman led the Greenville troops into the fray, calling "To Arms, men!" Actually, it wasn't much of a fray, and the troops arrived back in Greenville three days later, but young Furman had shown his leadership.

Far more important was his first informal partnership with Lewis Parker. In the same year as the “Dispensary War,” the two men formed the Young Men’s Business League, with Parker as president and Furman as secretary, a role he was to play frequently in future community organizations. The League, referred to as the “Progressive Association” in the pages of the Greenville Daily News, rapidly enrolled more than 200 of the younger professional men and executives in the city. The new organization replaced the former Board of Trade, and while it maintained the former group’s emphasis on building a railroad to Knoxville and the west and supporting local cotton farmers, the new organization had wider interests.

Spurred by Parker and Furman, these future leaders worked to promote Greenville, improve sanitation, expand the water system, support education, and, most significantly, encourage the building of cotton mills. Alester Furman later commented that before 1895 Greenville did not have much in the way of industrial development. He was accurate. In February of that year a private railroad train carrying seventeen New England textile executives came to inspect southern cotton mills. The trip, organized by entrepreneur Daniel Tompkins of Charlotte, visited mills in the North Carolina piedmont and then traveled into South Carolina to see Piedmont, Pelzer, and Pacolet Mills. Lewis Parker invited them to stop in Greenville; they refused, politely. There was nothing to see here.

Or at least not much. Construction had already begun on Oscar H. Sampson’s American Spinning Company, which would open in June. Frank Poe was busily raising money for a new cotton mill, and O. P. Mills had announced that he was considering starting one of his own. In retrospect, 1895 was Greenville’s turning point. Economic conditions were improving. The Southern Railroad system had been formed by merging a number of poorly performing companies, thus lowering freight rates; land was cheap, and workers were available.

Like all of Greenville’s early “Textile Crescent” mills, these first three were under-funded, with capitalization ranging from \$200,000 to \$250,000 for what were called “risky experiments.” As a result, the new entrepreneurs were extremely cautious about expenditures, including the cost of land for their mills and villages. O. P. Mills owned a 300-acre dairy farm that could be converted to more profitable textile manufacture, and Sampson probably knew of available property through J. H. Morgan, his junior partner, but Frank Poe turned to Alester Furman. Furman found him an ideal site—60 acres of land on “Governor’s Hill,” just outside the city limits (thus avoiding taxes), with nearby Southern Railroad tracks and the White Oak Branch of the Reedy River flowing through the property—all for \$60,000.

While Furman may not have invested in the company, since sources consistently say that he purchased stock in every local mill that opened after 1898, he had found his calling—he and his company would find, assemble, and procure

options on the sites for the mills that created modern Greenville. In the next five years, for example, Thackston, Furman & Company found land for J. I. Westervelt when he developed Brandon Mill and for Lewis Parker at Monaghan. After Furman began his individual real estate brokerage, he assembled the land for Westervelt, soon to be Judson Mill. By 1902 he was considered such an expert on Greenville's textile mills that when S. S. Crittenden was writing *The Century Book*, the first history of the city and county, he asked the young realtor to write the pages on the history of Greenville's cotton industry.

But he did not neglect other ways to develop his home county. Early in 1896 he had purchased 1000 acres of land on Paris Mountain, the former estate of Waddy Thompson, formed the Paris Mountain Land Development Company, and began improving access to the mountain and laying out building lots on it. Lots and acreage sold rapidly, with nearly fifty one-acre lots and several purchases of 50 or more acres in the next fifteen years.

While his fortunes and reputation were rising, it took the Spanish-American War to make him locally famous. "Remember the Maine" became the national slogan and impetus to war in February 1898 when the U. S. S. *Maine* blew up in Havana Harbor. In June a five-sentence article buried at the bottom of the second page of the *Greenville News* suggested that several southern cities, not including Greenville, might be considered as sites for an army camp by a selection committee visiting Columbia. Alester Furman read the article and immediately went to Mayor J. T. Williams, suggesting that a committee immediately contact the army officers. The next morning the two men, together with Alderman James Richardson, boarded the Columbia train to urge Greenville's advantages as a camp site. When they arrived in the capital city, they discovered that the selection team had just left for Augusta. The next morning they headed off to Georgia. When they arrived in Augusta, they learned that the team had completed their survey and were on their way to Charlotte. So they once more got on the train and followed them.

Finally, in Charlotte, they met the officers, emphasized the land and water resources available in Greenville, and received assurances that the city would be inspected as a possible site. Then the three weary travelers rushed to board the railroad to Greenville—and discovered that after nearly a week of travel, they had only one dollar between them. The conductor was polite but merciless. Their promises to immediately wire the ticket money when they got home were ignored; they would be put off the train in Blacksburg. The three men had begun to contemplate a long walk back to Greenville when the train pulled into the Blacksburg depot. To their delight, however, the Rev. A. J. S. Thomas, the editor of the *Baptist Courier*, was boarding. When they explained their predicament, he paid for their tickets. Their arduous journey—and its promising outcome—became

a community legend.

The site visit was delayed until September, even though the protocols ending the Spanish-American War were signed in August. But the United States was still involved in Cuba and the Philippines, and army camps were still needed. The selection team was impressed with Greenville's resources, especially its abundant water supply, and agreed to recommend it. After a public meeting approved the idea on October 1, Furman, Williams, and Richardson (constituted as the Greenville committee), went to Washington. There they met with President McKinley and officially learned that Greenville would be the site of a camp for two brigades, comprising 10,000 men. Greenville preened; neighboring cities were deeply envious.

Camp Wetherill, named for the first American casualty in Cuba, was located on two sites, one on Stone property extending from Rutherford Road nearly to today's Wade Hampton Boulevard, and the other between what is now Dunbar Street and Dunean Mill. Both properties were assembled and optioned for military use by Alester Furman.

The first troops, from New York, arrived early in November. They were soon joined by men from New Jersey and Michigan, all of whom anticipated spending the winter in the "Sunny South." Ironically, the winter of 1898–99 was the coldest on record in Greenville. While high-ranking officers boarded at the relatively luxurious Mansion House on Main Street, soldiers lived in tents and were miserable in the unexpected snow and freezing weather, especially since many had discarded their winter clothes. A mule-drawn ambulance got stuck in Stone Avenue's deep red mud; that night temperatures plunged into the teens and the mud froze hard. It couldn't be moved for six weeks.

Greenvillians welcomed the northern troops, the first they had seen since Reconstruction ended in 1876. Many, though, were dismayed when the Governor of New Jersey, who came to town to inspect his state's contingent, reviewed the soldiers on a Sunday afternoon. "Breaking the Sabbath" was not the southern way. But their concern was alleviated by the jingle of cash registers. The army payroll was almost \$500,000 a month, and \$250,000 of that was spent in Greenville, much of it at the holidays. While some residents complained that they couldn't find Christmas presents, merchants blessed the army and celebrated what they called "the silk-shirt Christmas" of 1898.

If 1895 was the beginning of Greenville's modern industrial development, Camp Wetherill was the first step in Greenville's rejoining the nation. The South had embraced the Spanish-American War, and Greenville, proud of its camp and happy with its newfound prosperity, began, slowly, to realize that Yankees, contrary to what many believed, were not necessarily evil. Old wounds began to heal; American flags began to fly again; the 4th of July was celebrated by white



TROUPS AT CAMP WETHERILL

Greenvillians in 1899 for the first time since 1860. Alester Furman deserves some of the credit.

He also reaped some of the benefit. In 1900, again with partners, he formed the Melville Land Development Company and began developing a portion of the Stone property that had been part of Camp Wetherill along West Earle Street. He hired an auctioneer from Charleston and the Greenville brass band, and elegantly dressed and waving his tall silk hat, led a parade from downtown Greenville to the auction site about a mile away. To the wonder of bystanders and the press, and to his rather substantial profit, he sold \$17,000 worth of property during that single day. It was extraordinary by Greenville standards.

By 1901, in fact, the company was prospering with the textile industry, developing land, and moving into securities. And it had certainly embraced marketing. Every issue of the Greenville Daily News carried ads promoting properties. "We have six lots on Stone Avenue, 54 by 64, \$150 each, \$1.00 per week, no interest, no taxes until paid in full. Good opportunity for small savers. Title guaranteed, no charge for papers. Thackston, Furman & Company, 106 E. Washington Street, phone 105."

In addition, they advertised money (\$7,000) to loan on "first class city property," and "offered special terms on No. 1 Gilt Edge Securities." Those "gilt-edged" securities were primarily those from local textile mills, which Furman would consistently promote for more than twenty years. Most historians say that profits from southern mills went into northern pockets because the mills were

initially under-funded and New York selling agents and New England machinery manufacturers took stock in lieu of payment. While that statement is true for our early mills (like Camperdown and Piedmont) and generally correct after the Great Depression, it is not accurate from 1900 to about 1930 because Furman and a few others invested in and strongly encouraged local buying of local mill securities. In 1911, a Board of Trade publication commented that “There is no city in the South where so large a proportion of mill stock is owned by local people.” It’s a testimony to Furman’s faith and the city’s increasing prosperity.

His company was obviously making money, and Furman, by then the father of three children (Eleanor, Alester, Jr., and Rebecca), had become a civic leader. In October 1901, he and Parker, feeling the need to engage more of Greenville’s businessmen in the life of the community, formed a new Board of Trade in order to enlist the city’s established leaders as well as young professionals. Furman served as (unpaid) secretary, in effect doing all of the work of the association, until 1906, when the Board hired its first permanent paid employee. The new Board had an immediate impact. Aside from scheduling speakers who discussed bringing new emigrants to the city from Northern Europe, working toward municipal ownership of the water system, and hearing landscape architect Harlan Kelsey praise beautification, in their first two years they chose a city motto, “The Pearl of the Piedmont,” supported the building of an industrial YMCA at Monaghan Mill, and urged the cause of industrial diversification. In November 1903, the Greenville Piedmont commented that “The Board of Trade has done a large amount of excellent work in the past year, which will remain a monument to its energy, enterprise, and foresight in the future.” In later years, the Board of Trade helped merchants weather the Panic of 1907, published an illustrated guide to the city, organized Greenville’s first credit reporting bureau, and worried constantly about the scarcity of hitching posts in downtown. (Parking has always been a problem.) In 1912, when Furman was president of the group, the organization changed its name to the Greenville Chamber of Commerce and affiliated with the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce.

The Board of Trade worked hard to expand Greenville’s burgeoning textile industry, but Furman and Parker became concerned that the area was becoming too dependent on cotton mills and felt there was a need to diversify. They approached James B. Duke, the president of American Tobacco Company, who was already a powerful presence in Greenville, and reached an agreement that the Board of Trade would buy land and erect a building to house a cigar factory that he owned. (In case the arrangement didn’t work, they asked Joseph E. Sirrine, a Greenville mill architect and planner who had just gone into business for himself, to design a factory that could be easily converted to textile production.) The Seidenburg Cigar Factory, a wholly owned subsidiary of American Tobacco, opened

on East Court Street in 1903, on cheap (it bordered on Greenville's Red Light District) but convenient (near Camperdown Mill and the trolley line) land optioned by Alester Furman. The Board suggested that the cigars be named "Pearls of the Piedmont"; the company declined and called them "Lady Churchill's."

His increasing stature (although his family heritage undoubtedly helped) was acknowledged when Furman University appointed him a trustee in 1902. He was to serve that board as secretary from 1903 to 1936; in 1937, when he was seventy, the South Carolina Baptist Convention appointed him trustee for life. Assisting in the governance of the university that bore his name was probably motivated by a sense of responsibility and concern for his alma mater, but he may well have realized that the growth and improvement of the school would add to Greenville's development as well.

In 1903, after nearly ten years of partnership, Thackston and Furman parted ways; both began new real estate and insurance firms. (Thackston would go on to develop Sans Souci and later lay out Clarendon Avenue.) Furman went into business for himself. His first listing in the Greenville City Directory is already impressive: "Alester G. Furman, Secretary and treasurer, Mountain City Land & Improvement Co.; treasurer and general manager, Paris Mountain Land Company; real estate, stocks and bonds and insurance." There was also a new address—210 1/2 South Main Street, telephone 81. And, just to make sure that everyone remembered his business, he purchased what the City Directory called "sidelines"; on every fourth page, alternating with ads for celery soda, Finlay Brothers Grocery, and Kelly Tires, there's an inch-high listing at the left margin: "Alester G. Furman, Cotton Mill Securities Bought and Sold."

He was also becoming deeply interested in hydro-electric power generation. In partnership with Lewis Parker, J. Irving Westervelt, and his cousin, attorney Harry Haynsworth, in 1903 he chartered the Saluda Power Company and purchased a substantial amount of land on the Saluda River. Electric street lights, with power generated by the Greenville Gas, Electric, and Power Company from their plant on Broad Street (now the home of Northampton Wines) and an electric trolley system already served the community, and some individual buildings, like the Mansion House, had their own electric turbines. But soon after Furman and his partners in the Carolina Power Company (the name changed before generation began) finished constructing the second hydro-electric plant in the state on the Saluda River in 1905, the plant generated enough power to light up homes and businesses throughout the city. At the same time, it provided enough electricity to power Westervelt's Brandon and Carolina (later Poinsett) Mills and their villages as well as Parker's Monaghan Mill, the location of its Greenville substation. The company, with Furman as president, was so successful that James B. Duke purchased it in 1910 and incorporated it into his Southern Utilities Company, later

Duke Power Company.

Even while he was busy electrifying Greenville, Furman continued expanding his real estate business. His friend and best man, B. A. Morgan, wanted to start a bank. Furman found the ideal location—the northeast corner of Coffee and Main Street—and approached Carrie V. Cauble, the out-of-town owner, about building on the lot. In 1905, when the Cauble Building opened with the Bank of Commerce as its major tenant, his company, evidently for the first time, became the leasing agent for the building; it served in that capacity for at least the next twenty years. That building, restored to its original appearance between 1985 and 1986, now houses Ristorante Bergamo.

He also maintained his active involvement in the Board of Trade, where he urged the creation of a Municipal League to focus on improving the city's sanitation and appearance. Thomas Parker, Lewis's cousin, became president of the organization. Its first project was to create a city beautification plan. To do so, they turned to Harlan Kelsey, a Boston landscape architect and planner who was already becoming nationally significant in bringing the ideas of the "City Beautiful" movement, launched at Chicago's Columbian Exposition in 1893, to towns and cities across America. Thomas Parker had known Kelsey in North Carolina, where he had worked with him and his father, a nurseryman, to plat and develop both Linville and Highlands. Lewis and Thomas Parker had later hired Kelsey to design the landscaping for their new homes in the new Boyce Lawn subdivision and to lay out their Monaghan Mill, and he had already completed a plan for Columbia before coming to Greenville. Kelsey visited the city several times to study conditions and discuss his plans with the Board of Trade. In January 1907 the Municipal League published the results of his research and thinking: "Beautifying and Improving Greenville, South Carolina."

By the time the plan, calling for street cleaning and widening, demolishing substandard buildings, creating parks, and ridding the Reedy River of mosquito breeding places and slaughterhouses, was published, Furman was involved in two other projects. The first was erecting a new hotel to house the increasing number of salesmen and other visitors who needed a clean and convenient place to stay. The second was replacing the old county courthouse and the jail, both embarrassments to the rapidly growing area. (The 1910 census would show the city's population increasing by a third from the previous decade, from approximately 11,800 to 15,700, and the county's by 28 percent, from 53,500 to 68,400 since 1900).

New York financiers and selling agents, New England textile machine manufacturers, traveling salesmen (called drummers because they "drummed up" business), and internationally known performers had begun to make regular visits to this suddenly assertive small city. But there was no place to house them. The





OTTARAY HOTEL PICTURED IN THE 1940S

old Mansion House, built in 1823, was small and hadn't been updated since 1887. Boarding houses offered neither privacy, good food, nor comfort. Greenville needed a new hotel.

It got a first-class one because business leaders, including Alester G. Furman, F. F. Capers, and C.O. Allen, saw the necessity, raised enough money, hired a talented architect, and found an experienced and committed proprietor to make the hotel's initial years a grand success. Private partnerships for public progress (and, not incidentally, private gain) were typical of Furman and became typical of Greenville.

With other progressive businessmen who took stock in the new enterprise, they formed the Greenville Hotel Company in the summer of 1907. The company immediately purchased "the old Coxe property" on North Main Street between Elford and Oak Streets for \$20,513. The property included substantial land as well as a large house, which they immediately leased to the new Poinsett Club for a facility where business leaders could gather for meals. The club remained in the building until it was demolished and replaced by the Carolina Theatre in 1925.

They built the new hotel just south of the Coxe house at the top of Main Street. Greenville's Confederate Memorial stood in the middle of the oak-tree lined residential block looking south to East North Street. Because it was several blocks distant from the main business district, critics thought it a questionable location.

Alester Furman knew better.

In September, the Hotel Company hired a young architect, George LaFaye of Columbia, to build a five-story hotel, one of the state's earliest "high-rise" buildings. Plans for the \$100,000 white-painted brick building included 83 rooms (some with private baths), a lobby, a sample room for salesmen, two dining rooms, a ladies' parlor, and remarkable "modern conveniences" including steam heat, an electric elevator, and a telephone in every room. The new hotel, named the "Ottaray" for the Cherokee word for mountains, had a first floor veranda studded with pleasant rocking chairs. On the second floor, there was a covered two-story balcony; above it was an open but railed third balcony.

In a somewhat daring move for the time, the Hotel Company also hired Minnie Quinn of Portsmouth, Virginia, a young woman of considerable charm and substantial hotel experience, to be the hotel "proprietress." The terms of the lease indicated that she was to provide all furniture and pay \$800 a month to the Hotel Company. She outfitted the "handsome hostelry" with 11 train cars of furniture and purchased a \$1000 piano locally.

On the evening of June 16, 1909, Miss Quinn opened the Ottaray with a public reception, "a scene of splendor," according to the Greenville Daily News, that included a table d'hote dinner, dancing to the music of a string quartet in the ballroom, and a receiving line of "sponsors." Although newspaper accounts do not list the members of the receiving line, Alester Furman, who was (once again) secretary of the Board of Directors of the Greenville Hotel Company, must have had a place of honor.

Early minutes of directors' meetings are unavailable, but their record book from 1911 to 1962 indicates that stockholders' annual meetings were consistently held in Furman's office. He continued to serve as secretary until the early 1940s, missing only one annual meeting in 40 years; then he became chairman and his son, Alester Furman, Jr. , became secretary. The last meeting record to bear his by-then faltering signature was held in December 1958, when he was ninety-one years old. In the twenty years just prior to the hotel's being razed and replaced by the Downtowner Motel, Furman Company principals, including Alester Furman, Jr. , Alester Furman, III, and Junius Garrison consistently served as either president or secretary. From 1954 until 1962, the Furman Company managed the hotel.

The second project, which took far longer than Furman could have anticipated, was to build a new jail and courthouse. The Broad Street Jail, referred to locally as "Old Siberia," was in dreadful condition. The building housed the jailer, whose kitchen boasted the only water available to prisoners, had no drains (foul water and refuse were emptied by buckets into the prison yard, where their smells combined with the stink of refuse dumped under the Reedy River Bridge

and the equally unpleasant odors from a nearby slaughterhouse), and crowded conditions. The jail had been “unfit for human habitation” for years.

The second problem was the courthouse. The old one, a hulking gray Gothic Revival structure built in 1856, was an aesthetic and functional embarrassment. Judges, jurors, and attorneys had complained for fifty years about its “hideous” appearance, leaking roof, and echoing acoustics. At the urging of Furman and others, in the early fall of 1907 the county legislative delegation appointed a commission, headed by Furman, to oversee the construction of a new courthouse and a jail that would reflect Greenville’s dignity and anticipated future importance. A bond issue, supported by a local referendum, would be essential in order to erect two major buildings.

But before that project (or the Municipal League’s proposed improvement scheme) could get off the ground, the Panic of 1907 interrupted progress. The stock market had been weak since March, but in October a run on New York trust companies led to failures and a massive downturn in the market led first the federal government and finally financier J. P. Morgan to intervene. Greenville felt the reverberations; cash became tight, stock speculators lost thousands of dollars, and there were rumors—but not the reality—of bank failures here. Nationally the Panic of 1907 was over by the spring of 1908, although its memory lingered on and led to the creation of the Federal Reserve System five years later. Locally, it lasted longer, although the Board of Trade intervened to support local financial institutions. Its persistence quashed any hopes of immediately floating an (always unpopular) bond issue for local improvements.

Heading the Jail and Courthouse Commission was Furman’s first political appointment, but it was not his last. In 1914 he was asked to chair Greenville’s educational “Sinking Fund.” With former Governor Martin Ansel, Bennette Geer (then the president of Judson Mill, later the president of Furman University), and Furman Norris, he invested school tax revenues placed in this reserve fund by the city school district. The point was to protect and fund a bond issue to build and expand schools and thus assure bond buyers that there would be sufficient money to repay the debt when the bonds matured in 1942. While it must have a frustrating and depressing responsibility in the 1930s, when the stock market plunged, he rejoiced in 1941, when the bonds were finally paid off a year in advance of their expiration.

Despite his public trust, local popularity, and increasing fortune, Furman never ran for elective office because he had no interest or desire to do so. He even refused to be a deacon in First Baptist Church, because, he said, he didn’t think that he had the leadership capability. While he had already shown that he had the ideas and motivation, he was clearly more comfortable working behind the scenes as secretary rather than as president of organizations. But he gave his time

willingly for the cause he most believed in—improving Greenville.

He also had a personal life. He and his family still lived in his wife's childhood home on Academy Street that he had purchased from James Hoyt in 1890. By 1911, they had added two new daughters, Lucy and Constance, to their growing family, and young Alester, Jr. had entered Furman University. Their daughter Eleanor, a student at the Female College, was a young suffragette who would, in a few years, become a professional organizer for women's voting rights. The family remained on Academy Street until 1920, when they moved to an elegant new home on Broadus Avenue adjacent to the recently constructed Fourth Presbyterian Church. He lived there for the rest of his life, although his family retreated during the summers to the prime land on Paris Mountain that he had reserved for himself.

Although his home address remained stable, his business moved frequently after he formed his own firm. His first office after splitting with Thackston was on the second floor of a dry goods store on South Main; three years later, he moved to the Palmetto Building, just north of the old Record Building. In 1911 he had established his real estate practice in the new Masonic Building, and a few years later moved into the even newer Southeastern Life Building. In 1923, his company became the first tenant and the leasing agents, for the new 17-story Woodside Building on Main Street. Initially their headquarters was on the third floor, but in later years they occupied the 15th floor of the skyscraper.

Although he was a busy realtor and stock broker (and he must have been exceptionally well organized to maintain his real estate practice, oversee the building of the Ottaray, and run Carolina Power Company while balancing his civic responsibilities), he constantly lobbied the legislative delegation and worked to convince business leaders in the Board of Trade that a major expenditure was necessary to replace the jail and courthouse. The legislative delegation finally agreed to a kind of county-wide referendum—"kind of" because it was limited to members of the Democratic Party. (The very few Republicans in the county were primarily black, who were effectively barred from the vote.) The first one, in late 1908, was doomed from the start because of the Panic the previous year. The second, in 1910, was also defeated, but by a closer margin. Then the state condemned the jail as unfit for human habitation. No public vote would now be necessary; a new jail had to be built. Politicians, reluctant to increase taxes, did not rush construction.

But Furman kept pressing for a new courthouse as well. The legislative delegation, according to an article published in the Greenville News in the 1940s, really wanted a bond issue for roads, but agreed that would be too expensive, so they half-heartedly endorsed the idea of floating bonds of \$60,000 to build a new courthouse using the walls of the old one and thus reducing the cost, and including

the \$30,000 necessary for a new jail. At a meeting of the county Democratic Party in January 1915, one speaker pointed out that “decent pigs were cleaner” than the courthouse, and that dirt was so thick that “you could plant turnips in it.” The audience responded, the newspaper reported, with “merry laughs.” Two weeks later, though, in the midst of a rainy spell when roads were muddy and streams high, the issue was endorsed by the 3,000 Greenvillians who made it to the polls. County voters were against it; city voters endorsed the motion overwhelmingly.

Even before Furman and three other leaders purchased the \$100,000 in bonds for the buildings, the Commission had already invited local architects to submit jail designs. In April 1915, Commission members accepted the plan proposed by Joseph T. Lawrence, a young architect whose father, J. R. Lawrence, had been the supervising architect for Greenville’s 1892 post office (later City Hall).

The three-story building, eventually 7500 square feet, included a two-story front residence for the jailer, seven fireplaces, twelve foot ceilings, and secure cells. The Greenville News reported that it would be “modern in every particular, and the main walls will be made of a special pressed brick.” The jail was erected to house “the cleverest crooks who may from time to time find their way within the keeping of the county.” It was built on the same site as “old Siberia,” which was immediately demolished. Construction began in May, and the “very nice and substantial” new jail was completed by the following January.

It took longer to get the courthouse. Atlanta architect Thornton Mayre provided far more expansive and expensive plans than had originally been proposed. They included offices for all county officials in a rear eight-story tower as well as an impressive three-story front section for a courtroom with a balcony and space for judges’ chambers. His design for the new “temple of justice” was in the Beaux Arts style, well adapted to public buildings.

Because of the building’s size and its limited funding, Mayre proposed concrete construction faced with cream color bricks with decorative details made of terra cotta. Gigantic Ionic columns would rise above the unadorned but massive entrance to the important second and third floors (the courtroom and balcony space).

A Charlotte contractor made the low bid of \$100,000 on the elaborate building. Even though the cost was \$40,000 more than voters had approved, the legislative delegation agreed that the additional expense was necessary “for the erection of a first class building.” It eventually cost well over \$150,000.

After the third courthouse was demolished in the summer of 1915, the commission decided that instead of rebuilding on the same site, which abutted directly on Main Street, they would set the new court building farther back on the property in order to provide open space for public gatherings and give an even more imposing initial impression. The cornerstone was laid with Masonic

ceremonies on October 10, 1916.

But just as it was beginning to rise from the ground, the United States entered World War I. Woodrow Wilson, who had been re-elected in 1916 using the slogan "He Kept Us Out of the War," reluctantly entered the conflict with Germany in April 1917. But in early March, anticipating the declaration of war, a Greenville delegation, encouraged by Furman and others, had already visited Washington to urge the military to consider the county as a site for an army camp in case of war. At the same time, Furman went into action. With Oscar Mauldin and William Sirrine, he optioned 1,000 acres at the foot of Paris Mountain for a possible camp. In June, General Leonard Wood visited the city, agreed to the location, and in August the first troops arrived at newly constructed Camp Sevier.

Although he was personally overseeing the construction of the new courthouse, Alester Furman (he was beginning, to his discomfort, to be referred to as Alester Furman, Sr.) began two new companies with the help of his son, Alester, Jr., who had graduated from Furman in 1914 and had immediately joined his father's real estate practice. Although he took a leave of absence to fight with American troops late in 1917, Alester Furman, Jr., returned soon after the Armistice in November 1918 and became deeply involved in his father's new enterprises as well as his real estate, insurance, and property management business.

The first was the Greenville Morris Plan. The idea had begun in Virginia in 1910 in response to the difficulty many low-income but steadily employed people had in obtaining loans. The problem was that without collateral, a workman, even one with a job, could not obtain money to better himself or to start a new business unless he went to a loan shark where interest was exorbitant and unregulated. The Morris Plan, however, allowed individuals to borrow if they had two co-signers on the loan who were also gainfully employed. The interest rate was 6 percent with a \$2.00 origination fee. Furman was president of the local organization, started in January 1917, which he ran out of his real estate office; his son was cashier. This new banking business, which he continued for only a few years until other, larger, Greenville banks began making loans on more generous terms, was clearly related to his previous loan-making. His second new enterprise, however, was distinctly different.

In 1918 he chartered the Greenville Cemetery Association and developed Graceland Cemetery on Washington and Pendleton Streets in West Greenville, convenient to textile mills. And immediately adjacent to it, he built Graceland Greenhouses (A. G. Furman, proprietor; A. G. Furman, Jr., secretary and treasurer). Although the businesses seem totally unrelated to his past experience or activities, they do make sense. He owned the land. Cotton mills employed thousands of workers, and while some mills had burying grounds, they were small

and often untended. Springwood Cemetery grave sites were costly (they were selling for a hundred dollars), restricted in number, and its location uncomfortable for mill workers who often felt like second class citizens when they came downtown. Many Greenville men had died in the Great War, and hundreds of others—civilians as well as military personnel—died during the horrendous influenza epidemic in 1918 and early 1919. There was a need, a continuing supply of customers, and he could provide the flowers as well as the cemetery plot—all for a reasonable price. In addition, by using his offices in the Southeastern Life Building as the cemetery’s headquarters, his overhead was low. Yet at the same time that he was busy with these new enterprises, he also agreed to lead Greenville’s final Victory Loan Drive in early 1919.

In 1920 he changed the name of his firm to the Alester G. Furman Company to reflect its enlarged interests and newly expanded staff. But the “Company” was all family. After Eleanor married Robert E. Hudgens, he joined the company; when Rebecca married Broadus Bailey, whom she had met when he was stationed at Camp Sevier, he too joined his father-in-law’s firm.

In the early 1920s, the expanding company continued its domination of the booming Greenville real estate market. The fact that Furman personally was a member of the Boards of Directors of Victor-Monaghan, Southern Worsted, Easley Mills, the Peoples National Bank (where he had banked since 1888), Southeastern Life Insurance, Brandon Mills, and Judson Mills probably helped. When the Greenville Board of Realtors was formed in 1924, the Alester G. Furman Company was among its charter members. And when it looked as if the Greenville Spinners, the city’s cherished Salley League baseball team, would be financially unable to resume play in the 1925 season, Alester Furman was one of eight Greenvillians who stepped forward to buy bonds that ensured that a new stadium—Graham Field—to be used jointly with Furman University, would be erected.

In 1919, Furman, Harry Haynsworth, J. W. Norwood, and W.P. Conyers had purchased all stock in the Greenville Hotel Association—the Ottaray Hotel—when Minnie Quinn Gassaway, the “proprietress,” gave up her ten-year lease. The hotel made money in the prosperous early twenties, and seeing an opportunity, the directors decided to sell the Coxe house and erect in its place the Carolina Theatre, a “Dreamland,” for both movies and state performances, according to the Greenville Civic and Commercial Journal in June 1925. One of the earliest radio broadcasts from Greenville—in 1926—came from the stage of the Carolina. They also leased out several shops—a barber and florist among others, in the Ottaray.

Furman continued to be a leader in the Chamber of Commerce. He headed the Chamber’s “Industrial Bureau” beginning in 1923, charged with encouraging new businesses (including Southern Worsted, Southern Bleachery, and Slater Manufacturing, for whom he also assembled land). He had also become involved,

with other Chamber members, in encouraging, unsuccessfully, the building of a Greenville airport. Mayor Richard Watson insisted in 1927 that there wasn't enough money to do so. Three years later, when they lobbied for airmail service from the city, that campaign was more successful. On August 21, 1930, he was photographed by the Greenville News, in an obviously posed position, enthusiastically shoveling the first airmail bags to leave Greenville into the hold of a yellow and black "Mailwing" of Eastern Air Transport with Mayor A. C. Mann, Congressman J. J. McSwain, Senator Joseph Bryson, and several textile executives.

Several years later, however, Eastern Airlines proposed eliminating the Greenville stop and picking up and delivering only to Spartanburg. A Chamber committee including Roger Peace, the owner of the Greenville News, Mel Glen, the Chamber director, and Furman immediately went to Washington to persuade the Postmaster General that a Greenville stop was essential. They were successful, and Greenville remained on the route.

Although he celebrated his sixtieth birthday in 1927, and he was gray-haired and a bit portly, he had not yet slowed down. The next difficult decade, though, sapped his financial resources and led to a changing of the guard in his company. The beginnings of the Great Depression had been felt in Greenville long before the New York stock market crashed in 1929. A combination of the boll weevil, devastating drought and storms, and the introduction of California cotton rapidly dropped the all-important price of cotton, reduced the value of farm land, and led some financial institutions, including B. A. Morgan's Bank of Commerce, to fail in 1926. And then the Woodside brothers, overextended by attempting to create a luxurious resort on a myrtle-covered beach in Horry County, went bankrupt in 1927. Lease rates on properties were reduced once, and then again; dividends from textile mills dried up; mills struggled to survive. There were lots of properties for sale, but few buyers with the necessary cash or collateral were available to purchase them. And then it got worse. In October 1930, the Seidenburg Cigar Factory suddenly closed its doors, leaving 200 women unemployed. Alester Furman, Sr., was appointed chairman of a committee to negotiate with the owners for a relief fund to be administered by the YWCA.

On the brighter side, the Great Depression brought unprecedented government funds to the city for the construction of public buildings. For two years the Chamber of Commerce, according to news articles, "waged a relentless campaign" for the replacement of the city's post office and federal building. Furman especially was untiring in his lobbying to build a new structure. In 1932, thanks to Congressman J. J. McSwain and Senator Jimmy Byrnes, that lobbying was successful. And when the building's cornerstone was laid, Furman made the welcoming address to the assembled dignitaries and local citizens.





GREENVILLE'S NEW FEDERAL POST OFFICE UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Furthermore, he had become deeply involved in Furman University's struggles. He was a longtime member of the executive committee of its Board of Trustees, and his wife, Nell, was a member of the executive committee of the Board of the Greenville Woman's College. They worked together to somehow reconcile the competing needs of the two institutions, both in dire financial straits, and both seeking to maintain their identities as the financial crisis darkened around them. The Women's College, unaccredited and with a tiny endowment, was falling deeply in debt. The University, accredited, was kept alive only by funds from the Duke Endowment. For nearly two years, through weekly and sometimes biweekly meetings at Furman's real estate office, the two executive committees hammered out an agreement, reluctantly agreed to on both sides, that would coordinate the two institutions and make GWC, as it was called, the Women's College of Furman University. The new arrangement began tentatively in 1932; by 1936, a coeducational university was a reality, and in 1937 it was official.

In the meantime, Alester Furman, Jr., had taken a commanding role in the firm. Although his father remained listed on company stationery and in advertisements as senior partner until his death in 1962, Alester, Jr., became responsible for the company and heir to the Furman real estate legacy in 1932.

In his last years, Alester Furman, Sr. (“that’s not my name!” he always said), spent several months each year in Ponte Verde, Florida, but he was always present at the annual meetings of the Greenville Hotel Association, corporate Boards of Directors, and Furman’s Board of Trustees. During the early days of World War II, as one of his last major public involvements, he helped lobby to bring an Army Air Base—later Donaldson Air Force Base—to Greenville.

Furman University awarded him a well-deserved Doctor of Laws degree in 1942. Eighteen years later, when he was well past eighty, he insisted that Furman President John Plyler drive him out the Buncombe Road so he could see the university’s new location. On October 6, 1953, he turned over the first shovel of dirt at the groundbreaking for the new campus. He died on March 6, 1962. The old bell tower on the campus above the Reedy River had been long abandoned by that time, but if it had still functioned, its bells would have tolled for a remarkable alumnus. Three years later, his family funded an exact replica of that bell tower on the new Furman campus in his honor.

When he died, eulogies came from across the state and nation. Robert T. Stevens, the chairman of the board of J. P. Stevens & Company in New York, commented, for example, “on his remarkable record of service to the community.” But perhaps Frank Barnes, writing in the *Greenville Story* in 1954, most eloquently summarized the contributions of Alester Furman, a man he had admired and known well since the turn of the century. He said that Furman was “a serious minded citizen of the first water, laying the foundation of one of the most lucrative businesses of the day, plodding, working, talking Greenville and its future. He was never idle, not a dreamer, but an indefatigable worker for the good of the town, a Christian gentlemen with a desire to improve the lives of its citizens.”





CHAPTER II



ALESTER G. FURMAN JR.  
DEPRESSION TO REDEVELOPMENT

PHOTO: ALESTER G. FURMAN, JR. CIRCA 1930





CONSTRUCTION ON THE POST OFFICE WAS COMPLETED DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION.

## **ALESTER G. FURMAN, JR. DEPRESSION TO REDEVELOPMENT**

WHEN HIS FATHER BEGAN SELLING REAL ESTATE IN 1888, GREENVILLE WAS POISED AT THE BEGINNING OF AN ERA OF REMARKABLE GROWTH. When Alester G. Furman, Jr., assumed the company's leadership in 1932, the nation, state, and county were mired in the deepest economic depression in the history of the United States. Yet during the next thirty years, until his retirement on December 31, 1960, Alester G. Furman, Jr., and his company overcame that disaster, forged alliances, created wealth, and made the decisions that helped form contemporary Greenville.

His ability to survive the Great Depression and to make a lasting mark on the community could not have been predicted. An only son reared in a privileged home, he was adored by his four sisters and indulged by his parents; he was his father's heir apparent. Destined from birth to attend the family university, he was sent to the Furman Fitting School, a preparatory school on the campus, when he was

eleven. Four years later, he enrolled at the university. When he graduated in 1914, he was only nineteen, labeled the “baby of the class” by his classmates.

Neither his academic work nor his involvement in the life of the college was noteworthy; he played a little tennis, belonged to a few social clubs, but did not distinguish himself in any way. Yet even then he knew his future direction. He planned, says the annual, “to follow in paternal footsteps and be a broker.” In the class prophecy he is envisioned as “sleeping away whole days away down on Main Street under a sign which reads ‘A. G. Furman and Father, Real Estate.’”

He didn’t do much sleeping after he joined his father’s company that pre-war summer. He became the company bookkeeper, closely involved in learning everything he could about the multi-faceted real estate, insurance, and investment business. In 1916, his father made him a partner. He had time, though, to romance Janie Earle, a 1914 graduate of the Greenville Female College, the university’s sister school, which was located on what is today Heritage Green. Her parents, Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Baylis Earle, had enrolled her in the college’s kindergarten, primary, and “sub-secondary” programs before she entered the college. The young couple were ideally matched: both Baptists, both from wealthy and distinguished families (the Earles were among the county’s first settlers), both well-educated for the time. Their wedding in November 1916 was the socially prestigious, and soon afterwards they moved into a spacious brick home on Whitsett Street in the Boyce Lawn sub-division.

Beginning in January 1917, his primary job became serving as cashier and a member of the Board of Directors of his father’s newly established Morris Plan and working as treasurer of their new association that was developing Graceland Cemetery. But in April 1917, America entered World War I, and by the end of the year, Furman, now twenty-two and an expectant father, had joined the 114th Field Artillery. He was sent to Camp Zachary Taylor near Louisville to the artillery officers’ training school, where he became friends with Baxter Jackson, a young Tennessean who was hired by the Chemical Bank of New York after the war. That friendship created an exceptionally important financial and personal connection that continued throughout their lives.

His wartime experience changed Alester Furman’s life. While he never saw active duty, it was during the war, he said in a letter written forty years later, “that I learned to think.” He also began to realize, he says, how much he could have learned if he had bothered to study during his college days and how much he owed to the Furman faculty who had granted “such a scatter-brained youth” a degree. Commissioned a second lieutenant in December 1918, a month after the Armistice, he returned to Greenville early in the spring of 1919.

He took on the time-consuming volunteer position of university athletic manager for a year or two, but he was so involved in buying and selling real estate



that his activities were mentioned in the Greenville News's annual year-end summary for 1919. In the early 1920s, by then the father of two sons, Alester, III, and Earle, he assisted his father in identifying and assembling property for the northern textile mills that were eagerly moving into town. He also became thoroughly involved in the company's securities business, underwriting stock issues for new local textile firms like Southern Worsted and Southern Bleachery and Printworks as well as for older mills like Judson and Dunean. (In later years they would necessarily diversify, handling new stock issues for Claussen's Bakery, Winn-Dixie Stores, and Texize Chemicals, among others.)

Whether their underwriting involved a "firm commitment" to come up with substantial capital after inspecting the mill's books and then making a profit on the stock price, or a "good faith effort" without the investment and for lesser profits is unclear. Either process would have taught him a great deal about reading the bottom line of mill profits and losses. His relationship with Baxter Jackson, who had become a vice president of Chemical Bank, continued. That firm, which had substantial investments in the southern textile industry, offered him a position in their office three times between 1922 and 1932. By the time he was thirty, he had come to understand finance, to assess the value of property, and to judge the integrity of people— qualities that he would need in the years ahead.

By the late 1920s, he was managing all of the Alester G. Furman Company's finances, an unenviable position at a time when the South Carolina economy was sagging. The deadly boll weevil had hit the state immediately after the First World War began, but it did not get to Greenville County until 1923. Its impact on cotton crops was immediate: production fell drastically. At the same time, the price of cotton collapsed because California's postwar production had soared. As a result, farmers all over the state saw their land values drop rapidly at the same time they were squeezed for cash to make mortgage payments. They stopped buying non-essential goods. Mills, facing declining sales and profits, fired older workers, cut salaries, and instituted the "stretch-out," attempting to use modern industrial engineering methods to produce more goods with fewer workers. Workers rebelled and went on strike, further cutting profits and dividends. In addition, the overheated and unregulated stock market had climbed precipitously throughout the decade, luring many small investors to borrow money to purchase stocks on margin for quick profits. Banks, burdened with loans on suddenly unprofitable and over-valued farms and on stocks purchased without collateral, began to fail. Well before the stock market crash on October 24, 1929, South Carolina was in depression.

Two weeks before that "Black Thursday," rumors began to circulate in Greenville that the Woodside Bank was in trouble. Neither the Furmans nor their company banked with the Woodsides (Alester Furman, Sr., had established a

relationship with People's National Bank when it opened in 1888), even though



FOUNDING OF PEOPLE'S BANK IN GREENVILLE

they were the leasing agents for the Woodside brothers' 17-story building and had their offices on its 14th floor. However, when Alester Furman, Jr., saw the mass of people rushing to withdraw their savings from the bank, he immediately made a substantial deposit of company funds to show confidence and stop the run on reserves. Local banks stepped in the next day and loaned the Woodside Bank \$400,000.

Then he went off to New York. When he returned, he learned that People's National Bank, then headquartered in Charleston, was negotiating with the Woodsides to take over the bank's liabilities and continue operating it as the Greenville Branch of People's Bank. Late one evening several days later, People's Bank officers asked him to come to the Poinsett Hotel to analyze the Woodside Bank's assets, which were based almost entirely in the Woodside Mill. After a midnight review of their books, he agreed that the mill's assets would support the People's Bank takeover of the Woodside Bank.

They did so, and in order to re-establish confidence in the financial institution, asked him to accept a position as Greenville vice-president. He agreed to a six-month term, giving them an hour a day at no pay. Then he returned to New York, this time with People's president R. G. Rhett. There Furman met with Baxter Jackson at Chemical Bank, from whom he learned that the Woodside Company owed \$1.5 million in back taxes to the U. S. government. The liability was not included in their financial statement.

He was dismayed. He realized that his advice had been wrong, and that the

mill stock had little value. Because he knew how essential stable banking institutions were to a community, he took on the almost full-time (but still unpaid) task of keeping the Greenville branch solvent. He was especially concerned about the debts of John T. Woodside, who headed the family. His assets just three years earlier had included the Ocean Forest Hotel in then totally undeveloped Myrtle Beach, a controlling interest in the Poinsett Hotel, the Woodside Building, and the Woodside Mills. Furman refused to allow the bank to cover Woodside's checks without deposits to cover the drafts and pushed to recover as much as he could on Woodside's other debts. After the novice banker had been on the job for less than a year, he was so successful that he was named state vice president of the American Bankers Association.

But from the time he joined People's Bank, where he was also a director, he was concerned about that institution's viability. (After his first meeting with the Greenville loan committee, he said years later, he learned "that you could borrow money without putting up any collateral or having any statement or value to the name that was on the note.") Branches in the low country had made many unsecured loans, and in the worst year of the Great Depression, the bank's finances were increasingly perilous.

He tried to resign his vice presidency twice, but each time People's executives convinced him to stay. Even during the fall and early winter of 1931, when he finally gave up, he spent as much time in Charleston as he did in Greenville, working closely with friends at both Chemical Bank and Chase Manhattan in New York to prop up the failing bank. His resignation in December did not end his involvement. His correspondence shows how fully he was absorbed in attempting to save the bank, and when that proved impossible, to reorganize it. He greeted the announcement that a Chemical Bank executive had accepted the presidency with relief, yet he despaired when it became clear that depositors and stockholders would receive 18 cents for every invested dollar.

In his files at the Furman University Archives are more than a dozen letters from Greenvillians applauding his performance during those excruciating months. "You fought a wonderful fight, old fellow, and we all appreciate what you did," wrote World War I hero Heyward Mahon. Business leader Milton Smith commented that he realized that Furman's recent life "has not been a bed of roses," but that he knew "if the ship went down, you would be standing at the bridge!" A letter from the executive vice president of South Carolina National Bank in Columbia concluded, "The People of South Carolina owe you a great deal and I hope that someday there will be some measure of reward for you."

In 1930, in order to look after the interests of People's Bank, he had agreed to join the Board of Directors of the Woodside Mill, where he worked to change what he considered inefficient and ineffective management and inadequate profitability.

In 1936, at his urging, Marshall Beattie was appointed president and his brother, Billy Beattie, treasurer, and the mill began making money. He remained a member of that board of directors for the next thirty years, developing a close relationship with executives of the Oliver Iselin Company, the New York commission house that took over when the mill, bankrupt, was reorganized in 1930. The relationship continued after 1956, when Dan River Mills purchased Woodside Mill. In 1965, four years after he had retired from the Furman Company, Dan River named its newest Greenville plant in his honor.

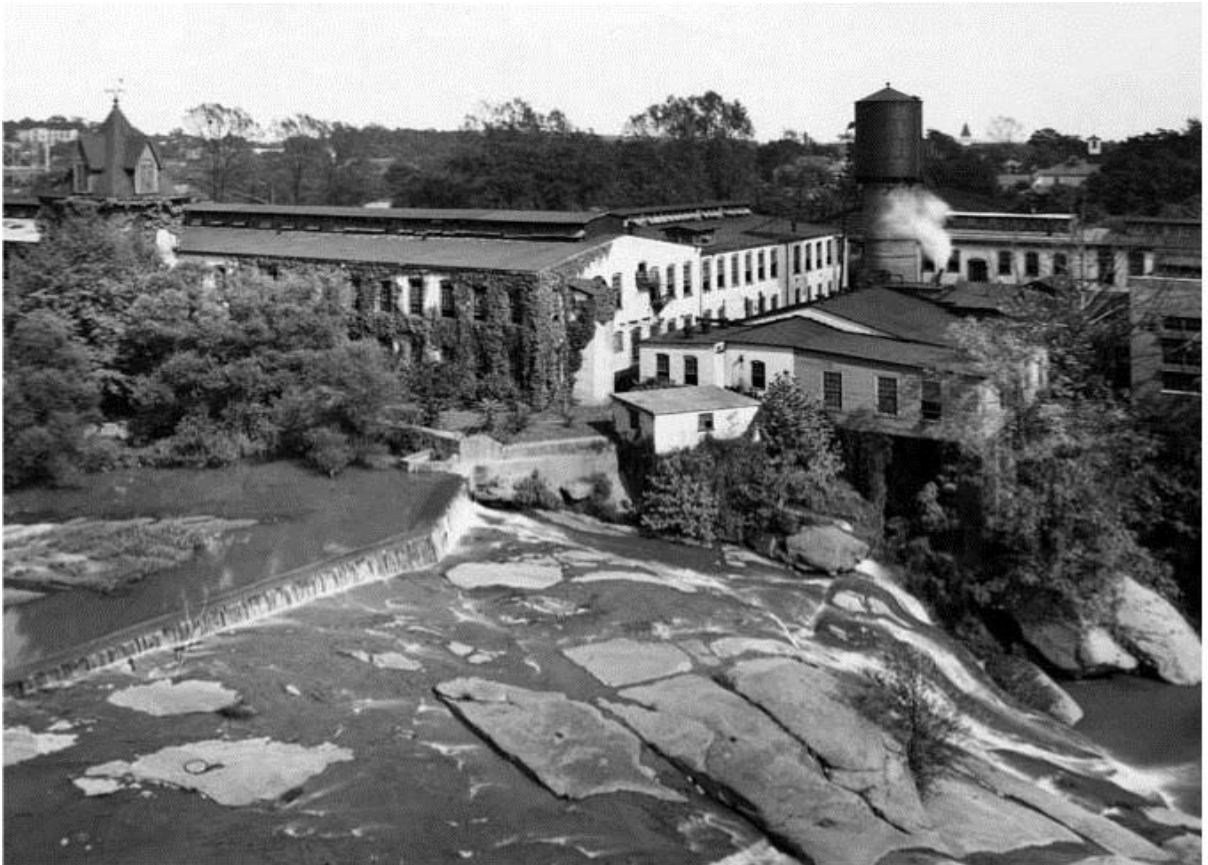
Becoming a director of Woodside Mills was not his first incursion into the working textile business through his position at People's Bank. In October 1929, the Camperdown Mill closed; in January 1931, the Greenville News announced that it would liquidate and be sold at auction. The mill, founded by three Boston businessmen in 1876, was Greenville's oldest, located on the north bank of the Reedy River opposite Furman University. Its tower was a city landmark, and for many years Camperdown was a reasonably profitable business. Always under-capitalized, though, its long existence had been marked by occasional bankruptcies until C. E. Graham purchased it in 1903. While at one time it had been the second largest cotton mill in South Carolina, by the 1920s, when its capitalization was still only \$100,000, the mill was one of the smallest textile operations. Even so, according to its respected president, Alan Graham, approximately 250 operatives would be thrown out of work. Since Camperdown owed money to South Carolina National, First National, and People's Banks, and their losses would be horrific if it shut down, the three institutions formed a syndicate, represented by Alester Furman, Jr., which purchased the mill, village, and equipment for \$270,000 at the auction.

Two months later, he and John W. Arrington, Jr., president of Union Bleachery, chartered the Camperdown Company to operate the mill. Together with a group of experienced textile managers, they formed a board that included Frederick Symmes of Nuckasee Manufacturing, C.E. Hatch of Brandon Mill and former Camperdown Mill treasurer Sidney Bruce, a seasoned textile executive from Pickens. Bruce was elected president of the reorganized mill, which continued operating throughout the Great Depression and into the 1950s. Furman was initially a member of the mill's board of directors, but his tenure was a formality, although his company continued to handle all of its real estate transactions until 1959. He had other, more pressing, problems.

They involved the Alester G. Furman Company. Both he and his father had invested heavily in textile stocks; between 1924 and 1931 their dividends had vanished and stock prices had fallen nearly 80 percent. The Ottaray Hotel, controlled by the Haynsworth and Furman families, paid no dividends between 1931 and 1937. The securities market had nearly vanished with the stock market

crash. No new land developments brought sales commissions. Farm acreage, newly available because owners could not coverage mortgage payments, found few buyers. The company was responsible for paying salaries to both Furmans, Broadus Bailey, Robert Hudgins, and their secretary, Mae Patrick. Just how much money Alester Furman, Sr., his son, and the company borrowed from the Chemical Bank in order to survive is unknown, but as late as 1934, they still owed enough to lead the bank to suggest selling some of the mill stocks they held as collateral in order to reduce the Furmans' heavy indebtedness because bank examiners were asking difficult questions. Late in 1932, when the Great Depression seemed to have a stranglehold on the economy, Alester Furman, Sr., exhausted by the struggle and fearing the firm's bankruptcy, asked his son to take over the company management. He did so.

Although his father's name continued to head the firm's listing, Alester Furman, Jr., became the managing partner. He and the company economized. He did not take a salary for three years, although he ensured that his brothers-in-law and his father had steady incomes. He drove the same car for seven years—admittedly, a 1929 Packard so long and luxurious that the backseat provided footrests. He and Janie continued to live in the sturdy and substantial Whitsett



CAMPERDOWN MILL ON THE REEDY RIVER CLOSED IN OCTOBER, 1929

Street home that he had purchased in 1917. They and the company survived, and by 1938, with the improving economy and increased textile orders, once more began to prosper.

That renewed prosperity came primarily from the war in Europe. Cotton mills began to hum again; by 1939, they were working 80 hours a week in three shifts. Workers' salaries spilled over into merchants' pockets and created a surge of new home buying. Textile stocks rose; dividends increased. Starting in 1939, however, and continuing well into the 1960s, the Alester G. Furman Company earned most of its substantial profits and a wider regional reputation by working with textile companies to sell off their houses.

They were in at the South Carolina start of the dismantling of the mill village economy that had dominated the region since the 1880s and that Alester G. Furman, Sr., had helped build. Burlington Industries of Greensboro had sold several villages when they purchased North Carolina mills in 1936 and 1937, but in 1939, when owner Deering-Milliken asked Furman's company to assess the value, plat the streets, and manage the sale of the homes in the Judson Mill village, it was the first mill in the state to abandon the paternalistic rental system and allow workers to buy their own homes.

Their decision was significant. The Judson community, built in 1912, had about 2,500 residents, and was one of the largest in Greenville. Deering-Milliken supplied water, electricity, trash pick-up, maintenance, security, medical care, and helped support schools and churches. Rents were cheap: in 1939, most people paid 25 cents a room a week. The company had good economic reasons to sell the aging houses. Upkeep and maintenance cost money as did "social welfare" services like community buildings and programs, sports teams, and basic medical care. Furthermore, the automobile was allowing employees more flexibility, since workers could now live some distance away. As a result, mills no longer had a captive workforce, and school attendance laws made child labor, once a prime reason for nearby housing, impossible. The cash flow resulting from the sales could be used to modernize equipment and improve manufacturing speed and profitability.

For residents too it was a gain. Mortgage payments were little more than rent; they could not be told to move if they rebelled against management or talked union; they could individualize and remodel their homes and create future equity.

The Alester G. Furman Company, one of the largest and oldest real estate firms in the county, had a long-standing relationship with textile companies and was thoroughly acquainted with local land values. It was the obvious choice to do the job. First they appraised each of the 565 houses in the Judson community, and then established a price that was 75 percent of the appraised value. Houses were priced from less than a thousand dollars for four-room homes in poor condition to



TEXTILE WORKERS BECOME HOMEOWNERS

\$2,500 for the largest, often those of “second hands” or supervisors. At Judson a 10 percent down payment was required, although later some sales would have 5 percent down payments, and new owners had as much as 15 years to pay off the mortgage. (That period of time was far longer than it had been in the past, when three or four years and as much as 80 percent down had been the rule. It came about because the Federal Housing Authority had been established in 1934 to guarantee mortgage loans.) Current residents were given first choice, then other villagers; if houses remained on the market, they could be sold to outsiders.

The company set up an office in the Community Building adjacent to Judson Mill and held a general meeting for residents where they explained procedures and answered questions. When the sale began, residents brought their “banks,” long-buried tin cans stuffed with carefully saved, and often moldy, dollar bills that they counted out with care. Paul Griffith, who worked at Judson, remembered years later that “Our payment was \$10 a month, and I had so many years to pay for it.” It took the company nearly a year to complete the sales.

Just a few months later, W. J. Carter and his family of Greensboro, North Carolina, the owners of Samuel Slater & Sons near Marietta decided to follow in Judson’s footsteps. Greenville’s newest mill, completed in 1929, it had 170 houses, and was much smaller than Judson. The Alester G. Furman Company had learned how to create demand and operate the process efficiently. Mill homes were

advertised for sale beginning on October 29, 1940; 24 were sold the first day. Within less than a month, 99 homes had been purchased, most by their residents, and by mid-November 1941, 158 of the 169 residences had been conveyed to new owners.

Dismantling the Judson and Slater villages did not begin a trend, however; in the spring of 1940, according to *Textile World*, only seventeen mills had sold their villages. The following year, as the United States moved toward the brink of war, the same reporter commented, after noting that 35 mill villages had then been dissolved, "It is as yet a small thing, and may not work any quick transformations." Those transformations were in the future, and the present, after December 7, 1941, was war.

While the devastating Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a shock, Greenville had been gearing up for America's entry into the conflict for months. A Chamber of Commerce Defense Projects Committee, chaired by Alester Furman, Sr., had been in place for nearly a year, working with the state's congressmen to once more convince the government to place an anticipated war camp in Greenville. (After the economic prosperity that resulted from Camp Wetherill and Camp Sevier, there was no doubt in the minds of local leaders that military meant money.) Alester Furman, Jr., had already secured options on more than two thousand acres of land, primarily cotton farms with a scattering of small houses, eight miles south of Greenville near the Augusta Road, in anticipation of an encampment. On December 11, 1941, the Department of the Army announced in telegrams to the South Carolina delegation and to Alester Furman, Sr., that an air base would be established in Greenville. City Council and County Commissioners, in a rare show of unanimity, had jointly covered the cost of the land, which they leased to the government for the duration.

A week later, the community learned of its first casualty. The navy announced that Kirk Luther McBee, the great-grandson of Vardry McBee, the community's founding father, had died at Pearl Harbor. He was the first of Greenville's twelve hundred casualties (183 men dead; 1,046 injured) in World War II. Almost every able-bodied young man (and many not so able and not so young) signed up to serve their country; among them, early in 1942, was Alester Furman, III, who had graduated from the Harvard Business School in June. He was ordered to the marine officers' training camp at Quantico, Virginia, after his father successfully convinced him not to join the air corps.

Although the Furmans were concerned about their son, they and the rest of the community followed the building of the Greenville Army Air Base with rapt attention. Daniel Construction Company of Anderson, which had established a small satellite office in Greenville a year earlier, received the building contract on January 4. A week later the company moved its main office to the city and began to





GREENVILLE ARMY AIR BASE BUILDING IN 1942.

clear the site for the anticipated \$8 million facility. (By the time the land finally returned to local control in the 1960s, the U.S. government estimated that it had invested \$20 million in the physical facilities at the air force base.) Charles Daniel, the company president, was to become one of the great forces in the life of the Greenville community because of his speedy and careful construction methods, his foresight and hard work, and his generosity. He was already acquainted with Alester Furman, Jr., but after the company found the perfect site for his new corporate office at 429 North Main Street (now Davis Mechanical) and negotiated the purchase of a lot for his new home on Crescent Avenue, the two men became friends and unofficial partners in promoting Greenville.

The first airmen arrived in late March 1942, when the facility was still under construction; by June, the first of the 130 bombers and pursuit planes and 400 command pilots had arrived at the completed base that was “so far out in the country that its initial address was Conestee,” as an early arrival later remarked. The coming of the base, which by 1943 had an annual payroll of \$9,485,000, 73 percent of which was spent in Greenville, brought real prosperity, but the camp also presented problems

New people arrived daily, not just airmen and their families, but also the nearly 5,000 civilian employees who flooded into town. Greenvillians, eager to be hospitable, opened their homes to the newcomers, creating apartments in their

houses and renting out rooms to accommodate the influx. They also began planning social events to entertain the troops and their families. Clubs for enlisted men, officers, and “colored” soldiers opened. Women rolled bandages for the Red Cross; the Junior Charity League gave money-raising performances to benefit the war effort; college girls sold war bonds on street corners; black leaders collected scrap metal in their neighborhoods to outfit a club for African-American soldiers at the Air Base.

When the war ended, most people assumed that the air base would be closed, but, when the Cold War heated up, the community learned with intense pleasure that the Defense Department had decided to retain it as the headquarters of a Troop Carrier Command. Included in Alester Furman, Jr.’s correspondence file is a telegraph from South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, indicating that it would continue to operate. Furman, though, was not involved in the controversial 1948 agreement between the army and a commission made up of representatives from both city and county governments, which finally convinced the army to include a reversion clause that would later allow Greenville to convert the facility, which had been renamed Donaldson Air Base in 1951, into the Donaldson Industrial Center.

The draft, air raids, rationing, and increased security measures at textile mills “to prevent sabotage” were immediately instituted. The latter were under the direction of Broadus Bailey a partner in the Furman Company, who headed the Civil Defense Council. Furman himself was appointed chairman of the statewide Citizens Committee for Navy Relief, charged with helping to alleviate intense housing problems at the Charleston Naval Yard, where sailors, civilian workers, and families were reduced to living in converted warehouses, crammed four or five in a room designed for two, or even, in one case, living in a chicken coop.

Housing wasn’t a problem at Furman University. Between 1940 and 1943, the male student body was cut in half; total enrollment fell from 1,040 to 658, with only 192 male students, all of whom were either underage, studying for the ministry, or disabled. Aside from the airmen training at the Glider Base established at the downtown airport, who lived on campus and took classes there, the university became a female enclave. Faculty turnover climbed as some young professors joined the military and others were dismissed because of reduced enrollments. Shortages—of pencils, stencils, and laboratory equipment as well as rationed gasoline and tires—created administrative nightmares. And when prospects for victory increased, so too did concerns about the university’s post-war future. Given the problems confronting them, the university’s Board of Trustees wisely turned to Alester G. Furman, Jr. There must have been a sense of the merged identity of the school and the Furman family, as well as a respect for their joint Baptist heritage. In addition, the “Furman seat” was open since his father

had retired in 1937, but the university could not have chosen a more dedicated, loyal, and supportive trustee.

Writing in later years, Alester Furman, Jr., recalling “the trauma” of the Great Depression, says that after paying off his debts, his father’s, and the company’s, and making sure that his relatives had support, “I decided that I would try to the best of my ability to use what talents and energy I had to make a contribution to things that could last a long time. I therefore started to try and help my sons to become educated and dedicated men whatever profession they decided to perform . . . I tried to contribute to my community and state in many ways, but I finally came to the conclusion that my forebears, who had tried to find a way to educate men and women, preachers and laymen, made a contribution that would help make leaders and Christians.”

He had already ensured his sons’ education (Alester, III, held an M.B.A. from Harvard; Earle was applying to medical school), and in 1943 he made his broader commitment to education a working reality when he joined the university’s Board of Trustees. And work he did. After listening to a recital of the university’s needs—a library, chapel, administration building, student center, and women’s recreation/physical educational building—at his first trustee meeting, he promptly suggested a campaign among Greenville businesses and industries for \$50,000. He was equally promptly made chairman of the committee appointed to raise the funds. He was successful, although the money was not used for expansion, and he became one of the university’s most generous supporters, both in time and in dollars, throughout the rest of his life.

Furman University in those years had intrinsic problems far greater than those that its president, John Plyler, indicated. Since 1932 in practice and 1937 officially, it had consisted of two colleges: the men’s campus, located, as it had been since 1851, on the south bank of the Reedy River, and its Women’s College, established in 1854, a mile away on College Street. Yoked unwillingly together during the Great Depression, Furman students, men and women alike, traveled the mile between them by bus, taxi, and private car. The women’s campus, a distinct entity with its own administration that reported to the men’s campus administrators, stood on about 12 acres of land, hemmed in on all sides by busy residential streets. Furman, with about 75 acres, had not constructed a new building in twenty years.

The coordinate college had long-standing financial problems. Furman University had survived the Depression primarily because it had been anointed by James B. Duke as one of the four recipients of his 1924 educational endowment for the Carolinas, together with Methodist Trinity College (later Duke University) in Durham; Presbyterian Davidson College in Davidson; and Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. When President Plyler had taken over in

1938, the Baptist school—then with fewer than 800 students—owed about \$250,000. By 1944, its indebtedness had been paid off, but falling wartime enrollments provided little money for maintenance or essential improvements.

It turned, as it always had, to the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Founded and financially supported in part by the Convention, and having to rely on its generosity, the university was subject to the complaints and oversight of Baptist ministers throughout the state. They objected generally to any hint of “modernism,” both in the classroom and in social life, and they frowned on non-Baptist faculty, smoking, dancing, fraternities, and the university’s “general moral laxity.”

Alester Furman, Jr., as a stalwart and generous member of First Baptist Church of Greenville, a frequent “messenger,” or delegate, to the Convention, and a man whose name was highly respected by state Baptists, consistently supported the university when it was attacked by fundamentalists. He tried to combat what he called “a malicious whispering campaign” among Convention delegates in 1947, and when local Baptists protested the university’s conferring an honorary degree on a “heterodox” believer a few years later, he spoke out in its defense. Just three months before he died in 1980, he wrote a letter to the editor of the Greenville News, protesting a statement by the president of the Southern Baptist Convention that God does not hear the prayers of Jews. While he was, as he said in another letter, “a conservative in all things,” his religious views were tolerant and his support of his alma mater absolute.

He couldn’t solve all of the university’s problems, but he tried. Elected chairman of the board in 1947, he was also chair of a real estate committee charged with purchasing land around the men’s campus for further expansion. That growth was essential: student enrollment, especially veterans’ enrollment in 1945 and 1946, had overwhelmed the campus. More than 1,400 students, almost 600 of them veterans, enrolled for the 1946-47 school year; some studied in a depressing former barracks while administrators pleaded with the army for surplus beds and mattresses to create dormitory spaces.

When it became known that trustees were considering buying all available land around the men’s campus, prices rose; at the same time, news began to leak out that Church Street, which then ended at Washington Street, might be extended as a part of the “Super Highway,” now Wade Hampton Boulevard, to connect with Mills Avenue. It would slice through the potentially expanded Furman campus.

At a real estate committee meeting early in 1947, Pendleton Street Baptist Minister J. Dean Crain, after listening to Alester Furman’s recital of the problems and expense associated with acquiring nearby land, suddenly suggested that the university build a new campus, “near town,” to unite the men and women and to,

in effect, start over again. Furman endorsed the plan immediately because he saw it as the only way to provide room for future expansion at a reasonable price. He was also aware that Bob Jones University, which had recently re-located to Greenville from Tennessee, had a philosophy that was making the university look “dangerously modern” to Baptist conservatives, and a plant that was making it look “antiquated” to students. While he always gave credit to Dean Crain for the idea, it was Furman who made the move a reality.

After the Board as a whole endorsed the concept in the fall of 1947, Furman, as a real estate expert who knew Greenville County well, immediately set out to identify potential campus sites. He found four, but the best, a team of experts and the trustees agreed, was northwest of Duncan Chapel near the Buncombe Road. At the same time, with Plyler and other trustees, he began lobbying Baptist Convention messengers about the university’s plans, the need for building on a new site, and the necessity for greatly increased funding. After the South Carolina Baptist Convention made a long-term commitment of nearly \$3 million in the early fall of 1950, the Board of Trustees, at a meeting at the Poinsett Hotel in October, agreed to purchase 973 acres on what is now the Poinsett Highway. The eventual purchase, however, was nearly 1,100 acres to include land for nearby faculty housing. The entire cost was \$542,531. (Seventy-five acres around the men’s campus would have cost \$750,000.)

At the same time that Alester Furman, Jr., was negotiating for land options that would create a new university, Greenville’s cotton mill world was changing. In early 1946, J. P. Stevens & Co. announced that it had acquired 14 area mills, among them Monaghan, Dunean, Piedmont, and Slater. A year later, Abney Mills of Greenwood purchased the Brandon Company, including Brandon and Poinsett Mills and Renfrew Bleachery; at about the same time, Ely & Walker of St. Louis (that’s the Walker in George Walker Bush) bought the Poe Mill. Local mills suddenly became part of large out-of-town corporations, but at first mill village life was unchanged.

Yet the pre-war trend of large companies buying mills and selling their houses lurked in the background. Alester Furman, Jr., was already well acquainted with Robert T. Stevens, the chief executive officer of J. P. Stevens, and about a year after the sale, according to Furman, asked him one day when he was planning to sell his newly acquired villages. “Never,” replied Stevens. “I’ll never do that. We’d lose control of our workers.”

“We’ll manage,” replied Furman.

Control was the central issue. Textile companies feared unionization, absenteeism, and loss of supervision. They learned, however, that workers with mortgages had more to lose than renters did, and, by financing their mortgages themselves, through local banks, or, more frequently, through the General

Mortgage Company set up by the Furman Company in 1950, they maintained substantial control over their employees. Within two years, Stevens was selling all of its mill houses, with the Alester G. Furman Company managing the sales. Other textile corporations sought their expertise as well. There was so much demand that the company developed an eight-man team that totally concentrated on dismantling mill villages. Even so, they needed enough extra help that Alester Furman, Jr., went to university president John Plyler in spring 1949 and asked him to recommend a bright graduating senior to join the effort. Plyler suggested Junius Garrison, whose roots went even deeper into Greenville soil than did the Furmans'. When Furman offered him a \$150 month salary, the young man jumped at the chance and immediately joined the organization that he would eventually lead.

Dissolving the mill villages would change the shape of the southern industrial landscape. Yet that transformation, suggested in 1940, and carried out primarily after 1947, had to be accomplished with tact and care. Workers were initially hesitant, and textile executives worried about public relations, about selling community buildings and pastors' houses, about returning streets to public control. Hundreds of letters from Furman and his partners, archived at the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University, give advice to owners about sales management. In order to improve public relations, Furman assigned his son to survey the attitudes of new home owners after an unnamed mill (from internal details, Dunean) had disposed of its houses. The results, with accompanying pictures showing happy former renters posed on their already remodeled porches, were published in the Greenville News and reprinted in two textile journals. These sales were the primary reason that Greenville County's rate of home ownership increased from 28 percent in 1940 to 67 percent in 1970. The sales also created taxpayers and concerned citizens with a greater stake in the community. In effect, it did away with the paternalism that had become intrinsic to mill village life. The Furman Company would eventually be responsible for the sale of mill villages—not just for textile companies but including other industries like the steel corporations in Birmingham, Alabama—from Delaware southward. They did the appraisals, promotion, sales, and arranged the mortgages for about 27,000 homes, and in doing so, changed the South.

These sales, not incidentally, were highly profitable and led the Company to expand. It was no longer just a family firm, although Alester G. Furman, III, had joined it in 1946 as vice president and treasurer after he returned from military service. It had become a full service company with specialized divisions and vice presidents responsible for real estate (both residential and industrial), insurance (theirs was largest agency in state, advertisements bragged, placing insurance with Lloyds of London when necessary) and investments, including underwriting

Greenville Water Works Revenue Bonds. By the mid-1950s, their subsidiary mortgage company was servicing more than \$18 million in loans annually. By 1953, when it celebrated its 65th year of operation, there were six partners, Broadus Bailey, Henry Brown, Harold Gaddy, Allen Graham, Arthur McCall, and Roy Hunt, in addition to nine real estate agents (including a woman, Mrs. Knox Haynsworth) and two insurance agents. The following year it incorporated.

In 1955, Liberty Life Insurance Company invited members of its Board of Directors, including Furman, to contribute a brief summary of their company's business and staff as well as a "message to the future" for a time capsule to be buried in the cornerstone of its new building on Wade Hampton Boulevard. Furman listed thirty-three employees by name and date of employment, together with the statement that he hoped that fifty years in the future "there will be successors to the present personnel still operating a business serving the large city that we believe Greenville is destined to be."

Furman also noted in the Liberty Life statement that the business "had withstood depressions and hard times, and stood to profit when the general business conditions were good." Those conditions were good, very good, in the late 40s and 50s. Pent-up consumer demand had led to unprecedented prosperity, and new inventions, especially television, were beginning to bring the greater world closer to Greenville. The square picture tube with black and white images was not new. Television cameras had covered the Scopes "monkey trial" in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925, and RCA had introduced the first commercial sets (selling for \$600 when the average worker earned \$1,700 a year) in 1939. By 1948, however, with 100 VHF channels nationally, television was no longer a toy of the rich. Hundreds of applications for licenses and questions of control, regulation, and compatibility between black and white and color receivers needed to be resolved, so the Federal Communications Commission initiated a four-year freeze.

In June 1952, the FCC lifted that freeze and assigned channels to more than 2000 cities, large and small, throughout the nation. Channel Four was allocated to Greenville. Seeing the future importance and the potential profits of television, Alester Furman organized his friends (including Charles Daniel and Clement F. Haynsworth) and filed a license application. So did the Jolley family, who owned WMRC radio, and the Peace family, who controlled the Greenville News-Piedmont and WFBC. The three competing applications, relatively unusual for a small market like Greenville's, could have led to lengthy legal wrangling. However, Furman, representing Carolina Television Inc., Robert Jolley of Textile Broadcasting (WMRC), and Roger Peace of the Greenville News-Piedmont Company met at a Washington hotel room just before the FCC hearing in mid-1953, and worked out a deal. They decided to cooperate rather than fight so that Greenville would have a television station of its own with all possible speed. They

agreed that the radio station representatives would each hold 39 percent of the stock and contribute \$100,000; Carolina Television, the group Furman organized, would have 22 percent and contribute \$220,000. WMRC Inc. would be the name of the organization (it later changed to Southeastern Broadcasting and then to Multi-Media), although WMRC would give up its radio license. The station's call letters would be WFBC-TV (they are now WYFF). The station went on the air on January 1, 1954, broadcasting the Rose Bowl parade and game.

But bringing television to Greenville wasn't Furman's central concern in 1953; his heart was in ensuring that the university that bore his name would become "not the biggest, but the best." Or at the very least, that it could pay to construct the first buildings anticipated for a campus that would rise on hundreds of barren red clay acres six miles north of the city. As chairman of board of trustees for eleven years, from 1947 to 1953, and again, after a mandated year's absence, from 1955 to 1959, he worked feverishly to raise the eight million dollars needed to complete the first building phase. He lobbied friends, businesses (the Ottaray Hotel, whose Board of Directors had never allocated more \$25 to charity, donated \$10,000 at his urging) and alumni, and he reached deep into his own pockets to provide for the university.

Writing nearly twenty years later to his friend Boone Aiken, an alumnus and former trustee, he commented that he had given over a million dollars to the university, almost all of it in non-restricted gifts, and that he and his wife would leave their home to the university when they died. He went on to say that he "never wanted any recognition, but while I was in Florida a few years ago, the administration building was named for me. I have tried to get them to change the name, but I have not succeeded and I am trying again. Furman University owes me nothing, but I am deeply indebted to it for letting [me] . . . finally get a diploma." That heartfelt comment was preliminary to asking Aiken for a sizeable donation.

At a trustees meeting in January 1951, Dr. Plyler announced three major gifts: \$100,000 each from Charlie Daniel and his brother, Hugh, and \$100,000 combined from Alester Furman and his father. Neither of the Daniels had graduated from the university, and it seems likely that their initial gifts as well as substantial later ones came about, at least in part, through the influence of Alester Furman. (It was, however, not coincidental that Daniel Construction Company built all the original and most of the later campus buildings. The Daniel brothers' generosity, and that of Charlie Daniel's widow, Homozel Mickel Daniel, was so significant that the university's dining hall, music building, and chapel bear their name.) Furman had helped raise nearly \$5.8 million, the amount necessary for initial construction, before ground was broken for the new Poinsett Highway campus on October 6, 1953. Symbolically, he turned over the first shovel of soil on



the former cotton field and then watched with pleasure as his grandchildren made their own small cuts in the heavy earth.

But the job wasn't done. The school needed far more money for the buildings required for an anticipated future student body of 1800 (enrollment in 1953 was slightly over 1200.) While he remained deeply involved in his company's business and in other plans for improving Greenville, he cut back on all his other interests, including his passion, golf. A longtime member of the Biltmore Forest and Augusta National Golf Clubs, where he joined textile executives from around the country for annual "swinging" weekend parties for years, he even delayed attending the yearly get-together in November 1953. His friends, astonished, telegraphed him: "We demand immediate explanation in person why you aren't here at [the Augusta National] party. His response was immediate: "Am organizing campaign for 10 million to build new campus. Need one million six hundred fifty thousand to ease my pain. Pledge or check for this amount from Augusta National friends will make it possible for me to explain in person why I didn't get there for the opening."

Given both his interest in golf and his financial and personal interest in seeing the area near the new campus blossom, then, it is no wonder that his next major venture was developing Green Valley. Located on the Roe Ford Road, bordering the university, it was a planned development with a "million dollar" club house and golf course. Furman had taken options on the 490 rolling acres just west of Furman's new campus in 1954. The land cost \$180,000; the cost of the golf course and club house was estimated at \$985,000, but he suggested rounding off the sum to a round million for advertising purposes. He had never belonged to Greenville Country Club, David Traxler's 1923 development off Augusta Road, but he was convinced that the county needed a new up-scale golf and housing development, and he persuaded Francis, Herman, and Calhoun Hipp of Liberty Life to lead what was initially named the Holly Ridge development.

As a member of the Board of Governors and chair of its building committee, he oversaw every detail of the club house construction, including approving its interior design and landscaping, and he watched the groundskeepers with an eagle eye, commenting on the frequency of watering and the need to keep roving teenagers away from the greens. A three-inch thick letter file on Green Valley, nee Holly Ridge, among his records shows how hard he worked to overcome early financing problems (the company had to be reorganized three years after it started) and his continuing concerns about its operation and success well into the 1960s.

At the same time he and his company were involved in an unusual downtown mill village sale. In 1956, Sidney Bruce announced that Camperdown Mill would close, a victim of cheaper Japanese sheeting. The land, Camperdown's Board realized, was worth far more than the mill and its village since it edged the Reedy

River and a part of it was directly in the path of a planned cloverleaf intersection on Highway 29, the new Church Street “by-pass.” A portion of it had already been condemned by eminent domain to an agreed-on price of \$115,000. But twenty houses stood on land needed for an additional right of way that had been appraised by the highway department at \$82,665. The Alester G. Furman Company, on the other hand, estimated their value at \$111, 575. They also had the year-long job of negotiating with the city and the Highway Department and representing the Camperdown Company at the trial that followed. The judge, as judges will, split the difference; Camperdown received \$98,000.

Eight months earlier, the Citizens and Southern Bank had purchased slightly more than seven acres of land on the mill site (the current Bowater property); the rest of the company’s houses would be rented and managed by the Furman Company until they were sold. Working with C & S Bank, Furman began developing that former mill site as Greenville’s first “industrial park,” with IBM and the Wyche Law Firm as other owners. It was an exceptionally small “park,” but it began a new thrust for local commercial development.

Furman’s interests were solidly based in Greenville, but he and Charlie Daniel had become increasingly aware that the city and the state needed outside investment in order to grow. Twenty years later, Dan River president Robert Small commented that in the late 1940s and ‘50s, “He and Charlie Daniel were our ambassadors of good will for South Carolina before there was a State Development Board.” They crisscrossed the nation, Small said, touting the state’s benefits to industrialists and bankers. Daniel’s biography (Charles Daniel, His Life and Legacy) quotes Furman as saying “We decided that in South Carolina we had the greatest potential for industry through our wonderful local, native people who wanted to work and that if we could get industry in here, we would furnish jobs which in the long run would help the economy of this state.

Both men worked hard and skillfully, driving sometimes 250 miles a day (pre-interstate highway system), or flying across country in one of Daniel’s corporate planes to make deals. Furman recalled, for instance, arriving at the Daniels’ home at 5 a.m. one morning, having breakfast, driving four hours over mountain roads to Elizabethton, Tennessee, inspecting the site of a potential plant, making arrangements for financing the job with a local bank, and arriving back home late that afternoon. (Furman commented that Daniel drove so fast that he kept his eyes closed “to be sure I didn’t see it if we hit something.”) Planes seemed safer.

It may have been the success of those (piloted) flights with Daniel that lead to Furman’s interest in the future of air transportation. Yet his father’s work in the late 1920s to ensure airmail service to Greenville must have lingered in his memory, and he had listened attentively when Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, the World War I ace who had become president of Eastern Airlines, had spoken about

the need for expanded airports to meet post-war needs at a Chamber of Commerce dinner in April 1945. While Greenville had had a downtown airport since 1927, it clearly would not be able to handle the new turbo-jets that developed after the Second World War. Furman became convinced that the future of the upstate depended on a joint venture with Spartanburg to create a “jet-port” serving the two cities and Anderson.

But Greenville couldn’t do it alone, so he took the idea to one of the most powerful executives in Spartanburg, Walter Brown, the president of Spartan Television—WSPA TV and Radio. Together they decided to approach the two men who could make it happen: textile magnate Roger Milliken in Spartanburg and Charlie Daniel in Greenville. According to Milliken, “One thing that was obvious to them was that air service was going to play a role in the future that railroad service played in the past.” Milliken went on to say that Furman and Brown believed that one large airport would be more advantageous than three smaller ones. Milliken and Daniel funded a private engineering study to look discreetly at potential airport sites, and chose a level plateau that lay between the two counties and would be accessible from the new Interstate 85, whose construction was moving north from Atlanta.

After the study was completed, a committee, including Furman, Brown, the mayors of both Greenville and Spartanburg, together with Daniel and Milliken, arranged a dinner meeting at Greenville’s Poinsett Club on November 11, 1958. They invited the legislative delegations from both cities as well as their leading business executives. Milliken and Daniel spoke definitively. A 2,300 acre “jetport” would cost \$5.5 million; the cost to each county would be approximately \$2.2 million, to be covered by bonds. The delegations agreed without a murmur, and immediately appointed a Piedmont Area Airport Commission. A year later, Governor Fritz Hollings signed the bill creating the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport District; GSP (pilots always called it “Greer”) opened on October 15, 1962, with two 7,600 runways, a freight terminal, a passenger terminal designed by Skidmore, Owings, Merrill of New York, and landscaping by Innocenti and Webel of Long Island, who had also designed Furman University’s campus.

Daniel and Milliken are always credited with bringing the “jetport” to the upstate, but Furman’s behind-the-scenes role started the project.

He was, in fact, an interesting combination of spokesman and manipulator. Unlike his father, who unvaryingly served as secretary of organizations and never wanted the limelight, Alester Furman, Jr., frequently chaired community organizations, like the Greenville Community Chest and the South Carolina United Fund, and used his increasing clout to create Greenville improvements. (For more than twenty years Chamber of Commerce surveys of local businessmen listed him among the top five most influential Greenville leaders.) But he was also



FURMAN UNIVERSITY MOVES TO A NEW CAMPUS ON POINSETT HIGHWAY IN 1958.

comfortable in planting the seeds of change and watching them grow, and he was able to compromise. In 1957, for example, he was asked to chair the Projects Committee of the newly formed County Foundation. His recommendations (no surprise here!) were for scholarships at Furman and jetport development. The full committee, however, decided on a thorough planning study of Greenville infrastructure—fire, water, sewer, and garbage collection. He did much of the preliminary work on the study before the contract was signed with Black and Vetch of Atlanta.

In 1961, together with Charles Daniel, L. P. Hollis, and Thomas Roberts, the rector of Christ Church, he was appointed to a community “Advisory Committee” to consider positive action to (slowly) end segregation. And in 1966 he agreed to serve as co-chair of the Greenville Redevelopment Committee—as long as Buck Mickel, who had succeeded to the presidency after Charles Daniel’s death in 1964, would co-chair it with him.

By that time, however, he had retired. On December 31, 1960, he officially gave up his position at the Alester G. Furman Company and resigned, at the same time, from seventeen boards of directors. “When you have young men coming on in an organization, the old men should step back,” he said. “You can’t have a young vibrant organization with old men sitting on top of them and taking the money.”

He eased himself gently into retirement, moving into a modest office on the thirteenth floor of the South Carolina National Bank Building, the former Woodside Building, but continuing a voluminous correspondence with friends throughout the state, country, and the international textile world whom he had met through the city's biannual textile expositions.

He had already had the satisfaction of seeing, in September 1958, the opening the first academic year on the Poinsett Highway after the old men's campus had closed. In 1961, when the trees planted seven years earlier were still thin saplings, he was present when the students from the Women's College moved in to create a truly coeducational university. With a little imagination, he could see from his office window a Greenville changed in part because of his vision, hard work, and financial acumen.

Retirement meant more time for playing golf, moving into his first air-conditioned home on Woodland Way Circle, spending winter months in Florida, and having the leisure to travel. It also meant more time to commit to Furman University. As a trustee, when he learned that his old friend, President John Plyler, would retire in June 1964, he immediately wrote to Gordon Blackwell, an alumnus who was then president of Florida State University, inviting him to apply for the position. A warm mutual relationship developed during Blackwell's presidency, although the mid and late 1960s were difficult ones with more Baptist pressures and mild student rebellions. His financial and moral support continued when John E. Johns was named president in 1976. Although his gifts to the university had never been restricted, in 1963, after his father's death, he and his family covered the cost of the reconstruction of the bell tower on the new campus in Alester, Sr.'s honor. And in early 1980, they gave \$650,000 to erect the Joseph Baylis Earle Infirmary, named for his wife's father, on the university campus. It's no wonder that the university refused his request to remove his name from its Administration Building (although the awkwardness of having two Furman Halls, connected to each other, one named for his great-grandfather and one for himself could not have been lost on him.) Nor is it inappropriate that in recent years the school has erected a life-sized bronze statue of him posed next to a bench in the Administration Building patio. His commitment in time, thoughtfulness, and money created modern Furman University.

When he died on December 3, 1980, he was mourned not only by his family and his colleagues but by business leaders from across the region. Strom Thurmond entered a statement in the Congressional Record about his accomplishments; Mayor Max Heller recalled his encouragement in civic projects; Governor Dick Riley noted Furman's "active support and involvement in cultural, civic, and business affairs throughout the state of South Carolina."

Yet Alester G. Furman, Jr.'s own words perhaps best summarized his life. In

a reflective interview in 1962 he said “The only value a man can take with him is what he has given away in time, talents, and money.”



CHAPTER III



ALESTER G. FURMAN, III  
CHANGING GREENVILLE

PHOTO: ALESTER G. FURMAN, III CIRCA 1950









SOUTH MAIN STREET, GREENVILLE 1955

## ALESTER G. FURMAN, III CHANGING GREENVILLE

POST-WORLD WAR II GREENVILLE: VETERANS, SOME STILL AWKWARD IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES, RETURNED TO A MAIN STREET AND A COTTON MILL WORLD ALMOST UNCHANGED SINCE 1930. Only one or two new buildings had been erected on Main Street, the retail heart of the community, since 1926. That busy and crowded street stretched from the West End, where the old Furman University campus was bursting at its seams, across the Reedy River, foaming with multi-colored residue from upstream bleacheries, past the Poinsett Hotel, newly acquired by the Jack Tar chain, to the Ottaray Hotel at the intersection with College Street. Retailers crammed commercial buildings: department stores, pharmacies, restaurants, movie theaters, music, appliance, fruit, hardware, gift, and furniture stores. The 17-story Woodside Building was the town's tallest; City Hall, erected in 1892, its most elaborate. Power wires crisscrossed overhead; cars, buses, and trolleys clogged downtown. All upstate highways emptied into Main Street. Christmas Parades and Furman University Homecoming Celebrations along its

route drew three-deep crowds. The Alester G. Furman Company kept a running list of businesses seeking a Main Street location, but couldn't promise any immediate openings.

Outside the city limits, sprawling brick cotton mills and their villages had been a part of the local industrial landscape since the turn of the century. Almost 50 percent of Greenville's workers were employed at those mills and related industries, and nearly 75 percent of the county's economy was based on textiles. Much of the rest was due to the continuing postwar military presence at the Army Air Base near Conestee, which had brought thousands of new people to town and kept retailers happy. The city's population hovered around 50,000; the outlying villages—Greer, Mauldin, Simpsonville, and Fountain Inn—had their own textile mills, but they were primarily farming communities bordering railroad tracks. Total county population was slightly more than 155,000, including the 30,000 or so mill village residents.

This was the Greenville that Alester G. Furman, III, returned to in November 1945. He was older, better educated, more traveled, but less familiar with his hometown than his grandfather had been when he began the family firm in 1888, or his father when he had joined the Company after his college graduation in 1914. Alester, III, attended Greenville High School for three years, but in 1934 his parents sent him to Severn Academy in Maryland to prepare for the U.S. Naval Academy. With an Annapolis appointment in hand after he graduated from Severn, he entered the Naval Academy's summer program. He hated it. So his father called an acquaintance who was president of Amherst College, and in September 1935, Alester headed for Massachusetts. He excelled at Amherst, becoming a star fullback on the football team and graduating with honors in mathematics. In September 1939 he entered the Harvard Business School where he earned his MBA with distinction in 1941.

That summer, even before America entered World War II, Alester joined the Marine Corps. After he was accepted for officer's training, he was sent to Quantico Marine Base in Virginia, where he was commissioned a second lieutenant in January 1942. In the meantime, however, he had become engaged to Mary Simms Oliphant, a classmate since elementary school. The great-granddaughter of South Carolina writer William Gilmore Simms and the daughter of A. D. Oliphant, the editor of Textile World Magazine who had died in an automobile accident when she was seventeen, she had earned a master's degree in French at the University of North Carolina. On a Saturday evening in April 1942, they were married at Christ Episcopal Church. Two Greenville friends who were also newly commissioned Marine officers were groomsmen, and, in typical wartime style, on Monday morning the three men were back at Quantico. Alester spent the next twenty months on the island of Numea in the Pacific, where he was promoted to captain, but after he was diagnosed with the tropical disease filaríasias, he was ordered home for extensive hospitalization at the naval hospital in Charleston.

When the twenty-seven year-old veteran, already a father, returned home, he went to work for Ross Builders Supply, a company that his father and Charles Daniel had invested in, as, he said later, a glorified bookkeeper. He was, however, more interested in

the challenges and opportunities offered by his family's multi-faceted firm. In 1946 he joined the Alester G. Furman Company as vice president and treasurer. It wasn't hard for the Harvard-trained young executive to become thoroughly comfortable with the business.

For the next twelve years, as head of the firm's commercial real estate division, he concentrated primarily on promoting the firm's expertise in village sales to textile mills across the South and dealing with the frequently complex financial issues involved in the sales. The business peaked in the 1950s, when the Company needed to employ eight fulltime salaried salesmen to manage operations, but opportunities subsided in the early 60s. (A 1962 newspaper article mentions that the Company "is still active in industrial sales" but it is beginning to add long-neglected residential and commercial real estate to its business.) While village sales perked up briefly about 1967, when the few mills that had not yet dismantled their villages decided to take the plunge before new federal regulations were put into effect, by 1970 the sales were over.

When his father decided to relinquish direct involvement with the day-to-day operations of the company and was named Chairman of the Board in 1958, Alester, III, was elected president. On January 1, 1961, when his father gave up his interest in the Company, he became chief executive officer. Throughout his career in the company, he was always the "numbers man," acting, in effect, as chief financial officer.

The Alester G. Furman Company was changing; in the years immediately ahead, the pace would accelerate. After incorporating in 1954, the firm's growth had been dramatic. While some of the expansion came about because of village sales, far more ultimately derived from Alester Furman, Jr.'s interest in diversifying the company, emphasizing commercial real estate development and property management opportunities as well as expanding its insurance business, which had become the largest in South Carolina.

In the early 1960s, the Company launched a long-term "The Right Man" advertising campaign, with photographs focusing on individual employees and copy emphasizing their expertise, experience, and training. But there were an awful lot

***The Right Man  
for Real Estate***

Junius H. Garrison, Jr., one of only two members of the Society of Industrial Realtors in S. C., has served corporations and individuals in the sale, leasing and development of commercial properties for 17 years.

CALL  
**ALESTER G.  
FURMAN  
CO.**  
CE 2-5661

'RIGHT MAN' AD CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

of right men: fifty-nine employees worked in three separate divisions and in satellite offices in Columbia, Greensboro, and Anderson. It was no longer a family business as that term had long been interpreted; it had become, rather “a family of four firms,” a change carefully noted when the announcement was made in February 1969 that its name would change to The Furman Company (or Co., their preferred usage). Each firm had its own president, with Furman as chairman of the board and chief financial officer. Stephen Middlebrook was president of The Furman Life Insurance Brokerage Co., specializing in life and group insurance; Frank Poe headed the Furman Agency, a general insurance brokerage; Roy Hunt was in charge of Furman Securities; Junius Garrison was responsible for Furman Realty, with commercial, residential, property management, and development divisions.

The role this large and multi-faceted organization would play in the development of Greenville (by 1970 the largest county in the state with a population that had grown to more than 240,000) would necessarily be less tied to a single man—its president—than it had been in the past. Yet because of the experience and knowledge of its principals and the firm’s tradition of integrity and vision, it would have a significant impact on the changes that came to Greenville in the years ahead.

For Greenville too was changing. New roads had begun to transform the shape of the city. Interstate I-85, completed from Atlanta to Charlotte by 1960, opened new land for industrial development; its I-385 link to the city provided opportunities for retailing, residential sub-divisions, and office buildings. At the same time, Wade Hampton Boulevard—Highway 29, Greenville’s “Super Highway”—was linked to Church Street and eventually to Interstate 185 south of town. The Church Street extension necessitated the relocation of the 1835 Beattie House, created a viaduct from Washington Street through the Camperdown Mill Village, demolishing the Methodist Church and Camperdown Community Center, crossed the east side of the old Furman campus, and cut off a portion of Crescent Avenue before it intersected with Augusta Street. In 1956 Church Street was two blocks long; in 1959, it stretched more than two miles.

Furman Company developers seized the opportunity that these new roads presented. Working with the Camperdown Company, Junius Garrison, who headed the project, began developing the former Camperdown Mill village site as Greenville’s first “office park.” In 1959, the Citizens and Southern Bank had purchased slightly more than seven acres of land on the mill site (the current Bowater property) where they built a headquarters building. Furman Realty developers planned, platted, and erected nearby buildings for IBM, Southland Life Insurance, the School District of Greenville County, and Security Federal, among others. With about thirty-five acres of land spread along Spring and Cleveland Streets and the new Camperdown Way, it wasn’t really a “park,” but the cluster of modern buildings began the first new thrust for commercial office development outside of downtown.

In much the same way, the Company developed Wade Hampton Mall as Greenville’s first “suburban” shopping center. It was the first large scale retail development outside of

downtown since 1948, when Lewis Plaza Shopping Center had opened on Augusta Road. After a 1958 feasibility study by Hammer and Associates of Atlanta, Furman executives got to work. In November 1962, they opened a 140,000- square-foot two-level open mall, “a regional shopping center” with a small Ivey’s Department Store, a W. T. Grant’s variety store, and a movie theatre, on the east side of Wade Hampton Boulevard at Batesview Drive. Convenient to new nearby sub-divisions and close to Bob Jones University (now the owners of the property), the mall was developed, managed, and leased by the Furman Company. Its initial success triggered much of the suburban eastside retailing that would soon dominate Greenville growth.

A third new direction was in leasing and managing the first new apartment complex to be built in Greenville since 1945. Yorktown Apartments, developed by Goodman Properties of Norfolk, Virginia, and built by Daniel Construction Company, were located between East North Street and Pelham Road in the rapidly developing Greenville eastside. The garden apartments, opened in 1965, were decidedly upscale. A three bedroom, one-and-a-half bath apartment cost \$155 a month (the equivalent of \$925 today). Although the Company had no experience in apartment management, its long-term relationship with Daniel was undoubtedly the reason Goodman selected it to manage the complex, which later became Yorktown Condominiums. Although the Furman



BILLBOARD ANNOUNCES NEW DANIEL BUILDING

Company went on to develop and manage Century Oaks Apartments on Buncombe Road, their involvement in apartment management continued to be limited; the Company was already emphasizing commercial property management. Like Camperdown Office Park and Wade Hampton Mall, however, the apartment complex represented another step away from Greenville’s traditional central business district.

And for good reason. While new roads created almost unlimited development potential outside the city limits, downtown was beginning to suffer. As early as 1957, in a speech to the Downtown Greenville Association, Charles Daniel pointed out that Main Street was “unclean and neither attractive nor competitive with comparable progressive cities.” When Charlie Daniel spoke, civic leadership listened. City government instituted a Clean-Up Campaign; merchants embraced

sparkling aluminum siding to slipcover their old buildings. The Board of Directors of the Hotel Company, which ran the Ottaray Hotel and was still principally controlled by the Haynsworth and Furman families, began discussing demolishing their “antiquated” 1909 hotel and replacing it with an up-to-date motel. In 1962, in its last act before dissolving itself and forming the Main-Oak Company, the Board leased the land to the Downtowner Hotel chain. During the following year the graceful old Ottaray became a victim of progress. The aggressively modern Downtowner Motor Inn replaced it at the top of Main Street.

Dissatisfied by the rate of change, though, Daniel decided to make a personal contribution to Greenville modernization. (The story—it may be apocryphal, but it has the ring of Greenville truth—is that Daniel and Roger Peace decided that Main Street needed a boost and agreed that if Daniel would build at the north end of the street, Peace would anchor the south with a new building for the Greenville News-Piedmont.) In 1962 Daniel asked the Furman Company to assemble land for what would be the tallest and most luxurious office building in the city. On June 29, 1964, in one of his last public acts before his death, he broke ground for the 25-story Daniel Building at 300 North Main Street. “The Business Address of Distinction,” complete with a parking garage, post office boxes, and an elegant lobby and plaza, would be leased, maintained, and provided with all professional services by the Alester G. Furman Company through DBM (Daniel Building Management), a wholly owned subsidiary.

Daniel Construction Company (it had not yet become Daniel International and its merger with Fluor Corporation to create the second largest contractor in the world was still a decade away) was its major tenant. Two floors were leased to J. P. Stevens & Co., another company close to the Furmans that had established its manufacturing and personnel headquarters in Greenville. Given the prestige of the new structure, the first Class A office building constructed in Greenville in forty-five years, and the significance of its management responsibilities, the Alester G. Furman Company leased the 12th and 16th floor of the building for its new home. The move was a bit unsettling to a company that had been ensconced since 1923 in the old Woodside Building (it had been renamed the South Carolina National Bank Building years earlier). Junius Garrison, then head of the Real Estate Department, was interviewed by a newspaper reporter in July 1967 as he lugged a portable typewriter from the old building to his new office as part of the move. He was excited, he said, to be moving into an absolutely modern office space, but he wasn’t quite sure that he could work the equally modern punch button phones.

The most pressing issue facing the realty department of the Alester G. Furman Company in the early 60s was how best to serve one of its oldest and most prestigious clients: Furman University. Alester Furman, Jr., had made it possible for the university to move to the Poinsett Highway. As a result, after 1958, the old men’s campus above the Reedy River was abandoned, and after September 1961 the woman’s college stood vacant. These were potentially valuable sites, and Furman University, which needed every dollar it could find to pay for the buildings it was erecting on the Poinsett Highway, turned to



the expertise of the Company for assistance. President John Plyler and Alester Furman, Jr., made an agreement in 1960 that the Company would be responsible for negotiating, leasing, or selling the property to benefit the university.

The Women's College 12-acre campus was the lesser problem because City Council was already eyeing the tree-shaded land just three blocks from Main Street as a possible site for a "civic center." Council's intention was to build a new city hall and surround it with "cultural institutions." Neither the public nor the business leadership, however, was enthusiastic about the idea of moving City Hall off Main Street, and many objected to spending \$789,000, the Furman Company's appraised value, for the site.

Drawn-out discussions followed. Before any sale could be negotiated, Furman needed a judicial permission to sell the land that Vardry McBee had deeded to the university as the site of the Greenville Female Baptist College in 1854. The deed included the proviso that "at all times to come the said Furman University shall keep up and maintain a male and female school in the village of Greenville." A friendly suit was filed to clear the title, at which Alester Furman, Jr., testified at length; the judgment in favor of the university was handed down in the summer of 1961. But there were also issues of land use, not totally resolved until the late 1960s, when the city backed off the civic center proposal and local business leaders raised the funds to turn the former campus into what became Heritage Green. Another consideration was a new route for Academy Street. That street had, for 140 years, extended from College to Washington Streets, but the Department of Transportation had proposed a route that would extend through the Women's College property as a by-pass to East North Street and access to I-385.

On December 10, 1963, City Council agreed to purchase the campus for \$500,000 to create a civic center. Its first tenant would be the Greenville Little Theatre, which had been housed in a multipurpose building (a combined chapel and theatre) constructed by the army air force on Lowndes Hill Road when the Municipal Airport had been converted into a glider training base during World War II. On December 11, the Little Theatre Board of Directors announced that they would break ground for a new facility in the summer of 1964 after the college's Fine Arts Center had been razed. In the early 1970s, the county library and art museum were built there, too, and Heritage Green became Greenville's cultural hub. That cultural center has a contemporary footnote: thirty-five years later, Alester Furman, III, purchased eight adjoining acres, the land extending down Buncombe Road from the Little Theatre to Atwood Street, and sold most of it to Phillip Hughes' Southern Commercial Development Company (the land included the present site of the Hughes Branch of the Greenville Library System). Furman deeded the remaining 1.8 acres to the Historic Greenville Foundation to become the site of the History Museum.

The men's campus was far more difficult.

While the smaller—12 acre—women's campus would be sold, the plan for the 90-acre men's campus, as Alester Furman, Jr., noted in a memo, was to create income to ensure "the future endowment of the school." The assumption from the very beginning was that it

would be converted into a shopping center by an out-of-town developer with the Furman Company serving as leasing agent in order to distance the university from any direct involvement in the mall's operation. In 1961 Furman Realty commissioned a feasibility study from Hammer and Associates that supported the concept, although the planning group warned that there could be competition. Options had already been taken, the Hammer report noted, on the McAlister farm on newly-extended Pleasantburg Highway and the Hughes Development Company was planning a K-Mart two and a half miles south on Mills Avenue.

While the Furman Company was unsuccessfully seeking potential developers and anchor tenants for the site (Greenville, still perceived by Atlanta and New York developers and national retailers as a cotton mill town, was not an easy sell), University Ridge was widened and straightened, and a fire destroyed the old main building, Richard Furman Hall. In the early 60s, the university decided to dismantle the bell tower and move it to Furman's campus. That plan didn't work because the old bricks crumbled when they were dislodged, but the Furman family covered the cost of building a replica on the new campus. In the meantime, the Company was developing and leasing land on the south side of the street, where the former president's home had stood, for an office complex, the 300 Building, and they sold a large adjacent lot that became the 37,000 square-foot Greenville County Health Center in 1966.

But about forty acres lay north of University Ridge, where the college campus, with its winding roads, great trees, and Bell Tower had been located, and which also included the steep bluff overlooking the Reedy River. It still needed to be developed. Although a preliminary plan had suggested an up-scale "Lennox Square" type development, including high-end anchor tenants, heavily landscaped parking, and condominiums along the rear of the development, architectural renderings accompanying the Hammer study were more modest. They suggested a partially-enclosed central "Demonstration Area," featuring the relocated Furman bell tower, parking for 2,000 cars, and a national mid-level retailer like Sears as the anchor tenant.

Four years passed. The Company asked Hammer for a second feasibility study, which was as upbeat as the previous one. Finally, in November 1965, Bell Tower Associates unveiled plans for a 345,000-square-foot enclosed, air-conditioned (in capital letters and with exclamation marks) shopping center with discounter Woolco as its prime tenant. A second anchor had not yet been identified. Two months earlier, McAlister Square had announced that local retailers Ivey's and Myers-Arnold would be their tenants. Bell Tower Square's New York and New Jersey developers leveled the old campus, created acres of bare asphalt paving, and opened in July 1970 with nearly full occupancy, including a Winn-Dixie Grocery, an Edwards Department Store (a Charleston-based chain), and a multiplex theatre. An eighteen-foot replica of the bell tower stood in its central space



BELL TOWER MALL

Although it initially made money, Bell Tower Mall's size, location, and store mix did not succeed. Residential development was moving east, and the old West End did not have the population base to support even a low-end mall. In less than a decade, it began losing tenants. By 1982, when Woolco closed, the mall was dying, although a few stores hung on for a couple of years. The huge vacant shopping center with acres of empty parking spaces was an embarrassment (and a financial loss) to the university and to the Company, but then, in a remarkable turnaround, the lemon, as the old adage goes, was made into lemonade.

County government needed office space in the mid-1980s, and county commissioners were investigating making a major investment in a new building when Furman Realty approached them in 1984 with an idea: why not bring all county offices (including those in the recently condemned Family Court Building) together on one site. Parking was more than adequate and space was not an issue: the facility could house social services, probate and family courts, tax offices and meeting spaces. When County Square, thoroughly renovated and redesigned by Craig, Gaulden and Davis, and with the landscaped parking envisioned twenty years earlier, opened in 1987, the Company and the university must have breathed a joint sigh of relief.

While the Furman Company was working to develop the old campus into a much needed cash source for the university, Alester Furman, III, was beginning to become personally involved in his family's—if not his own—college. While he was not an alumnus,

his allegiance to the university which bore his name was absolute, and like his grandfather and father before him, he was exceptionally generous in giving his time, thoughtfulness, and funds to support it. He initially joined the Board of Trustees in 1967, while his father was still a member, and, except for the two-year breaks between four-year terms mandated by the South Carolina Baptist Convention, served actively until 1998, when he was named trustee emeritus. Because of his expertise, his initial appointments were to Budget, Development, and Finance Committees. Both his business and the university took time, but he was a loving father of a family that had increased to four daughters, and he had also become active in the broader Greenville community. In addition to the Furman Board, he was, like his father, a member of the Boards of Directors of Duke Power, J. P. Stevens & Co., the Liberty Corporation, and Daniel International, but his interests extended into the arts as well, since he served as a member of the Greenville Symphony and County Art Association Boards.

At the same time that ground was broken for Bell Tower Mall, the Company took on another commission for a non-profit organization: assembling land for the Piedmont Exhibition during the South Carolina Tricentennial. That celebration of three hundred years of state history was fraught with politics, rushed in planning, and a public relations disaster; but the Furman Company, at least, was efficient and effective.

In 1956 the legislature started considering ways to celebrate the state's founding in 1670, but it took a decade for politicians to allocate funds and appoint a Tricentennial Commission. That Commission, with some pressure from upstate business leaders and politicians, decided that Charleston, historic as it was, should not be its only site. Instead, they settled on a three-part exhibition, with Charleston (at Charlestowne Landing, the site of the first settlement) hosting the first century, Columbia the second one, focusing on the Civil War, and Greenville (over the protests of Spartanburg) the period from 1870 to 1970. The Chamber of Commerce, which was lobbying for a local textile museum, saw a future opportunity in the exhibition space and enthusiastically supported the Piedmont Exhibition.

The responsibility for finding the Greenville site was given to the Furman Company. They chose well: 62 sloping wooded acres of land bordering I-385, located on Roper Mountain Road convenient to Interstate 85 available for \$450,000. The company held an option on most of it for nearly six months while the Tricentennial Commission negotiated directly for a small portion at the crest. Then the Commission voted to erect huge geodesic domes built of plastic and steel, spectacular and expensive designs by internationally famous futurist and amateur architect Buckminster Fuller, on the selected sites in Greenville and Charleston. Adjacent to the Greenville dome would be a smaller "core" building that could be used for exhibitions but was far too small for heavy textile machinery. Dreams of a textile museum died.

During construction of the domes, the Charleston structure cracked. Engineers discovered that the design had not been tested and would never work. Greenville's almost-completed dome could not be used. (E. D. Sloan later purchased the hulk for its

steel, which he sold to a Saudi Arabian prince.) As a result, the local Tricentennial coordinator delayed opening day from May to July 1970. Although the year-long celebration brought new cultural opportunities and greater emphasis on history to the state, its most beneficial aspect locally occurred several years later, when the site, including the concrete platform on which the dome stood, was ceded to the School District of Greenville County and eventually became the Roper Mountain Science Center.

Among the other balls that Company realtors were juggling in the late 1960s was one which had an immediate payoff for Greenville. In 1964 General Electric approached the Furman Company about assembling land for a massive gas turbine operation. The Company identified and optioned 600 acres on Garlington Road, seven miles east of the city near Interstate 85. GE brought much needed diversity to Greenville's still predominantly textile economy as well as the presence of one of the nation's most respected, profitable, and well-paying companies to upstate South Carolina. GE's preliminary plans called for a \$50 million 300,000-square-foot building employing 500 workers, although only 250 were employed when it began operating. That opening workforce was not as large as that of even a small textile mill, but GE had obviously come to stay. The company broke ground for its facility in 1967 and began operations in late 1968. The work force expanded (and contracted) rapidly, though, with 900 employed by 1970; it surged and then subsided in the 1980s, but then increased once more in the 1990s to 2,300 workers as utilities sought low-cost ways to keep up with increasing demand. In 2001 the company added a three-story research and design facility, and employment peaked at 3,150, but a year later it announced 600 layoffs. Today it has recovered and produces both gas and wind turbines; it remains Greenville County's largest industrial employer. GE was one of the first major non-textile related industries to move to Greenville; its selection of the Furman Company helped provide the impetus that led other multinational companies to turn to the Company when they relocated to Greenville.

The most newsworthy was international tire maker Michelin. Rumors began circulating in 1971 that the closely held French company, the third largest tire company in the world, was exploring potential plant sites in the United States. The evidence is unclear (the corporation insisted on the strictest confidentiality) whether Michelin approached the Furman Company directly or if the State Development Board made the initial contact, but Company realtors had, by late in the year, taken options on a 113-acre tract adjacent to Donaldson Center. It seems likely that they also identified land in Anderson. By November 1972, the news had leaked out that Michelin had narrowed its choice to the Johnson City/Bristol area of Tennessee and the Greenville/Anderson area. In July 1973 the announcement, momentous for Greenville, was made: Michelin would make an initial \$175 million (\$773 million in today's dollars) investment in South Carolina.

A Greenville tract, 113 acres immediately adjacent to Donaldson Industrial Center, would produce radial tires; the Anderson County plant, near Sandy Springs, would manufacture rubber. Both would be built by Daniel Construction Company. By the summer of 1975, when the 1,000,000-square-foot Greenville plant had begun producing

radials, the French company had increased its local holdings to 247 acres. The Furman Company became its realtor, eventually finding land in Laurens County for Michelin's 2,500-acre test track and for its North American headquarters building on Interstate 85.

The importance of bringing a distinguished multi-national corporation like Michelin to the South Carolina piedmont cannot be underestimated. It brought prestige to the community and sparked the interest of other international firms. Like General Electric, Michelin was attracted to the upstate because of its inexpensive land, water resources, availability of workers, location near the port of Charleston, and, most importantly, non-union environment. Its salary scale was higher than that of the textile industry, where workers' salaries averaged \$2.96 an hour. It brought new faces and accents to Greenville and began the internationalization of the city. It changed Greenville. Today, Michelin operates eight facilities in South Carolina, including a mold plant, research center, conference center and sales training center at the Donaldson industrial complex.

And it came at the right time. Greenville in the mid-1970s was in trouble. On the one hand, the textile industry was already suffering from the impact of foreign competition. Mills announced layoffs; some—Brandon, American Spinning, Mills Mill—closed. J. P. Stevens, one of the county's largest employers, was attacked by textile unions, which had launched a massive national campaign to unionize its mills. At the same time, downtown, like downtowns throughout the nation, was losing business. Department stores (Ivey's, Myers-Arnold, Penney's) moved to malls; rents fell on Main Street as stores closed, and "For lease or Sale" signs appeared on vacant windows. In spite of the Daniel Building and the News-Piedmont Building, in spite of the shiny new aluminum siding, downtown was not much more attractive than it had been when Charlie Daniel had pointed out its deficiencies to local merchants fifteen years earlier.

In 1966 the Chamber of Commerce had launched a "Total Development Campaign" headed by Alester Furman, Jr., who had agreed to chair the committee as long as Buck Mickel, Charlie Daniel's successor at Daniel Construction Company, would agree to be vice-chair. With five other business leaders, including attorney Tommy Wyche, they hired economic consultants and planners and began to envision a new downtown. They considered making Main Street a seven-block long "pedestrian strollway"; they dreamed, first of a civic center on College Street, and then, when that idea was rejected, of two ten-story twin buildings, one a new city hall, the other an office building, near Broad Street. More successfully, they lobbied for a smoother connection between Spring and Falls Streets and a link between Richardson and River Streets. They also encouraged South Carolina National Bank to raze the Woodside Building and build anew, and North Carolina National Bank to build a high-rise at the old intersection of Buncombe and West Coffee Streets in order to anchor the east and west sides of town.

Main Street, however, still suffered; the private sector alone couldn't reinvigorate it. With the strong support of Mayor Max Heller, in 1975 the Committee appointed nine years earlier began a major, and risky, private-public partnership push toward revitalization. To get the necessary start-up funds, they set up a foundation (the

Greenville Community Corporation) and sought investors for 50,000 shares of stock at \$100 apiece to be used to help finance property acquisition and construction of a convention hotel, office building, and retail space. Wyche, Mickel, and Furman were among the arm-twisters who invited 27 potential investors to a meeting in July 1976. With \$5 million pledged by the group, they hired internationally known landscape architect Lawrence Halprin to conduct public input sessions and to design a plan for Main Street renewal. That December, Halprin's San Francisco firm submitted a plan for a renovated Main Street and an office-hotel project. Thanks to a \$1.85 million federal grant, street renovations that included narrowing traffic to two lanes with diagonal parking, adding trees, landscaped corner plots, street furniture, new lighting and signage began in August 1977.

While Alester Furman, Jr., had been the first chair of the "Total Development Committee," and while he had invested (with no hope of profit) in the Greenville Community Corporation, he was not deeply involved in the development of the hotel/office complex because he was not well and was withdrawing from public life. But then a question arose about the location of the "Greenville Commons" project. Initial plans were to site it directly south of the Downtowner Motel, owned by the Main-Oak Corporation, which the Furman family controlled. The Downtowner site, at the head of Main Street, was substantially better than the proposed one. Main-Oak's Board of Directors agreed to sell the fifteen-year-old motel (referred to as "old" in newspaper articles of the time) and its land to the Foundation for \$500,000. That sale and the city's closing of Oak Street, which bordered the south side of the motel, created at least the possibility for success of the public-private effort.

It took, however, more federal money, exceptionally creative financing, and remarkable good fortune to make the deal a reality. Attorney Tommy Wyche was primarily responsible for negotiations that led to the Hyatt-Regency; Mayor Max Heller was the guiding force behind an essential \$7.4 million federal UDAG (Urban Development Action Grant) award and the city's agreement to pay for the parking garage and convention center facilities. The Furman Company became the leasing agent for the connected office and retail space, initially occupied by IBM, which made the project work. The hotel's opening in February 1982, just after the street refurbishment was completed, sparked the re-creation of Main Street.

Beyond downtown, perhaps the Company's most significant project in the late 1970s was developing the Merovan Center on Woodruff Road immediately adjacent to Interstate 385. In 1980, when the first building of the multi-purpose office park opened, Woodruff Road was little more than a country lane—but a country lane that intersected with an interstate connector. Now with eight buildings with square footage comparable to that of Haywood Mall that house an amazingly wide range of offices and manufacturers, it is in the heart of the eastside's most frequently traveled and busiest thoroughfares. Furman Company realtors saw the potential for the site, conceived the project, and have continued to handle the leasing and property management for the project since its start up.

By the time the first companies were moving into Merovan, the Furman Company had considerably slimmed down from the four-firm corporate structure it had developed in 1969. Alester Furman, III, as the prime stockholder, and his partners—primarily Junius Garrison—made two major business decisions in the mid-1970s that reduced the Company’s size and refocused its direction. The first came in 1975, when they sold Furman Securities to the Charleston brokerage firm of Frost, Johnson, Read and Smith. As an important regional securities brokerage with offices in Columbia and Anderson as well as Greenville, Furman Securities had underwritten industrial and municipal bonds since Alester G. Furman, Sr., had begun a Stock and Bond Department to help bring textile manufacturing to Greenville. For more than seventy years, that department of the Company had also managed investments for its principals, for their subsidiary corporations, including their retirement accounts, and for South Carolina investors. It had been a longtime member of the Midwest Stock Exchange. The securities market had become so complex, however, that a relatively small regional securities business was at a disadvantage, and Frost, Johnson, which was later acquired by Smith Barney, paid a healthy price. The decision allowed the company to concentrate more directly on real estate.

So too did a second sale in 1977. Alester Furman, III, sold the Furman Insurance Agency to Marsh & McLennan of New York. As one of the largest and most fully staffed independent insurance brokers in the Southeast, the Agency had had offices in Columbia and Greensboro, North Carolina, as well as its home base in Greenville. Although he claimed “to have no special expertise in insurance,” Furman initially headed the Marsh & McLennan office, which simply took over the Daniel Building suite of the Furman Agency and smoothly continued to serve its clients; well into his late seventies he was still a consultant to the firm.

Three years later, Furman gave up the presidency of the Company, although he maintained his controlling stock interest, kept

his real estate license, and continued to serve as the “money man,” or chief financial officer. Junius Garrison, who had joined the firm in 1949 and had become president of Furman Realty in 1969, became president and chief executive officer. In 1986 Furman sold his interest in the business to Garrison, and for the first time in ninety-eight years there was no Alester Garden Furman at the Company helm.

These decisions—both the sales and his gradual retirement from the firm— may have been motivated by the financial advantage involved, by Junius Garrison’s clear preference for concentrating on real estate, or by his desire to slow down or at least make a change in direction. In 1978 Alester Furman celebrated his sixtieth birthday in a new home on Altamont Road after moving from the house on West Avondale Avenue where he and Mary Simms had reared their daughters. The land they built on was part of the thousand acres on Paris Mountain that his grandfather had purchased in 1896, and it was on the site where his family had long had a summer home.

From it he had a clear view (in winter) of both downtown Greenville and the Furman



University campus where he would spend hundreds of hours a year for the next two decades.

Although he had been an active and generous university trustee for a decade, after his formal retirement from the Company, he became more deeply involved in the university's future. He had served as vice-chair of the Board of Trustees between 1974 and 1976, and he chaired it in 1981 and 1982, years when the university was in the midst of its first major capital campaign since the move to the Poinsett Highway. One of the first major campaign gifts was the Furman family's contribution of funds to build the Joseph Baylis Earle Infirmary. The same architects, Perry, Dean and Associates of Boston, who had designed all buildings on the campus, were once more chosen as the architects, although, as usual, local architects complained because there was no open competition.

But then the question of the site for the much needed new facility arose. At first General Dean, the head of the firm, suggested attaching it to the west side of the Daniel Dining Hall; Alester Furman objected. Then Dean proposed a site over a drainage ditch (facing a garbage disposal unit). Furman was irate; he wanted a stand-alone facility on a broad sweep of vacant land near the women's residence halls, and his colleagues on the Board agreed. It was built there over the architect's strong objections.

That disagreement between the architects and the generous and influential trustee was the first of several during the next decade. (He intensely disliked the firm's design for the Roe Art Building, and he was appalled at Perry Dean's proposed cost—\$45,000 per bed—for apartment-style dormitories.) Alester Furman, Jr., had brought the new campus into being; Alester, III, was concerned, as his memos to board members and administration clearly stated, that the university's buildings continue to reflect the commitment to unified design motifs, quality construction, and price considerations that his father had championed. As chairman of the trustees' Building Committee between 1988 and 1996, he successfully lobbied to have local architects selected to design new buildings, and he carefully studied and questioned plans and elevations for the North Village Apartment complex, Daniel Chapel, and Johns Hall before approving them.

Yet he was quick to respond to needs. When he decided, for example, that the university needed impressive entrance signs, he contributed the funds and then worked for nearly a year to ensure the signs' proper placement and permanent construction. And when Cherrydale, the nineteenth century home of James Clement Furman, the university's first president (and his great-great grandfather), was offered to the school if the university would move it four miles up the Poinsett Highway, Alester Furman, III, covered the cost of the move and its total refurbishment to become the college Alumni House. Resigning his committee chairmanship in 1996, he called himself "your meddlesome trustee" in a letter to President David Shi, but the university administration knew that his involvement grew out of his devotion to the school and to its physical environment.



CONSTRUCTION OF THE JAMES BUCHANAN DUKE LIBRARY AT FURMAN UNIVERSITY

At the 1999 Founders Day Convocation when the university awarded him a Doctor of Humanities degree, the citation noted his service on the boards of the South Carolina Foundation of Independent Colleges and the state Commission on Higher Education, but it did not mention his involvement with the Greenville Hospital System, where he set up a million dollar trust fund, nor his publishing and underwriting a new South Carolina history text for eighth graders by Furman Professor A.V. Huff, nor his constant support of Furman University during the break with the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Nor did it mention the influential role he played on corporate boards. As a longtime director of Duke Power Company, for example, he chaired the building committee when Duke decided to erect a new South Carolina headquarters in downtown Greenville. His clear preference for traditional architectural styles and careful construction, as well as his commitment to downtown revitalization, were reflected in the careful detailing and Georgian (some called it “Furman”) style of the 1992 Duke Building on the once drab and neglected corner of McBee Avenue and Academy Streets. Several years later, when the Greenville Water System erected its new building a block away at the intersection of McBee Avenue and Westfield, it copied the same style; some Greenvillians called it the “son of Duke Power.” Although Alester Furman had not been involved in its construction, his university building committee experience and personal taste were reflected in the two

most important anchors on the newly revitalized west side of the city.)

During his tenure at the Company and the years following his retirement before ill health forced him to withdraw from public life, Greenville had changed dramatically. Downtown had almost died before being reborn with renewed energy. Mill villages had become self-sufficient communities. Furman University had moved to a new campus and was regularly listed among America's top fifty liberal arts colleges. The county's economy, no longer exclusively dependent on textiles, was fast becoming diversified and multi-national. Eastside housing, retailing, and business were dynamically expanding. Mauldin, Simpsonville, and Fountain Inn had become suburbs linked to Greenville by the extension of Interstate 385. He, his partners, and their associates had contributed to and helped shape those changes. And the Company his grandfather had started, his father had shaped, and he had expanded, had returned to its roots in real estate.



CHAPTER IV



INTO THE SECOND CENTURY

PHOTO: JUNIUS GARRISON



## INTO THE SECOND CENTURY

THE FURMAN COMPANY CELEBRATED ITS CENTENNIAL IN 1988 BY CO-SPONSORING "RIDE THE CHAMBER EXPRESS," A FESTIVE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY PARTY FOR THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. Among the Company executives who welcomed guests to the Hyatt that evening were Junius Garrison, the chairman of the board; his son, Henry Garrison, the company's president and chief executive officer; and Stephen Navarro, its executive vice president.

While Alester Furman was present, he no longer headed the firm, but the Garrisons, its new leaders, shared their predecessors' long Greenville heritage and their personal and professional dedication to community improvement. Their ancestor, David Garrison, a redheaded Scotsman, had settled near the banks of the Saluda River in the late eighteenth century and gave his name to Garrison Shoals, the later site of Piedmont Mill. The family eventually moved to Greenville, and, as a child during the Great Depression, Junius lived on Perry Avenue in the West End. From there, his father walked daily to the shoe store on Main Street where he was a salesman. After graduating from Greenville High School, Junius studied at Clemson College for a year before entering the U. S. Army Air Corps during the Second World War. Afterwards he enrolled at Furman University with the help of the G. I. Bill. He graduated from the college with a B. A. in economics, Magna Cum Laude, in 1949, and immediately went to work for Alester Furman, Jr. The bright young veteran with a sharp eye for location and an in-depth knowledge of Greenville real estate advanced rapidly, becoming vice president of the Company's commercial real estate division in 1961 and then president and chief executive officer in 1970. When Alester Furman, III, retired in 1986, Garrison acquired all the remaining stock in the company, although Furman remained on the board for several more years.

Garrison too was a community leader who felt a responsibility for helping Greenville grow. He had been a member of the executive board of 300 for Greenville County, a member of the board of the Local Development Corporation, the Advisory Council of the Greenville County Development Board, and the Land Value Advisory Committee. His involvements in charitable and nonprofit organizations were equally impressive: he served as a director and board officer of the Vocational Rehabilitation Workshop, as a director of the American Heart Institute and the Greenville County Foundation, and he had chaired the United Way, the Greenville Symphony Association, and both the Furman University Alumni Association and its President's Advisory Council. He was also an active and committed leader at Buncombe Street Methodist Church.

But while Junius Garrison was immensely knowledgeable about Greenville real estate—he seemed to know the cost, ownership, and value of every piece of property in the county—he was past sixty when he finally controlled all aspects of the Company. Remembering perhaps Alester Furman, Jr.’s advice that real estate was a young man’s business, he soon named his son Henry, who had joined the Company after graduating from Presbyterian College in 1972, as its new chief executive officer. At the same time he conveyed Company stock to the younger man. He also appointed Steve Navarro, a 28- year-old Californian whom the company had hired in 1983 after his graduation from California State University at Fullerton, as executive vice president and junior partner in the firm.

The new leaders knew that acquisitions, mergers, and globalization were rapidly changing the real estate industry. A more sophisticated approach to the business would be essential to unlocking a new frontier for the business; the key constituent of that approach would be in-depth, accurate, and immediately retrievable information. As a result, the new partners immediately began the Furman Space Report. It focused on office space availability, location, and cost, when no one in South Carolina measured anything other than residential inventory. It was later expanded into an annual report including retail and industrial space. With the goal of identifying every upstate building, owner, tenant, unit size, specifications, rental cost, vacancies, and absorption, was a daunting task, researched initially by brokers and compiled by an outside writer. Within two years, however, it became a part of the Company’s internal operations. In later years, the Company established a Client Services Division dedicated solely to providing more sophisticated research and to include, on the basis of the collected data, a future forecast in order to interpret the marketplace and its direction. Today the Furman Report is available to office, industrial, retail, and investment clients both quarterly and annually and it is the most quoted source used by the industry.

Along with research and new client services, the Furman Company knew that in order to maintain its standing as a real estate leader, its focus would have to sharpen. By 1990, it required all of its professional staff to specialize in a particular area of expertise—office, industrial, retail, or development—because partners knew that as Greenville’s appeal to outside investors grew, specific knowledge was not only needed but expected. Navarro consistently emphasized that as clients became more sophisticated, their expectations for service would rise and that the Company’s competitiveness would be measured nationally rather than locally.

The Company’s most significant downtown project in the late 1980s was developing, leasing, and managing the Ogletree Building at the corner of Beattie Place and North Main Street. It took fast decision-making and considerable



financial expertise to create what became a handsome Main Street landmark for the large employment law firm. The land on which it was built, originally planned for a third tower adjacent to the two Shelter Centre Buildings on Beattie Place, suddenly became available in 1988 when Shelter faced financial difficulties. Steve Navarro was playing golf at Hilton Head Island one Saturday when Shelter officials phoned him at the club's turn-house coming off of the 9th green; three days later they had clinched the deal.

The result was a \$10 million, six-story building, opened in October 1990, fully leased by Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak, and Stewart, who occupied three and a half levels and leased the remainder to Merrill Lynch. Initially owned by Fidelity Corp., a Furman Company financing subsidiary, two years later it was sold back to the law firm through a prearranged agreement. In 2001, Ogletree decided to get out of the real estate business and sold it to a small consortium that included company attorneys and Navarro.

New executive management brought new opportunities, but during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Furman Company struggled internally. Some successful brokers like Earle Furman resigned to start new companies of their own; Henry Garrison had personal problems. Following an unfortunate lawsuit involving the principals, Junius Garrison and Stephen Navarro bought back Henry Garrison's stock, and Navarro, the new president and majority stockholder of the Furman Company, unexpectedly found himself in charge of all operations.

A 30-year old chief executive from California, even one who had established himself as a top broker in the previous few years, did not seem a likely fit for the prestigious century-old South Carolina real estate firm. But Navarro too had Greenville roots, even if they were more recently planted in local red clay soil. His great uncle had been stationed at Donaldson Air Force Base after World War II; when Steve's grandfather, a barber, learned of the opportunities the piedmont city presented, he joined his brother in Greenville and reared his family here. His daughter, Pauline Lancianese, had just graduated from Greenville High School when she met Lu Navarro, an enlisted man at Donaldson Air Base, at St. Mary's Church in the mid-1950s. They danced at the USO center at the Traxler Building (now Falls Place) in the West End, and after Navarro completed his military career at Shaw Air Force Base they were married.

In 1958 they moved to California, where they reared their sons, but the Navarros made frequent summer trips to Greenville to visit her father. So in 1979, when Steve, who had majored in finance and real estate at Cal State-Fullerton and already knew Greenville, read an article in Money Magazine touting the area's potential for growth as "One of the Top Ten Job Mecca's of the '80s," his decision to move east and seek a career in his mother's hometown was not a difficult one. While his remarkable success could not have been anticipated, by education and

personality he was, as the old Company advertising campaign had put it in the 1960s, “the right man.”

During the first years that he served in his new role, he stabilized the Company’s management and grew its business. Yet even while the firm was participating in large-scale developments, it still functioned primarily as a real estate brokerage, and Junius Garrison, after recovering from cancer, still “mended and tended” as the mentor of its overall operations. When Garrison, then 75, died suddenly in April 2000, he was mourned by colleagues and friends who had known and worked with him for fifty years, and Furman University posthumously presented him the Bell Tower Award for lifetime service.

As the Furman Company entered the twenty-first century, with its rapidly changing and highly charged global economy and the new opportunities presented at home, Navarro and his experienced management team prepared for the future by reshaping the firm, ensconced since 1994 in luxurious corporate offices in the Bank of America Building. Between 1999 and 2001, the Company’s structure changed into five distinct but closely related limited liability corporations in order to emphasize its strengths and enhance its services to clients.

The first step came in 1999, with the establishment of The Furman Co., Insurance Agency LLC. By returning after more than twenty years to a core business given up when Marsh & McLennan had purchased its insurance business from Alester Furman, III, the Company was once more able to provide personal, business, and financial planning services for clients. During the same year, Navarro also formalized the Company’s longtime role and increasing interest in commercial property development by creating The Furman Co., Development LLC with a goal of identifying land to fit corporate clients’ needs and constructing or rehabilitating structures for the business. Commercial Real Estate continued to be a separate division, offering enhanced asset management through The Furman Co., Facilities LLC and investment services as well as retail, office, and industrial brokerage in The Furman Co., Commercial LLC.

In 2000, in order to access national and international commercial research and management services, the independent –Commercial and Facilities divisions finally acquiesced to partnering with a national firm. They affiliated by license agreement with Grubb & Ellis, the fifth largest commercial real estate brokerage company in the nation at that time. Their market report was folded into the Grubb & Ellis national report, and at the same time the Company added annual seminars for invited clients, real estate lawyers, bankers, and appraisers where experts discussed survey results and trends in detail.

In 2001, reflecting its continuing emphasis on commercial real estate, the Company sold its old and well-established home brokerage business, The Furman Co., Residential LLC, to Coldwell Banker Caine. It was a perfect match since both

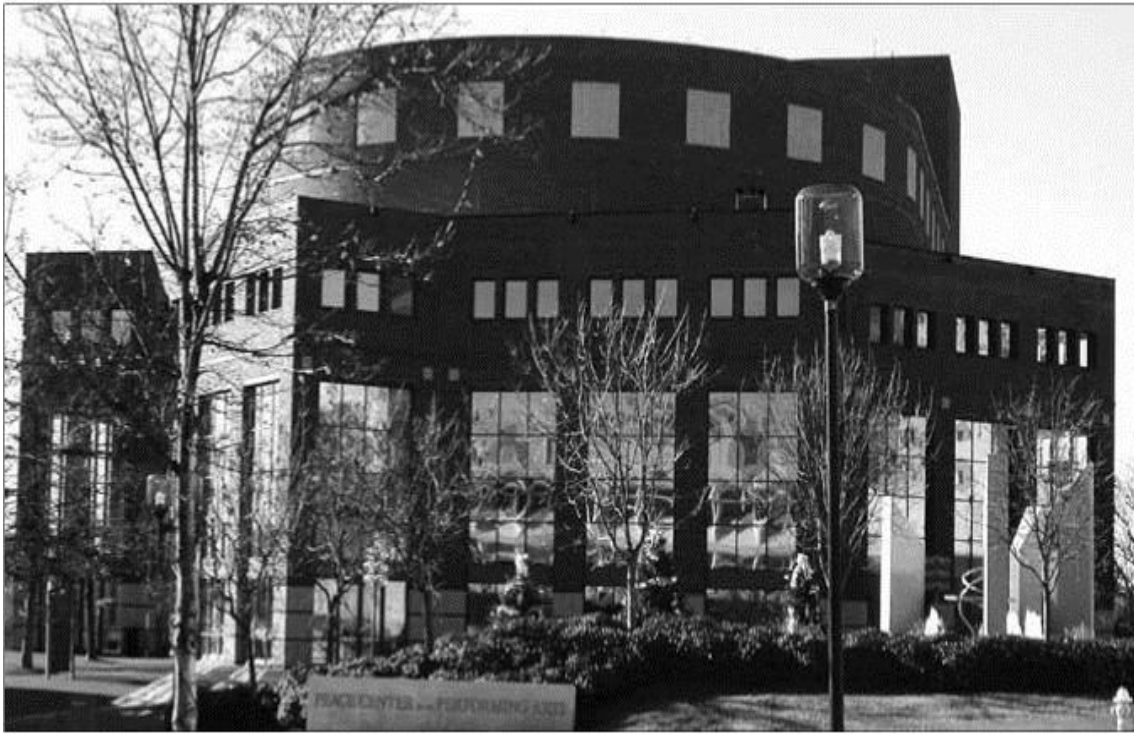
long-established companies targeted the same upper end homebuyers and business relocation customers, while Caine was intent on growing in that business and Furman had its eye on expanding its primary core commercial real estate interests. Later, in 2007, Navarro added another service platform that focused on the most sophisticated investors and portfolio owners of real estate. The Furman Co., Investment Advisory Services LLC was established to help clients manage their institutional portfolios and most complicated distressed assets, again boosting the company's delivery of sophisticated services to match their clients' needs.

On February 1, 2010 at its annual Upstate Real Estate Forecast event in downtown Greenville, The Furman Co. announced their new affiliation with CBRE, Inc. Global affiliation with CBRE, the world's largest international real estate firm, allows CBRE | The Furman Co. tactical access to new technology, the ability to put its brokers in direct collaboration with over 447 offices and 34,000 employees worldwide, together with more sophisticated research and data collection, allowing the Furman Company to advise investors and major corporations about changing markets and development opportunities. Delivery of market reports have progressed and evolved into sending "real time" communications through outlets like email blasts and Twitter.

While current data, expertise, knowledge of local market trends, and keen eyes for development potential are essential in the real estate business, success still depends on personal relationships and trust. The Furman Company has built those relationships both with local companies and international corporations over the decades; their client list over the period includes most of the Upstate's blue ribbon firms—Michelin, Milliken, General Electric, BMW, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, and TD Bank among them. In addition, as the largest commercial real estate firm in the upstate, they began to work in partnerships with public entities—city, county, and state—on new development opportunities.

Whether in tandem with individual clients, multi-national corporations, or these new partnerships, for more than a hundred years the Furman Company has helped to create the map of Greenville. In 1890, Greenville business was Main Street business. Alester Furman, Sr., had broadened that boundary to include land adjacent to the western city limits where textile mills erected their villages. His son saw the development potential of new roads and started projects on Wade Hampton Boulevard, Pelham Road, and, by finding the land for Furman University, on Highway 25 northwest of the city. After the conversion of Donaldson Air Base into an industrial park in the late 1960s, Greenville's industrial growth had sprawled southeast along Augusta Road with Michelin's massive property purchases near Donaldson Center.

The pattern of industrial growth away from town and commercial



PEACE CENTER COMPLEX CIRCA 1990

development within the central business district has continued, but with a slightly different focus. The Furman Company's first major involvement with a public partnership project, for example, was The Matrix Technology Park, developed on over a thousand acres of land owned by Greenville County near Donaldson Industrial Center between Augusta Road and the new Southern Connector. Greenville County's Donaldson Commission hired the firm in 2002 to help structure and develop the property, and, upon completion, answering to a County Council Committee, the Company continued consulting for the project, which now has four major occupants.

By the mid-1990s, Greenville's central business district had become one of the most vigorous (and award-winning) downtowns in the nation. The opening of the Peace Center for the Performing Arts, a public-private partnership jump-started with multi-million dollar gifts from the Peace family, the owners of the Greenville News, as well as the on-going refurbishment of the old West End into the beginning of an arts district triggered major renovations near the Reedy River. Restaurants and cafes brought crowds to Main Street; refurbished apartments and second floors of downtown buildings became some of Greenville's most desirable residences. New development was the result. Wachovia Place (now known as Wells Fargo Center), for example, was a \$10 million makeover of the former South Carolina National Bank Building to include Main Street retail, office space, a new entrance and atrium as well as condominiums. Upon completion and transfer, the

property's retail and office space was then turned over for leasing by the Furman Company. In fact, at the close of 2006, the Company's presence in downtown Greenville was never stronger, since it leased or managed seven of the city's ten largest office buildings.

As Main Street opportunities became increasingly rare, urbanism, almost by necessity, seeped out to parallel blocks. The Bookends is an example. This downtown project further illustrates the Company's new partnership approach with a public entity: it is a mixed-use development facing on both Spring and Washington Streets that wraps around (thus the name) the public Spring Street parking garage. City Council awarded the development rights for the 30-unit upscale condominium project to the Company after a vigorous RFP (Request for Proposal) process that required prospective partners to demonstrate to city officials their abilities and plans for success.

Everyone who knows Greenville knows that the intersection of Woodruff Road and Interstates 85 and 385 is becoming the second mega-development area after downtown's success. Forty years ago, however, that prime land for future development was sleepy two-lane Woodruff Road. Junius Garrison had first seen its possibilities in the 1960s when the company selected land at Roper Mountain Road for the Piedmont Tricentennial Exposition. Later the Furman Company sited General Electric's gas turbine facility on nearby Garlington Road, and, in 1980, developed the Merovan Center on Woodruff Road. As the Furman Company looked for development opportunities at the beginning of its second century, they increasingly focused on a 60-acre triangle of land owned by Alester Furman and Junius Garrison fronting the interstate highway and Woodruff Road.

When eccentric multi-millionaire John D. Hollingsworth died in 2000, he left his vast estate—primarily thousands of acres of undeveloped land, much of it along Interstate 85 around the Laurens Road (Highway 276) exit—in a trust to benefit Greenville charities including Furman University and the YMCA. The committee charged with distributing his wealth began planning for the gradual development of this wooded land bordering the highway. Because the land is entirely within the city limits, it has the potential of adding to the city's tax rolls, increasing its population, and alleviating urban sprawl. On the Verdae property, as it is known, they envision an intensive and extensive residential development—estimated to be eventually worth \$1.5 billion—to include affordable as well as high-end housing, a major park, and retail space for, eventually, at least 10,000 people who will work at commercial and industrial developments planned for other portions of the acreage on the south side of I-85. That's where the Furman Company comes in.

Teaming with Clemson University, BMW, Microsoft, Michelin, and IBM, The Furman Co., Development, LLC, initially (in 2004) committed to spend millions of dollars and to build the first of up to four 80,000 square feet or larger buildings at



CUICAR FACILITIES ARE FIRST IN A SERIES OF FIVE PROPOSED TECHNOLOGY CENTERS

CUICAR, the new Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research, a series of five “technology villages” spread over 250 adjacent rolling acres on former Hollingsworth property. When The Timken Company of Torrington, Connecticut, decided to relocate one of its research engineering divisions to the new campus, the Furman Company agreed to build a 120,000 square foot state-of-the-art LEED-Certified research and office facility for the Fortune 500 automotive support company.

And when “Project Pogo,” the top secret multi-million dollar project long-rumored to be locating either in Greenville County or in Jacksonville, Florida, was officially announced by The South Financial Group president Mack Whittle at a press conference at the Poinsett Plaza in downtown Greenville in spring 2006, Steve Navarro was there. The Furman Co., Development LLC had identified and optioned the land where South Financial would build its massive headquarters and the potential for creating thousands of new jobs. Furman Development handled all aspects of the nearly \$100 million project and Furman was able to successfully encourage sustainable development and the construction of LEED-certified buildings. The impact of these developments along Woodruff Road has the potential to change Greenville in ways unimaginable to previous generations of developers. The Furman Company itself is today would be just as unimaginable to its predecessors. Three generations of Furmans watched it grow from one man in a buggy to a proud family firm; today it is as a complex multi-functional organization that works with clients in more than a dozen states and as well as Mexico and Canada. Although the firms it advises still have Greenville ties, Company leaders

are helping them develop huge projects on an international scale. And while yellow signs eventually changed to CBRE green proclaiming “leased and managed by The Furman Co.” are ubiquitous around Greenville, its presence is felt in Canada and Mexico, and from its headquarters in South Carolina across the United States.

It has adapted to the changing business environment while maintaining the values of its founders. A single person can no longer encompass its responsibilities and goals; it takes the vision, dedication, and hard work of dozens. Complexly structured partnerships, high-risk development ventures, and multi-million dollar deals, though, have emphasized rather than replaced the virtues that helped Alester G. Furman flourish so many years ago—connections and friendships, integrity and initiative, and thorough knowledge of the land and people of the community.

Using technology that was unknown even twenty years ago, Furman is assisting hundreds of clients and helping to bring prosperity to their hometown, and more thoughtfully designed workplaces to the nation. The men and women who have contributed to its remarkable success over the years have also been, in part, responsible for creating the Upstate as it is today. As Greenville builds toward the future, as it digs the foundations and raises the steel that will create the city of many tomorrows, The Furman Co. will be there as it has been for 125 years.





# THE AUTHOR

JUDITH BAINBRIDGE RETIRED IN 2007 FROM FURMAN UNIVERSITY AS PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Mary Washington College and a M.A. and Ph.D. in English from the University of Iowa. Though a native of New Jersey, Judy has resided in Greenville since 1976 where she has extensively researched local history. A historic preservationist, Judy has written books about Greenville's West End, the Greenville Women's College. Recently published works include Greenville's Heritage, a collection of her articles which originally appearing Greenville News, and the 2008 Chamber of Commerce's book Historic Greenville.



# PHOTO CREDITS

We are grateful to these companies and organizations for the use of their photos (in order of appearance):

## CHAPTER I

Campus Aerial	Greenville County Historical Society
Chicora College	Greenville County Historical Society
Camp Wetherill	Greenville County Library
Post Office	Greenville County Historical Society

## CHAPTER II

Post Office	Greenville County Historical Society
People's Bank	Greenville County Historical Society
Mill Village	Greenville County Historical Society
Greenville Army Air Base	Greenville County Library
Furman Uptown	Special Collections, Furman University

## CHAPTER III

South Main Street	Greenville County Historical Society
Daniel Billboard	Greenville County Historical Society
Hyatt Regency	Hyatt Regency, Greenville, S.C.

## CHAPTER IV

The Peace Center	The Peace Center, Greenville, S.C.
------------------	------------------------------------

All other photos in this book are the property of The Furman Co., Inc.



# INDEX

Abney Mills .....	41	Blackwell, Gordon .....	49
Academy Street .....	58, 67	BMW .....	75, 77
Alester G. Furman Company .....	21, 29, 32, 34, 35, 42, 46, 48, 53, 54, 57	Board of Trade .....	7, 8, 12, 14, 17, 18
Altamont Road.....	65	Bob Jones University.....	41, 56
American Heart Institute .....	71	Boll weevil .....	22, 29
American Spinning Company .....	5, 8	Bond issues.....	17, 18
American Tobacco Company .....	12	Bookends (The) .....	77
Amherst College .....	53	Boone Aiken.....	44
Anderson, SC .....	36, 47, 62, 64	Bowater .....	46, 55
Ansel, Gov. Martin.....	17	Boyce Lawn.....	14, 28
Army Air Base (see also Greenville Army Air Base).....	24, 36, 53, 83	Brandon Mill .....	9, 32
Arrington, John W., Jr. ....	32	Broad Street .....	13, 16, 63
Augusta National Golf Course.....	45	Broadus Avenue.....	18
Augusta Road .....	36, 45, 55, 75, 76	Broadus Bailey.....	21, 33, 43
Bailey, Broadus .....	38	Brown, Henry .....	43
Bank of America.....	75	Brown, Walter.....	47
Bank of America Building .....	74	Bruce, Sidney .....	32
Bank of Commerce .....	5, 14, 22	Bryson, Sen. Joseph .....	22
Baptist Courier.....	5, 9	Buck Mickel.....	9, 48, 63
Batesville.....	6	Bucknertown .....	6
Baylis Earle.....	28, 49, 65	Buncombe Road (Street).....	24, 41, 56, 58, 63
Beattie, Marshall .....	32	Buncombe Street Methodist Church.	71
Beattie, William (Billy) .....	32	Bush, George W. ....	41
Beautifying and Improving Greenville, South Carolina .....	14	Byrnes, Sen. James .....	22
Bell Tower Associates.....	59	C.O. Allen.....	15
Bell Tower Mall.....	59, 61	California State University, Fullerton	72, 73
Bennette Geer.....	17	Camp Sevier .....	20, 21, 36
Biltmore Forest Golf Club .....	45	Camp Wetherill.....	10, 11, 36, 83
Birmingham, AL .....	42	Camp Zachary Taylor .....	28
Black and Vetch .....	48	Camperdown Company .....	32, 46, 55
Blacksburg, SC.....	9	Camperdown Mill .....	4, 7, 13, 32, 45, 55
		Capers, F. F. ....	15
		Carolina Mill (see also Poinsett Mill)	41

Carolina Power Company.....	13, 18	Confederate Memorial.....	15
Carolina Television .....	43	Conyers, W. P. ....	21
Carolina Theatre.....	15, 21	County Square.....	60
Carter, W. J. ....	35	Court Street .....	13
Cauble Building .....	14	Coxe property (house).....	15, 21
Cauble, Carrie V. ....	14	Craig, Gaulden and Davis .....	60
Century Book (The) .....	9	Crain, J. Dean.....	40, 41
Century Oaks Apartments.....	56	Crescent Avenue .....	37, 55
Channel Four .....	43	Crittenden, S. S. ....	9
Charleston Naval Yard.....	38	D. T. Bacot.....	6
Charleston, S.C. ....	30, 31, 38, 53, 59, 61, 62, 64	Dan River Mills .....	32
Chase Manhattan Bank, NY .....	31	Daniel Building .....	57, 63, 65
Chemical Bank, NY .....	28, 29, 30, 31, 33	Daniel Chapel.....	9, 66
Cherrydale .....	66	Daniel Construction Company.....	36, 44, 56, 57, 62, 63
Chicora College.....	6, 7, 83	Daniel Dining Hall.....	66
Christ Episcopal Church .....	53	Daniel International.....	57, 61
Church Street.....	40, 46, 55	Daniel, Charles.....	37, 43, 46, 48, 53, 56
Cigar factory (see also Seidenburg Cigar Factory) .....	12	Daniel, Homozel Mickel .....	44
Citizens and Southern National Bank.....	46, 55	Daniel, Hugh.....	44
Citizens Committee for Navy Relief .....	38	Darlington, SC.....	7
City Beautiful movement .....	14	Davidson College.....	39
Civil Defense Council.....	38	Davis Mechanical .....	37
Civil War .....	4, 7, 61	Deering-Milliken .....	34
Clarendon Avenue .....	13	Department of the Army.....	36
Claussen's Bakery .....	29	Dispensary War .....	8
Clemson College.....	5	Donaldson Air Force Base .....	24, 73
Clemson University .....	10, 42, 77	Donaldson Industrial Center .....	38, 62, 76
Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research .....	78	Downtown Greenville Association .....	56
Coffee Street .....	14	downtown revitalization .....	67
Cold War .....	38	Downtowner Motel.....	16, 64
Coldwell Banker Caine Real Estate .....	74	Duke Endowment.....	23
Columbia .....	14, 31, 61, 64, 65	Duke Power Company .....	14, 67
Columbia, SC.....	4, 7, 9	Duke University .....	39
Columbian Exposition.....	14	Duke, James B.....	12, 13, 39
Conestee, SC.....	37, 53	Dunbar Street.....	10
		Dunean Mill .....	10
		Earle Street.....	11
		Earle, John Baylis, Infirmary .....	49

Easley Mills.....	21	Furman, Alester G. Sr.....	9
Eastern Air.....	22	Furman, Alester G.(Sr.) .....	15
Edgefield, SC .....	4	Furman, Alester G., III .....	9, 16, 42, 53
Edwards Department Store .....	59	Furman, Alester G., Jr.....	5, 9, 16, 27, 38, 49
Elizabethton, TN.....	46	Furman, Alester G., Sr. ....	16
Ely & Walker .....	41	Furman, C. M.....	4
Federal Communications		Furman, Constance .....	18
Commission.....	43	Furman, Earle.....	29, 39
Federal Housing Authority .....	35	Furman, Earle, Jr. ....	73
Fidelity Corp.....	73	Furman, Eleanor .....	12, 18
Finlay Brothers Grocery .....	13	Furman, Eleanor (Hoyt) .....	5
First Baptist Church .....	17, 40	Furman, Florence Garden.....	4
Florida State University .....	49	Furman, James Clement.....	4, 66
Fluor Corporation .....	57	Furman, Janie Earle.....	28
Fountain Inn, SC .....	53, 67	Furman, Lucy.....	18
Fourth Presbyterian Church.....	18	Furman, Mary Simms (Oliphant ..	53
Frank Barnes .....	7, 24	Furman, Mary Simms (Oliphant).	65
Frost, Johnson, Read and Smith ...	64, 65	Furman, Rebecca .....	12, 21
Fuller, Buckminster .....	61	Furman, Richard .....	4
Furman & Rabb.....	7	Gaddy, Harold.....	43
Furman Academy and Theological		Garden, Alexander .....	4
Institution .....	4	Garlington Road .....	61, 77
Furman Co. (The).....	2, 9, 10, 62, 64, 75, 77, 78, 79, 83	Garrison Shoals .....	71
Furman Co. Commercial LLC (The)	74	Garrison, David .....	71
Furman Co. Development LLC (The)	74	Garrison, Henry.....	71, 72, 73
Furman Co. Development, LLC (The)	77	Garrison, Junius.....	9, 10, 16, 42, 55, 57, 64, 65, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77
Furman Fitting School.....	27	General Electric .....	75
Furman Space Report .....	72	General Mortgage Company .....	42
Furman University .....	9, 10, 3, 4, 5, 13, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 31, 32, 38, 39, 44, 47, 49, 52, 57, 58, 65, 67, 71, 74, 75, 77, 83	Geodesic domes .....	61
Furman, Alester G. (Jr.) .....	12, 16	Glen, Mel.....	22
Furman, Alester G. (Sr.).....	5, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 54, 57, 58, 60, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 71, 72, 74, 75, 77	Glider Base .....	38
Furman, Alester G. III.....	9	Goodman Properties .....	56
Furman, Alester G. Jr.....	10	Governor's Hill.....	8
Furman, Alester G. Sr .....	10	Graceland Cemetery .....	20, 28
		Graceland Greenhouses .....	20
		Graham Field .....	21
		Graham, Alan.....	32

Graham, C. E.....	32	Greenville Redevelopment Committee	48
Grant's, W. T. variety store .....	55	Greenville Sinking Fund.....	17
Great Depression .....	12, 22, 27, 31, 32, 33, 39, 71	Greenville Spinners .....	21
Green Valley Golf Course .....	45	Greenville Story (The) .....	7, 24
Greensboro, NC.....	34, 35, 65	Greenville Symphony Association.	61, 71
Greenville		Greenville Water System.....	67
airport	22	Greenville Women's College	
beautification	14	(see also Women's College of Furman	
city hall	19, 52, 58	University)	23, 39, 49, 57, 58, 81
electricity	13, 34	Greenville-Spartanburg jetport .....	47, 48
jail	14, 16, 17, 18, 19	Greer, SC .....	47, 53
motto	12	Griffith, Paul.....	35
population	3, 14, 53, 55, 59, 77	Grubb & Ellis .....	74
post office	19, 22, 57	Halprin, Lawrence .....	63
telephone	6, 7, 13, 16	Hammer and Associates .....	55, 58
water	3	Hammond, Frank.....	6
Greenville Board of Realtors .....	21	Harvard Business School.....	36, 39
Greenville Cemetery Association..	20	Hatch, C. E. ....	32
Greenville Chamber of Commerce	12, 21, 22, 36, 47, 61, 63, 81	Haynsworth, Clement F.....	43
Greenville Commons .....	64	Haynsworth, Harry J. ....	6, 13
Greenville Community Chest .....	47	Haynsworth, Mrs. Knox .....	43
Greenville Community Corporation	63, 64	Haywood Mall.....	64
Greenville Country Club .....	45	Heller, Max .....	49, 63, 64
Greenville County Art Association	61	Heritage Green .....	28, 58
Greenville County Courthouse .....	14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	High Hills of the Santee.....	4
Greenville County Foundation .....	48, 71	Highlands, NC .....	14
Greenville County Health Center .	59	Hipp, Calhoun.....	45
Greenville County library .....	58	Hipp, Francis .....	45
Greenville Female College .....	5, 18, 28	Hipp, Herman .....	45
Greenville Gas, Electric, and Power		Historic Greenville Foundation .....	58
Company .....	13	History Museum of the Upstate ....	58
Greenville Guards .....	7	Hollings, Gov. Fritz .....	47
Greenville High School .....	53, 71, 73	Hollingsworth, John D. ....	77
Greenville home ownership .....	42	Hollis, L. P.....	48
Greenville Hospital System .....	67	Holly Ridge.....	45
Greenville Hotel Company .....	15, 16, 56	Horry County .....	22
Greenville Little Theatre .....	58	Hoyt, James .....	18
Greenville Morris Plan .....	20	Hudgens, Eleanor (Furman) .....	21
Greenville News-Piedmont Company	43, 57	Hudgens, Robert E.....	21
		Huff, A. V.....	67



Hughes Development Company ....	58	Marsh & McLennan .....	65, 74
Hughes, Phillip.....	58	Masonic Building.....	18
Hunt, Roy .....	43	Matrix Technology Park.....	76
Hyatt Corporation.....	64, 71	Mauldin, Oscar .....	20
IBM.....	46, 55, 64, 77	Mauldin, SC.....	53, 67
Innocenti and Webel.....	47	Mayre, Thornton.....	19
insurance business.....	7, 54, 74	McAlister Farm.....	58
interstate highway .....	46, 77	McAlister Square.....	59
investments.....	29, 42, 64	McBee Terrace .....	6
Iselin, Oliver Company .....	32	McBee, Alexander.....	6
Ivey's Department Store .....	55	McBee, Kirk L. ....	36
Jackson, Baxter .....	28, 29, 30	McBee, Vardry .....	36
Johns Hall .....	66	McCall, Arthur.....	43
Johns, John E. ....	49	McKinley, Pres. William .....	10
Jolley, Robert.....	43	McSwain, J. J. ....	22
Judson Mill .....	17, 34, 35	Melville Land Development Company	11
Junior Charity League .....	38	Memminger Street .....	6
Kelly Tires.....	13	Merovan Center .....	64, 77
Kelsey, Harlan.....	12, 14	Michelin Tire Corporation .....	62, 75, 77
Knoxville, TN.....	8	Microsoft Corporation.....	77
Lady Churchill.....	13	Middlebrook, Stephen.....	55
LaFaye, George .....	16	Mill village sales.....	54
Lancianese, Pauline (Navarro) .....	73	Milliken .....	75
Land Value Advisory Committee ..	71	Milliken, Roger.....	9, 47
Lanneau Manufacturing .....	7	Mills Avenue .....	40, 59
Lewis Plaza Shopping Center .....	55	Mills Mill.....	63
Liberty Corporation.....	61	Mitchell and Furman.....	5, 7
Liberty Life Insurance Company ..	43	Mitchell, J. F. ....	5
Linville, NC.....	14	Monaghan Mill.....	9, 12, 13, 14, 21, 41
Local Development Corporation ....	71	Morgan, B. A. ....	5, 14
Mahon, Heyward.....	31	Morgan, James H. ....	5, 8
Main Street .....	5, 6, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 28, 37, 52, 56, 57, 63, 64, 71, 72, 75, 76, 77, 83	Mountain City Land Development Co.	13
Main-Oak Company.....	56, 64	Mountain City Land Development Company	
Mann, A. C. ....	22	Municipal League .....	14, 17
Manning, Charles .....	4	O. P. Mills .....	8
Mansion House .....	10, 13, 15	Ottaray Hotel .....	16, 18, 21, 32, 44, 52, 56, 57
Marietta, SC .....	35	Pacolet Mill.....	8
		Paris Mountain Land Development	

Company .....	9, 13	Stone Avenue .....	6, 10, 11
Parker, Lewis .....	5, 8, 12, 13	Strom Thurmond Institute .....	42
Parker, Thomas.....	14	Symmes, Frederick .....	32
Pelzer Mill.....	8	Television .....	43, 44
People's Bank .....	6	Texize Chemicals .....	29
People's National Bank .....	30	Textile Crescent .....	8
Piedmont Mill.....	8	Thackston, Furman & Company ...	7, 9, 11
Poe, Frank.....	8, 55	Thackston, William J. ....	7, 13, 18
Quinn, Minnie .....	16, 21	The Furman Co. Development LLC	78
R. E. Allen.....	6	The Furman Co. Facilities LLC.....	74
Record Building .....	5	The Furman Co. Insurance Agency LLC	74
Reedy River.....	6, 8, 14, 16, 24, 32, 39, 46, 52, 57, 59, 76	The Furman Co. Residential LLC.	74
River Street .....	6	Thomas, A. J. S.....	9
Saluda Power Company.....	13	Thompson, Waddy.....	9
Sampson, Oscar H. ....	8	Thurmond, Sen. Strom .....	38, 49
Seidenburg Cigar Factory .....	12	Tillman, Gov. Ben .....	7
South Carolina Baptist Convention	4, 13	Timken Company (The) .....	78
South Carolina National Bank.....	31, 49, 57, 63, 76	Tompkins, Daniel.....	8
South Carolina Tricentennial.....	61	Total Development Campaign .....	63
South Carolina United Fund .....	47	Townes Street .....	6
South Financial Group (The).....	78	Traxler Building.....	73
Southeastern Broadcasting.....	44	Traxler, David.....	45
Southeastern Life Building.....	18, 21	U.S. Naval Academy .....	53
Southeastern Life Insurance .....	21	Union Bleachery .....	32
Southern Baptist Convention .....	40	University of North Carolina .....	53
Southern Bleachery.....	21, 29	University Ridge .....	59
Southern Commercial Development Company .....	58	Verdae Development .....	77
Southern Connector .....	76	Victor-Monaghan Company.....	21
Southern Railroad .....	8	Vocational Rehabilitation Workshop	71
Southern Utilities Company .....	13	Wachovia Bank.....	75
Southern Worsted.....	21, 29	Wachovia Place.....	76
Southland Life Insurance.....	55	Wade Hampton Boulevard .....	10, 40, 43, 55, 56, 75
Spanish-American War .....	9, 10	Wade Hampton Mall.....	55, 56
Spartanburg, SC .....	22, 47, 61	Washington Street .....	4, 7, 11, 40, 55
Springwood Cemetery .....	21	Watson, Mayor Richard .....	22
Stevens & Co., J. P. ....	41, 57, 61	West End .....	6, 52, 59, 71, 73, 76, 81
Stevens, Robert T. ....	24, 41	Westervelt, J. I. ....	9, 13

Whitsett Street.....	28, 34	52, 57, 63
Whittle, Mack .....	78	Woodside Mill.....
Williams, J. T. ....	9	30, 31
Wilson, Woodrow.....	20	Woodside, John T. ....
Wilton Street.....	6	31
Winn-Dixie Stores.....	29, 59	Woolco.....
Winnsboro, SC .....	4	59
Women's College of		World War I.....
Furman University .....	23	20, 28, 31,
Wood, Gen. Leonard .....	20	46
Woodland Way .....	49	World War II .....
Woodruff Road .....	64, 77, 78	24, 36, 53,
Woodside Bank .....	29, 30	58, 73
Woodside brothers .....	22, 30	Wyche Law Firm .....
Woodside Building .....	18, 31, 49,	46
		Wyche, C. Thomas .....
		9, 63, 64
		YMCA .....
		12, 77
		Yorktown Apartments .....
		56
		Young Men's Business League .....
		8
		YWCA .....
		22

