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**THE HISTORY OF
CITY OF WOODBURY**

Prepared By
Planning & Zoning Commission
Woodbury Development Authority



Woodbury, Ga History

Prepared by the Historic Preservation Commission,
members of the Planning & Zoning Commission, and
much input by our Woodbury neighbors.

Special thanks to Robert Lovett.

August 14, 2020

CITY OF WOODBURY, GEORGIA



SNAP SHOT

- **POPULATION ~1,000**
- **200,000+ square footage in proposed Rural Zone Boundary**
- **1 Gigabits of wireless Broadband Access – First Georgia Broadband Ready Designated City**



It's a major part of Regional tourism venues.

Easy access to many tourist attractions, Woodbury is only a short drive away from Meriwether Murals Trail, Geocaching, Manchester's Train Observation Deck, Camp Meriwether, Pine Mountain, Lake Meriwether, the FDR Little Whitehouse, Hunting Trips, Golfing, Hiking, Fishing, and Kayaking. It is also centrally located between major Georgia cities:

- Columbus – 49 miles
- LaGrange – 31 miles
- Macon – 66 miles
- Atlanta – 69 miles



It's in a small town.

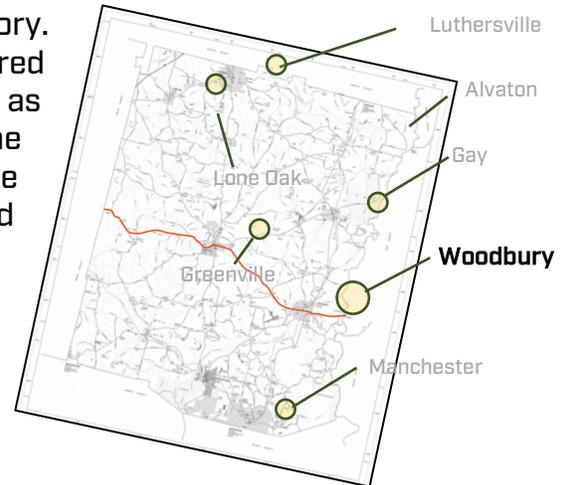
Woodbury is a town of about 1,000 people. It has a footprint of 2 square miles. At 500 people per square mile, we are a typical rural Georgia community.

It's the center point between West Point, GA and I-75 commonly referred to as the Kia Highway.

Woodbury is the center point of travel between the Kia manufacturing plant in West Point, GA and I-75 just North of Macon, GA. Our State Highway serves as an easy transit for Interstate Commerce vehicles to transit across the middle part of Georgia.



Downtown Woodbury is a cradle of Georgia history. Noteworthy people, places, and events are treasured memories for many within our community. Yet today, as memories fade and buildings deteriorate, we are losing the foundations of our future. Together, we have decided to take positive action to pull our downtown out of a blighted condition. We have agreed that it is time for our entire community to cooperate in creating opportunities for significant economic development. We are eager to “firm up” our foundations and to take Woodbury “past forward” into the future.



In the Beginning

As one of seven towns in Meriwether County, Woodbury is believed to be the oldest. Between 1828 and 1830, the first house was built in Woodbury at the Cross-Roads - a centrally located spot formed by three streets. The location was used to determine boundaries for the city limits and was later memorialized with a US Coast & Geodetic Survey Mark. It was around this “hub” that Woodbury eventually grew.



Geodetic Survey Mark on 1911 Building

Woodberry to Woodbury: A name change and a Charter

Woodbury was initially known as Sandtown because of white sand covering the roads and surrounding area. When the first post office was established in 1845, the name was changed to Woodberry. Then in 1854, the spelling was changed to the current spelling – Woodbury. The first village charter was issued that same year with a boundary radius one-half mile from the center of the crossroads. It was amended in 1872 and, with the coming of the first railroad in 1887, officially submitted to and incorporated by the state legislature. A 1907 amendment increased the area to three-

WOODBURY.

WRITTEN UP AFTER THE MANNER OF
A TRIPPLE MAN.

The Proposed Improvements—Situation,
Prospects, Railroad, Market, The
Battle of the Carpenter's
Hammer, Etc.

WOODBURY, Ga., Nov. 12.—All along the line of the Georgia Midland railroad the traveler notices a thrift and energy contrasting finely with the slow, unprogressive increments of the people along the line of older roads. Particularly in this spirit noticeable at Woodbury, a place 13 1/2 miles from the station, and a wide place in the road, but it is now moving rapidly on the way to a thriving city. New shores are being added, and the town is being filled to their capacity with goods. Beautiful residences are dotting the beautiful plain of ground and new mills and plants for building materials, cotton, iron, crockery, schools, law offices and physicians—they are all at Woodbury. Every man is busy. The other side of the town, the hotels are crowded with boarders, restaurants are being built, and in their yards or snipping it by the Georgia Midland, persons are going about their business as usual; the lawyers are looking after their fees; even the newspaper men bustle around with an energy not at all characteristic of the profession, but above all the busy farmer, the sound of the carpenter's hammer rattles away on the new building's frame with much rapidity. The rate of the hammer tones the painter's brush starts, and in a few days the once vacant plot of ground is covered with a handsome residence or store, occupied by a family or filled with goods.

Such is the impression made on the visitor's mind, but suppose we look about the place with note-book in hand and see the facts in our hands. Woodbury is fifty miles north of Columbus, on the Georgia Midland railroad. It is incorporated and has excellent officers. It has sandy streets and is a beautiful location for a town. The business done there this season is flattering and it is safe to predict double the amount next year. Going a bit out the city with note-book in hand I will cite some recent improvements:

R. P. Tallman, new hotel, just finished, and now receiving the finishing touches from the painter's brush. It is now occupied by Mrs. L. E. Wales, who does not fail to see to every comfort the traveling public could ask. Also, new building just completed and filled with a full stock of general merchandise. Also, warehouse, new, full of cotton; also, heavy stable, new; also, a two-story store nearly finished. J. M. Williams, five residences completed, and five more to be finished by January. He has fourteen others under contract; these finished are very handsome. Wilson Williams, residence in course of construction; John Gill, new residence finished; Walter Williams, new residence finished; R. D. Lora, residence, new, finished; Mrs. Martin, residence, new, finished; Dr. Houston, residence, just finished; Will Owen, residence, finished; John Cartwright, new store, just finished, occupied; Mr. Taylor, new store, occupied; general merchandise; Alex. Gill, new residence, finished; Preston Dore, large residence, building; Frank J. Williams, new residence, finished; A. C. Moore, new residence, finished; Mr. White store and residence, finished and occupied; Hirsch Bros., new store of general merchandise; Barnett & Co., manufacturers of harness; A. P. Dixon, new store, finished; Walter Williams, new store, finished, unoccupied; Gill, Williams & Powell, saw mill, planer and gig; Wm. Gilbert, carriage and wagon, manufactory; school house, new building, to be a neat and commodious house; Prof. G. P. Allen will be in charge; parsonage, just finished.

Besides the improvements mentioned in the way of buildings there were a number of new houses, the owners of which I could not ascertain, notwithstanding my guide was a resident of Woodbury, and one to whom I am indebted for many kind news stories, and such information gathered about the place. He is a young man of promise, and of delights to welcome strangers to the place, so if you should ever go to Woodbury do not fail to meet him—Col. D. L. Palmer.

With all these improvements going on, and the prospects of the Birmingham and Atlantic Air Line railroad crossing the Georgia Midland at that point, what is to hinder Woodbury from becoming a town of consequence? There is a fine farming territory surrounding it, the cotton to be shipped by rail to save carrying up to weighing over 4000 bales. The place is blessed with a spicy newspaper to push its claims, and all is going to succeed.

By the way, the Hot Blast has changed hands. Mr. T. E. Beall retiring and Mr. Peter W. Martin assuming editorial control with the next issue. Mr. Martin is well known to our readers, and handles a

*Columbus Daily Enquirer—
Sun, Nov 14, 1887*

quarters of a mile. Steadily growing, attracting more people and new businesses, in 1913 the Woodbury Charter was finalized and is the charter presented in our current Book of Ordinances.

Railroads, a President, and Prosperity

Railroads have been an intricate piece of Woodbury's growth and decline. The Georgia Midland and Gulf Railroad (GM&G) was chartered in 1885 and began operations in 1887. This brought the first rail service to Woodbury and the greatest period of growth began. Over time the line became part of Southern Railway. Known as the "M" line, it was Southern's access line to Columbus from Atlanta. This is the rail line President Franklin D. Roosevelt used to reach his "Little White House" in Warm Springs and the train usually stopped enroute at a Woodbury packing shed to onload fresh peaches for the President. Southern Railway abandoned the section from Rover to Columbus in the early 1980's before the name change to Norfolk Southern(NS). The right-of-way from Rover to Columbus is actually railbanked by the State of Georgia. The section from Grove (south of McDonough) to Greenwood to GA Route 155 in Luella is still operated by NS. NS also operates a portion of the line from Griffin to Westbrook to Rover. Woodbury is on that line from Rover to the Southwest into Columbus.

Growth Spurt of 1880s

The 1880's were a "booming" time for Woodbury. The Columbus Enquirer, Sunday, November 28, 1886 has the following headline; "The Town on a Regular Boom — One Saw Mill with Orders for Lumber for Fourteen Buildings."

TO BE INCORPORATED.

The Thriving Town of Woodbury Holds a Mass-Meeting—The Legislature to Be Memorialized for Articles of Incorporation.

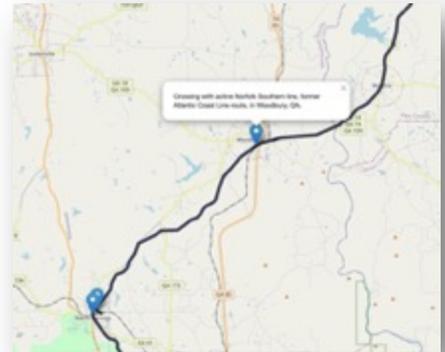
The citizens of Woodbury, Ga., held a mass meeting Tuesday night in the old Masonic hall to take steps to incorporate the town. Woodbury is one of the most thriving towns on the Georgia Midland. It is growing every day. New and handsome stores and residences are being erected and the town is rapidly growing to be a city of no small magnitude.

Upon motion, Rev. S. J. Clements was elected chairman and Mr. Herman Hirsch was elected secretary. The object of the meeting was stated by Mr. A. B. O'Hara in a few well timed and terse remarks. The meeting was harmonious, and it was unanimously in favor of incorporation. On motion of Dr. Neal Mr. O'Hara was elected treasurer.

Messrs. Neal and O'Hara were appointed to solicit funds to be used to insert an advertisement in the county paper, the Meriwether Vindicator, stating that application would be made to the legislature for articles of incorporation. The notice will be inserted at once and Mr. O'Hara was requested to perform this duty.

Messrs. J. T. Dixon, J. D. Sutton, T. P. McElrath, A. A. Moore and A. B. O'Hara were appointed to draft a set of resolutions to be submitted to the next meeting. The meeting then adjourned to convene again on the 14th instant.

Columbus Enquirer, Thursday, June 9, 1887



*The "M" Line; Rover to
Columbus*

Our community was growing! The first drug store opened. Many new houses were built. The cotton warehouse flourished. Woodbury dug wells to provide water and, as the newspaper stated, these “wells were located in strategic places around town.” Our City began to “thrive”. “All seem busy, and a spirit of progress is noticeable about the place that interests’ strangers at once.” [Columbus Enquirer, Sun, Nov 25, 1887]

School houses were provided as early as the late 1870's. The first school was a log cabin just north of Woodbury. Later a two-story wood frame structure was constructed on the site where the city tennis court and community center are now located. This

structure was torn down in 1922-1923 and rebuilt on the south side of town. A new brick school was constructed to the east on Greenville Street and educated local students until it was lost to consolidation and demolished in 2000.

“Woodbury, a place that was once little more than a wide place in the road, but it is now moving rapidly on the way to a thriving city.”

“The clerks behind the counters have no time for idleness; the hotels are crowded with boarders; warehousemen are piling the cotton in their yards or shipping it by the Georgia Midland; physicians go dashing from place to place attending the sick; the lawyers are looking after their fees; and even the newspaper men bustle around with an energy not at all characteristic of the profession; but above all this busy murmur, the sound of the carpenter’s hammer rattles away on the new buildings rising with magical rapidity.”

Columbus Daily Enquirer, Sun, Nov 14, 1887

GOSSIP FROM WOODBURY.
WOODBURY, GA. November 15.—[Special.]—On last Wednesday, between the hours of 1 and 2, fire consumed the barn of Duck Thompson, together with the contents, consisting of one bale of cotton, several hundred bundles of fodder, some corn and other produce. It is thought to be the work of an incendiary.
 Professors Calhoun and Harrison opened their schools on last Monday, and the prospects are good for two large and flourishing schools in **Woodbury**. Both Calhoun and Harrison are able educators, and our town and the country contiguous certainly know how to appreciate men of such gifted talents.
 Prof. Harrison was suddenly called off yesterday, having received a telegram that his brother was in a dying condition.
 A gentleman who is engaged in the mercantile business about six miles from here, and who keeps everything in stock except maypops and junybugs, attended the banquet at Columbus on last Tuesday night, and relates the following: When he returned to get his hat in the room, where they had been deposited, he found it had absented itself, and it having not been one of the most approved in style and fashion, and having passed the age of maturity, he thought the time very propitious for obtaining one which in appearance would be more adapted to his pursuits in life. He therefore obtained one, and now sports a ten dollar beaver, which he says he will return when the robins nest again.
 Miss Maggie McRae, a beautiful and accomplished young lady of near Bullockville, was in town Friday, and while here performed several pieces on the accordeon, and at times accompanied the music by her sweet-toned voice. The manner she handles the accordeon proves conclusively that she is no amateur.

Columbus Enquirer - Nov 16, 1890

As the 1880's progressed into the 1890's, a second railroad came through town. There was a growth spurt in population. Businesses were popping up, either in new buildings or some that had been repurposed. Mercantile businesses seemed to be the most popular. [The last mercantile store in Woodbury operated into the 1980's]. Other businesses included several saloons, a harness-maker's shop and doctor's offices. Cotton ginning, both horse and steam powered, was a big business during this time with several ginneries in or around Woodbury. Planing mills were also lucrative in the area.



Old Hotel now Methodist Church Fellowship Hall

A cotton warehouse, livery stable, and hotel were built. [the hotel still stands today. Purchased in the mid-2000's by the Methodist Church for use as a fellowship hall]. A printing plant was established and provided the first newspaper, the "Woodbury Hot Blast".

According to The Newnan Herald [Jul 29, 1887] and the Columbus Enquirer, July 5, 1888), “Mr. T. B. Thrash of Griffin, a talented young man, arrived in the city [Woodbury] yesterday for the purpose of establishing a newspaper here. Mr. Thrash is one of the young men who means business, and the result will be that the *Times* will make its appearance on Saturday next” [Columbus Enquirer, Thursday, July 5, 1888]. Also, in the same article, it was reported that the “Woodbury college” resumed its study the previous Monday night. There was much going on in Woodbury as the City neared the turn of the 20th Century. ***“It certainly seems that Woodbury is destined to outrival any other town in Georgia”*** [Columbus Enquirer, Aug 24, 1890]. During the 1890s, Woodbury was flourishing from the growth spurt in population, businesses, and construction.



Woodbury - 1902

Front Row [L-R]: Dr. Clements, Evan Millan, Mr. B. B. Lovett, Dr. Dixon, John Gill, Amos Chunn, Will Owens, Steve Owens, Jr, Wilson Williams Back Row: Will Lunsford, Mance Crawford

New homes were built, new streets were opened, and other improvements were made. The first brick building, a long narrow two-story structure, was built. This later became home of the Woodbury Banking Company. Also during this time a large lumber mill and wood-working plant were built. Together, these stimulated even more construction. Many streets in Woodbury were seeing residential growth. A local Masonic Lodge, with many high degree Masons, was organized. Another large business, Woodbury Cotton Oil and Fertilizer plant, was established.

A third east to west railroad allowed for much larger cotton buying markets while providing more freight and passenger service. The community now had four churches and a cemetery.

Expansion of Commerce and Banking

As the 20th century dawned, Woodbury had acquired telephone service with Southern Bell Company. One of the buildings in our proposed Rural Zone [the Chunn Building] housed the telephone exchange and the Masonic Lodge on the upstairs level. The local newspaper became an eight-page weekly publication with a name change to "Woodbury Georgian". In 1902-1903, Woodbury Banking Company was organized. It was housed in Woodbury's first brick building for years until the new bank building was constructed across the street. For a time, there were three banks in town. United Bank [formerly Woodbury Banking Company] is the sole survivor.



Woodbury Banking Company

The Brunswick Coca-Cola Bottling Company was incorporated in 1907 and purchased in 1912 by J. L. Andrews and O. F. Copeland and Sons. O.F. Copeland was considered a pioneer in the promotion of Coca-Cola in Georgia. During the company's early years, he and his sons and grandsons invested in plants in Lagrange, Athens, Cornelia, Woodbury, and Sylvania as well as Brunswick. Thus, Woodbury has a, albeit brief, Coca-Cola heritage. The bottling facility came and went within the first quarter of the century. Most of the Copeland brick and mortar investment has disappeared. Coca-Cola lives on in a ghost mural on the Mangham Building.



Brunswick Coca-Cola Company Woodbury, GA



Chunn Building housed the Telephone Exchange

In 1907, several women in town organized the first social and literary organization named the "Once a Week Club." Later, the Club donated their large library to Meriwether High School. As the old saying goes, "there's nothing new under the sun". The literacy legacy continues with "Reading Rangers" at George E. Washington Elementary School.

Developed by a land company from Brunswick, a 30-acre tract of land was divided into building sites which were sold at auction. Thus, in 1908, a suburb—Woodbury Heights—was born.

The Chamber of Commerce: Serving Meriwether County Since 1910

By 1910 Woodbury businessmen had organized a Chamber of Commerce. Later the organization changed and began advertising in an effort to attract more manufacturing plants with good payrolls.

There was a flurry of brick and concrete construction. The Copeland Buildings and Woodbury Livestock Company occupied brick buildings in our downtown. The first hardware store opened in the early 1900s, as did Planter's Warehouse Company. Woodbury also had a fully equipped undertaking establishment. A brick City Hall was built on the former site of the blacksmith shop and old town calaboose [a small cell with double board walls and small grate window]. Fire destroyed a drugstore where the original picture theater stood.

Connections at Harris, Ga.		Connections at Woodbury, Ga.	
hour	quarter	hour	quarter
6:55 a. m.	No. 42 (Daily) for Macon.	7:50 a. m.	No. 56 (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays) for Macon.
8:10 a. m.	No. 56 (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays) for Macon.	4:50 p. m.	(Saturday only) for Macon.
7:00 a. m.	7:15 a. m.	7:00 a. m.	7:15 a. m.
8:00 a. m.	8:15 a. m.	8:00 a. m.	8:15 a. m.
9:00 a. m.	9:15 a. m.	9:00 a. m.	9:15 a. m.
10:00 a. m.	10:15 a. m.	10:00 a. m.	10:15 a. m.
11:00 a. m.	11:15 a. m.	11:00 a. m.	11:15 a. m.
12:00 p. m.	12:15 p. m.	12:00 p. m.	12:15 p. m.
1:00 p. m.	1:15 p. m.	1:00 p. m.	1:15 p. m.
2:00 p. m.	2:15 p. m.	2:00 p. m.	2:15 p. m.
3:00 p. m.	3:15 p. m.	3:00 p. m.	3:15 p. m.
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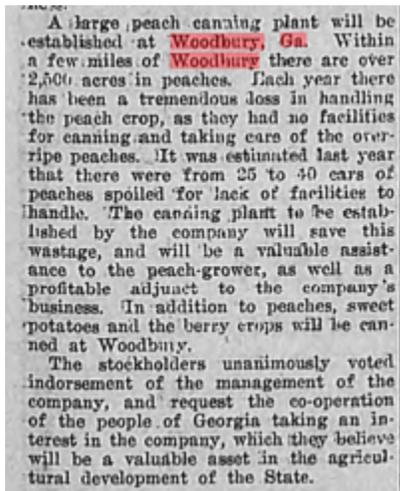
1911 Train Schedule - LaGrange to Woodbury

With the exception of a flour and grist mill and Copeland's Bottling Works, industrial development was slow between 1910 and 1920.

Entertainment was in the form of the silent picture show which was later replaced by a new outfit in one of the warehouse buildings. This in turn was replaced in 1940 by the first sound picture show.

In 1912, the first running water system was provided in the homes from a deep, bored well. It gradually supplied water to 22 families, a barber shop, the bottling works, and the drug store. This was also the time when the first citizen owned an automobile. Later two more were purchased and our roads began to bustle with traffic. A few years later, the Georgia Department of Transportation established an office on the top floor of the 1911 Building. Their sign on the door remains there today.

The 1920s



A large peach canning plant will be established at Woodbury, Ga. Within a few miles of Woodbury there are over 2,500 acres in peaches. Each year there has been a tremendous loss in handling the peach crop, as they had no facilities for canning and taking care of the over-ripe peaches. It was estimated last year that there were from 25 to 40 cars of peaches spoiled for lack of facilities to handle. The canning plant to be established by the company will save this wastage, and will be a valuable assistance to the peach-grower, as well as a profitable adjunct to the company's business. In addition to peaches, sweet potatoes and the berry crops will be canned at Woodbury.

The stockholders unanimously voted indorsement of the management of the company, and request the co-operation of the people of Georgia taking an interest in the company, which they believe will be a valuable asset in the agricultural development of the State.

Mar 26, 1920 article on the Georgia Preserving Company

During 1921, the owners of the Pimento Canning Factory of Griffin purchased a piece of land in town. Later this same piece of land was sold to Hills Brothers Company of New York. The New York based company greatly enlarged the building to accommodate their pimiento pepper packing operation. Over the following decades, these facilities were enlarged and diversified even more to allow for seasonal packing of dates and sweet potatoes. Eventually peanut products were added.

A new large and comfortable school was opened in 1921. This same year a purchase of a municipality owned electric lighting plant was made. After fire destroyed the plant in 1923, a new outfit was installed in a brick building and was later sold to the Georgia Power Company.



1933 9th Grade Class

The 1930s

A landmark was modified, and a previous landmark was rebuilt in 1936. The Methodist Church, originally located just outside of town, had been moved inside the city limits



Woodbury Methodist Church

in the late 1800's. 1936 was time for a facelift. The Baptist Church burned the same year and was rebuilt using bricks from the original structure. Newspapers in 1937 said, "it is one of the finest buildings structurally built in all of Meriwether County." Both structures remain prominent features of Woodbury's 21st century downtown.

In 1939, the Woodbury Garden Club was formed by some of the ladies. Mr. Fred A. Durand's machinery plant created and patented a device equipping his manufacturing plant to grade and brush peaches. Mr. Durand's patent remains in use in various forms today. Other businesses included a lumber mill, the Venetian Blind Factory (later Woodbury Business Forms), and Woodbury Box Company. That same year, another very important service, the Freezer-Locker plant opened.

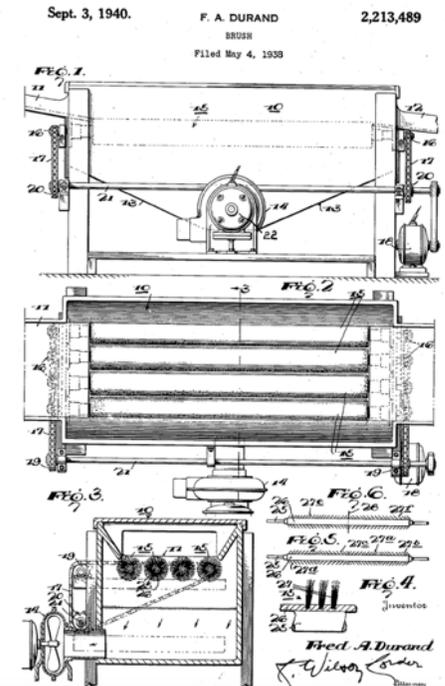
The 1940s and 1950s

Although growth was somewhat stagnant during this period, businesses did change ownership or physical location. Some of those changes included the movie theater, pool hall, post office, a bank, a beauty shop, barber shop, two drug



Woodbury Police Department

stores, six grocery stores, a hardware store, a mercantile, a five and dime, a shoe shop, "filling stations," a couple of garages, a dry cleaner, an ice house, and a cold-storage building.

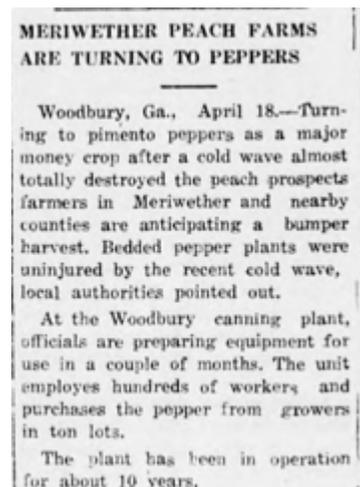


United State Patent Office 2,213,489 Brush

Peaches to Pimientos

For at least the first half of the 20th Century, cotton, pimientos, and peaches were staples of the Woodbury economy. There were peach orchards and packing sheds; cotton fields, gins and an oil mill. In April of 1940, brought on by a cold season that "almost totally destroyed the peach prospects," local farmers turned to pimiento peppers as their primary money-making crop. The local "pepper plant" ramped up to quickly deliver those peppers to market.

In October of 1942, the Atlanta Constitution described the "pepper plant" operation, the "largest pimiento pepper canning plant in the world, located in Woodbury, GA., consumes annually 5,000,000 pounds of Meriwether County peppers."



The Butler Herald - April 25, 1949

Beginning in 1950, Woodbury hosted an annual Pimiento Festival celebrating "King Pimiento" and the city was nicknamed the "Pimiento Capital of the

World." Distinguished public figures [for example, Governor Carl Sanders] gave speeches.



Pimento Festival

Dozens of floats and marching bands paraded down Greenville Street led by the newly crowned "Pimento Queen." These glory days are fondly remembered by many who attended or rode on those floats each fall season, as this was the apex of Woodbury community involvement and city pride.

Miss Charlene Rains Chosen Pimiento Queen At Woodbury Festival

Woodbury, Ga. — Three top Ga. political leaders congratulated pimiento growers on their ninth annual festival and Miss Charlene Rain of Manchester was named 1958 Pimiento Queen.

Senator Herman Talmadge, Gov. elect Ernest Vandiver and Lt. Gov. elect Garland Byrd were on the speakers' platform for the largest and grandest pimiento festival ever in its history.

The new queen is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Rains of Manchester.

The gala affair was attended by approximately 12,000 persons.

*Oct 23, 1958 Pimento Queen
Newspaper Announcement*

The festival ended after 18 years and the plant was shuttered in the 1990's. After diversification with additional seasonal products, the plant periodically employed up to 1200 citizens from Woodbury and the surrounding community.

Today the site is a sad collection of deteriorating buildings symbolizing the past and pointing toward future potential.

20th Century Winds Down and 21st Century Dawns



Flint River Academy

In the 1960's, Woodbury began a gradual downward spiral. The past 70 years have seen few positive developments and numerous damaging losses. Educationally, as previously noted, the local high school was lost to consolidation. Fortunately, after demolition, it was replaced by the new George E. Washington Elementary School (GEW). Sadly, consolidation again robbed our community of local facilities when GEW closed for good this spring. On a positive note, Flint River Academy, our private K-12 founded in 1967, continues to offer local area students a challenging learning environment.

Woodbury's largest employer, the "pepper" plant closed in the early 1990's. Other larger employers, like "homegrown" Woodbury Business Forms and Durand Machinery moved operations to LaGrange. Likewise, Woodbury Box Company relocated to Thomaston. Smoot's Grocery, Moreland's Grocer, Alexander's Beauty Shop, Alice's Beauty Shop, and Mangham Furniture are only memories. King Cotton Textiles, Western Auto, Sinbro's, Copeland Furniture, The Clothes Rack, and Champion Mobile Homes (among others) have all come and gone. Due to vacancy and neglect, historic buildings on the north side of the downtown block were demolished. Others were lost or damaged by fire. The Woodbury Theater is long gone, but USave-It Pharmacy occupies that space. Woodbury Stamping and Woodbury Florist remain in the downtown core. High Cotton and Sandtown Antiques, along with The Blackbird Cafe, have brought new life to downtown. Our historic downtown icons, the 1911 Building and the Williams & Williamson Building are empty. However, the Downtown Development Authority now

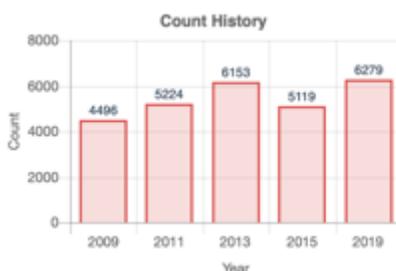
owns one and the other was recently acquired by a preservation minded investor. The future looks brighter for these downtown survivors.

Woodbury Industrial Park is home to Custom Truck & Body Works Inc. and Crown Technology. Ingles 200th store is our first supermarket. Lemmon Cattle Enterprises and Fitzgerald Farms carry on the local agrarian tradition. There is a small city park with playground, tennis courts, butterfly garden, and a community building. The old City Hall building successfully hosted Woodbury's first haunted house last Halloween. For the first time in years, we have a doctor's office in town. Lake Meriwether is a popular fishing, boating, and recreation area. The Flint River, The Cove, and Horace King Red Oak Covered Bridge are nearby. There are indeed a few "ups" among so many "downs."

Like many small rural towns, Woodbury has struggled with the shift from agrarianism to industrialism to high tech. Current residents no longer have the convenience of businesses or entertainment venues enjoyed by past citizens. Financial challenges have stymied development because we no longer have some of these amenities. Our population is stagnated and growth is stunted, but we have begun providing support for businesses to consider Woodbury as a viable option for investment.



A busy downtown Woodbury



GDOT Traffic County History
https://gdottrafficdata.drakewell.com/sitedashboard.asp?node=GDOT_PORTABLES&cosit=0000199_0196

Woodbury in its heyday was the place to go for mercantile, furniture, and feed stores; pharmacies, doctors, dentists, beauty salons, groceries, restaurants a theater and even a Georgia Department of Transportation office. Woodbury still maintains its prominent position on the main tributary allowing traffic from I-85 in LaGrange to traverse directly across middle Georgia and connect to I-75 in Macon. 2019 GDOT-Portable: Site 0000199-0196 data shows an average of 6,279 vehicles per day traveling through our city with more than 4,720 traveling through our proposed rural zone. Those driving from

Woodbury can access GA State Hwy 85N and arrive at the world's busiest airport, Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International, within one hour. A long-time resident recently remarked that Woodbury's downtown core used to be a "booming" area. We believe Woodbury is poised to "boom" again.

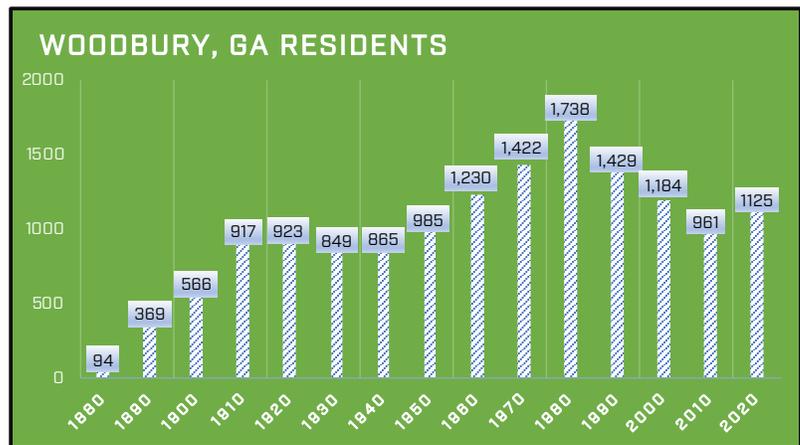
- 1. Outline what specific factors have led to the decline of the downtown and proposed Rural Zone. Include a thorough discussion of how the area has slipped into a state of economic distress.**

Although there was growth in our area's population during the 1970's and 1980's, steady inflation during these years eventually led Woodbury's overall economy into what would be a catastrophic downturn. The subsequent enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993 created a direct hit upon our agrarian livelihood. Hundreds of larger businesses in Woodbury and the surrounding communities closed: The Georgia Preserving Company (peach packing, sweet potatoes, and berry plant), Nabisco (pimentos, peanut butter, and date bread), Spurlin Industries (fiberglass bathtubs and sinks), Woodbury Business Forms (large print shop), American Eagle Company (golf cart manufacturers), and Woodbury Box Company.



Local Woodbury Farm

Our City's water treatment plant lost most of its revenue as water usage waned. Subsequently, our population suffered a steep decline during the 1990's as many jobless workers moved to neighboring cities to gain employment. After the closure of our largest businesses, our small businesses within the proposed rural zone began to dissolve. The availability of cheap gasoline now allowed shoppers to drive long distances to patronize modern shopping malls.



The downtown Woodbury shop owners who survived did so by adapting to current trends. Some Main Street historic architecture was covered with more modern décor in an attempt to entice shoppers back into the downtown area. Canopies were built over historic transom windows, historic façades, trimmed in turn of the century Mesker Brothers cast iron, were hidden away and thus began their long wait to be uncovered.

Any economic stability that remained through the 1990's was quickly wiped out due to the 2008 Recession. Gradually, surrounding cities such as Newnan to the Northwest and LaGrange to the West began their recovery. Not only have these areas recovered, according to the Coweta County Chamber of Commerce and The Newnan Times-Herald, "more than 30,000 new residents will relocate to Coweta County in the next 10 years." Although this surrounding prosperity has attracted many of our residents, we are determined to break this pattern.

In August 2020, the City of Woodbury submitted our Rural Zone Designation Application to Ga DCA for consideration. The proposed Rural Zone is comprised of two

individual areas referred to as the Downtown Design Overlay (DDO). Downtown Commercial consists of the downtown central business area. Downtown Residential consists of low density historic homes surrounding the central business area. Historic buildings located along the commercial routes traversing Main Street, Dromedary Street, Durand Street, Peachtree Street, and Jones Mill Road are included.

Deterioration of Historic Anchor Buildings

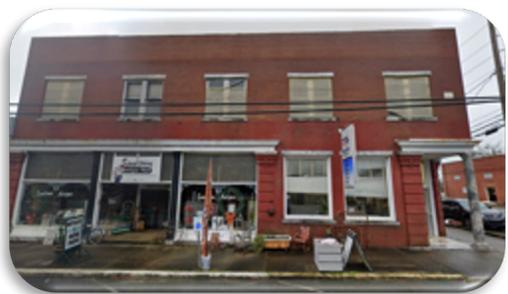
Even though most of the properties within the proposed rural zone show differing degrees of blight, there are five which visibly anchor the Downtown Commercial District and are ripe for renovation – as is evident by 1911 Bank building currently being renovated.

The Williams & Williamson Building, which occupies the corner of Main Street and Jones Mill Road, has suffered years of neglect. Severe water damage has rendered the interior damp and moldy and the upstairs floor unsafe. Windows are broken or missing, paint is peeling, and exterior awnings are in poor condition.

Fortunately, through this neglect, this building has retained most of its historic character, including an intact tile entryway which announces, "Williams & Williamson" and solid wood doors with transom windows located upstairs. The owner has provided engineering drawings to renovate this building into a full-service restaurant downstairs and loft apartments in the upstairs.



Williams & Williamson Building, Parcel 6



1911 Building, Parcel 30

Across Main Street, the 1911 Building sits in a similar neglected condition. Although there is no obvious water damage, this building's exterior has been altered with inappropriately sized replacement windows and awnings. Years of peeling paint covers the original exterior wood doors. The building is in fair condition because it has been occupied for the last 20 years. Additionally, the bottom floors of the building

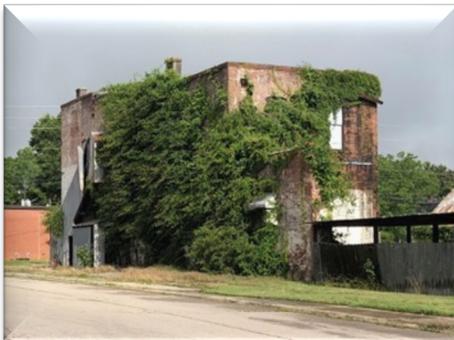
will soon be home to Switch & Grinds a coffee shop and Paparella's Pizza. The Woodbury Development Authority owns this building and their plans include adding loft apartments in the upstairs portion of this building.



The Old City Hall Building, composed of two separate buildings, is located on Durand Street. This building served as Woodbury City Hall and Police Department until 2018. The building now sits vacant. It is in fair condition. On the exterior, joint cracking is evident, which is indicative of foundation settling. Recent demolition of an adjacent structure has revealed poorly constructed modifications to the original building which are now in full view from Durand Street.

Of all the buildings in the proposed rural zone, the Chunn Building and the Mangham Building are the most structurally compromised. While the Chunn Building has a partially collapsed roof, broken windows, and an unsafe interior, it was recently purchased, and the new owner is currently renovating the building with plans to open a general store in the downstairs and offer two loft apartments in the upstairs.

The Mangham Building with a completely collapsed roof is only a shell of its former self. The owner of this building is working with a local architect to “reconstruct” the building as a Mexican restaurant.



Rear view, Chunn Building, Parcel 34



Mangham Building, Parcel 41



*Wood building
Parcel 32*

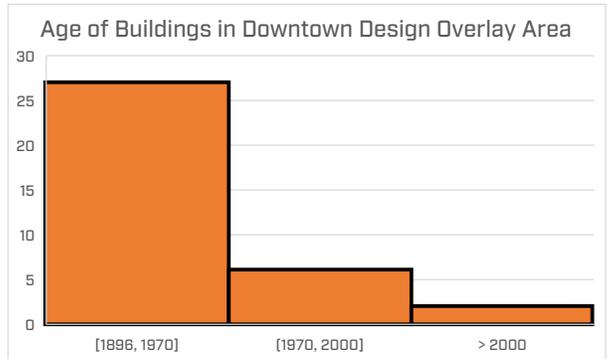
In 2018, a collaborative effort among the City Council members, the Woodbury Development Authority, and the Planning and Zoning Commission, resulted in a total reformation of Woodbury's antiquated and restrictive zoning regulations. The arduous job was expedited with the help of our city attorney [Nathan Lee], who had an expert background in zoning law. The new zoning ordinance was adopted in July 2019 with a unanimous vote of City Council. We anticipate that our updated zoning regulations will allow our commercial buildings, which are of somewhat limited historical or architectural significance, to be converted to both affordable housing (loft apartments) and retail

space. This will allow us to maintain the character of the community.



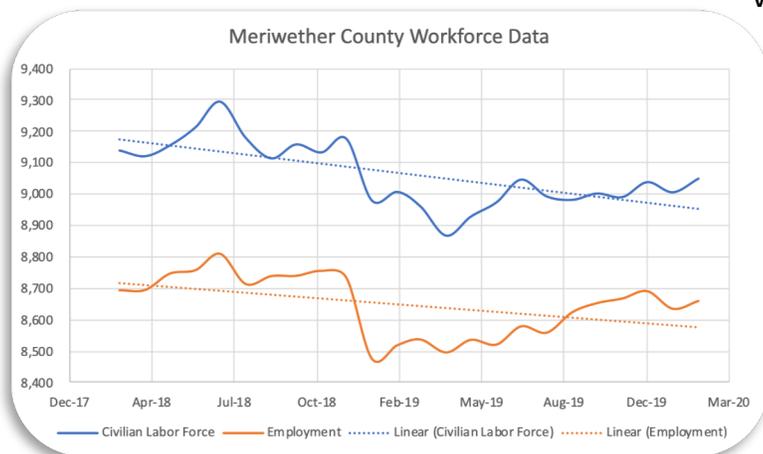
*City of Woodbury Open Lot, Parcel 21
Old Fire Station, Parcel 22*

Many years of economic decline has resulted in blighted conditions within the DDO district and Woodbury across our entire community. The lack of code enforcement and historic preservation regulations, absentee landlords, aging buildings and poverty level have also contributed. In the late 1980's and 1990's, in the ensuing city decline, many longtime residents of the City of Woodbury chose to relocate. Some moved to larger cities while others choose to rebuild just outside the city limits. Many sold their family homes to absentee landlords.



With no code enforcement or historic preservation efforts in place, many historic homes were lost to demolition by neglect. According to the U.S. Census, 42.2% of houses in Woodbury were built prior to 1970, and properties in the DDO area has an average age of 77 years for its' buildings-only six buildings were built after 1970. 35.7% of housing units within the City are rented while 64% of houses are owner-occupied and 59.7% are mortgage free. The vacancy rate is 12.5%. While Meriwether County has owner-occupied home values at \$98,000, the City of Woodbury's owner-occupied

values are only \$59.800 in comparison.



According to 2018 American Community Survey results, it is estimated that 58.4% of Woodbury's population over the age of 16 are employed. Meriwether County Workforce Data indicates that the unemployment rate in Meriwether County has declined since 1980.

Median household income in the

city in 2018 was \$27,946 and the median family income was \$50,417 which is 55% less than the state average. The per capita income for the city was \$18,000. About 12.1% of families and 16% of the total population are living below the poverty line, including 18.3% of families with children under the age of eighteen.¹

In 2017, Woodbury's Mayor and City Council recognized the need for an ambitious economic redevelopment plan to address increasing blight, failing infrastructure, and continued disinvestment within the City of Woodbury.

As an initial effort, and in order to capitalize upon state and local provided resources, the City of Woodbury coordinated with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and Three Rivers Regional Commission to determine the best course of action. For seven-months during 2017, Three Rivers Regional Commission facilitated an intense planning program which included a team of local Woodbury citizens, community stakeholders, elected officials and business owners. From these sessions, it was determined that the most productive course of action that Woodbury needed to take to immediately address the community's continued decline would be to create a concise, pointed strategy for economic redevelopment.

What has followed has been a series of coordinated steps to lead the city into a renewed position of economic prosperity.

The City of Woodbury's downtown core, which would later be designated as the DDO district, was uniformly considered to be the area in need of the most urgent attention. The City of Woodbury coordinated with the Woodbury Planning & Zoning Commission, the Woodbury Development Authority, and the City of Woodbury City Attorney to implement a revitalization strategy that would concentrate on commercial and residential redevelopment. All steps being constantly reviewed to ensure consistency with our short-term work program in support of our Local Comprehensive Plan.

Simultaneously, during 2017 and continuing through 2018, The City of Woodbury's internal mechanisms were being meticulously brought up to date. City Hall operations were streamlined to ensure that a financially stable city budget could serve as a foundation for quality growth. During this flurry of activity, it became evident that adequate broadband access was the vital understructure needed to provide for economic development.

In 2020, the City of Woodbury was designated as a Broadband Ready Community and made application for designation as a PlanFirst Community. In June 2020, the City Council voted unanimously to adopt a resolution determining that the proposed Rural Zone redevelopment area qualifies as a "slum area" as defined in Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Act, URA, [O.C.G.A.36-61-2]. Steps are underway to formally adopt Woodbury's Urban Redevelopment plan which would allow Woodbury City government

¹ https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?id=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DPO3&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DPO3&g=0400000US13_1600000US1383896

to effectively use the URA's statutory powers to improve conditions which have led to blighted areas.

By having already initiated the aforementioned foundational steps to recovery, the City of Woodbury is uniquely positioned to immediately begin utilization of the economic benefits the proposed Rural Zone Designation would provide.

In 2019, The Woodbury Development Authority purchased the 17,170 square foot 1911 Building. Through visioning sessions with a developer, the Authority created a plan to convert the building into commercial space on the ground floor and loft apartments in the upstairs. With the incentives that the proposed Rural Zone Designation would provide, this substantial project would become much more attainable.

Likewise, the current owner of the William & Williamson building, a preservation minded private investor, would be positioned to take advantage of tax credits in order to facilitate rehabilitation of his highly visible Main Street property.

The themes of revitalization through proactive infrastructure investments and business development resources are recurrent in each of the City's recent planning efforts and culminate most clearly in its newest strategic plan, the Strategic Priorities Assessment. A brief synopsis is provided of the prior planning efforts: the Woodbury Urban Redevelopment Plan, the Meriwether County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2018, and the five-year comprehensive plan update in 2019. The goals of the Rural Zone program to bring investment to real property and increased employment echo within these plans. The opportunity that an increased tax base would provide the City of Woodbury to make critical investments across physical and cultural infrastructure are highlighted. Please take time to read through the Comprehensive Plan, our Comprehensive Work Plan, and our Downtown Revitalization Work Plan. Additionally, read through the Strategic Priorities Assessment provided by Georgia Tech's Economic Development Research Program (all of these can be found here on the City's website).